

AN EVOLVING EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:  
THE PHILIPPINE CO-CURATION PARTNERSHIP AT THE FIELD MUSEUM

by

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## ABSTRACT

### AN EVOLVING EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: THE PHILIPPINE CO-CURATION PARTNERSHIP AT THE FIELD MUSEUM

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Under the Supervision of Professor W. Warner Wood

Over the last decade, Field Museum staff have worked to build enduring partnerships with local Filipinx-American community members. These partnerships engage participants in the stewardship of the collection, reinterpreting entangled object meanings and connecting the Museum's collection to the lived experiences of modern communities. Through collaborative digitization efforts and events the Philippine Co-Curation partnership works to confront a colonial past while offering a gathering space for local Filipinx-Americans. As an emerging approach to collections management, it aims to embody the ideals of modern museology, bringing both partners and staff into uncertain territory and inspiring important questions about how collaborative relationships negotiate authority, recognize expertise, and navigate the institutional contexts shaping their execution. In this way, the Field Museum's Philippine Co-Curation partnership represents an important case study into the potential and pitfalls of long-term collaborative partnerships, and their ability to make museums more accessible, locally relevant, and respectful of diverse traditions.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

When I was a little girl, growing up in rural Illinois, the Field Museum was my favorite place in the world. It was under Sue the T-Rex's watchful, if empty, eye that I learned there was a world much bigger than the farmland I had seen. I devoured exhibitions that illustrated distant lands and times, pushed my ability to think like a scientist, and inspired me to learn more. When I entered college, this excitement persisted and grew, inspiring me to pursue a degree in Anthropology and a career in museums. The summer before my senior year, I was thrilled and elated to work as an intern with the Field Museum in the Anthropology department. Happily ensconced in the Regenstein Pacific collections lab, I rehoused, photographed, and digitized a selection of objects from the Museum's impressive Philippines collection. This work was designed to support an exciting new approach to collections management that sought to involve local communities in the curation process—a collaboration that would come to be known as the Philippine Co-Curation partnership.

While my internship ended as the summer did, this partnership continued to captivate my interest as I graduated and pursued other opportunities. I watched from afar as the partnership inspired new activities, attracted new volunteers, and offered new interpretation to the collection. When I began my graduate coursework, I learned how the partnership aligned with other movements and literature across the museum world to modernize and strengthen their relationship with and relevance to constituent communities. Eager to learn more, I reconnected with my former supervisors and colleagues at the Field Museum to re-engage with the partnership as the focus of this Master's thesis. With their patient assistance, I worked to understand how the partnership works and the goals it seeks to accomplish, bringing these into conversation with the literature of the museum field, as well as situating them within the context

of the Field Museum as an institution. Through this discussion, I hope to highlight this partnership as a case study in the ongoing and lengthy shift toward more inclusive and collaborative practices in museums around the country and the world.

### *Philippine Co-Curation and Pamanang Pinoy*

The Field Museum’s Philippine Co-Curation partnership began over a decade ago with what one staff member calls “a performative declaration” from Dr. John Terrell, the Regenstein Curator of the Field Museum that the collection would now belong to the Filipinx<sup>1</sup> community, and be interpreted through a long-term shared partnership with the museum, intended to extend in perpetuity. This declaration was inspired by a shift in museum studies literature, often bolstered by pressure from indigenous groups, to establish museums as forums of community engagement that are inclusive and descriptive of multiple and varied viewpoints. To make this a reality, staff began attending local festivals, and reaching out to personal networks to build relationships in the Filipinx-American communities of the Chicago area, informing community leaders of the museum’s collections and testing the waters for interest in collaboration. Some of these partners eventually became volunteers working to digitize, reinterpret, and re-contextualize the 10,000 objects in the collection. In this way, co-curators aimed to improve access to the collection, reinterpret entangled object meanings, and connect the collection to the lived experiences of modern communities. Over time, and as volunteer personnel and goals evolved, the priorities of this partnership shifted to include regular programming events, including the *Pamanang Pinoy* (“Filipinx Heritage” in Tagalog) series. As an emerging approach to long term collections and heritage management, this partnership aims to embody the theories and goals of participatory museology, in which museums serve as platforms for multi-directional and co-

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<sup>1</sup> A gender-neutral term intended to include those who identify as Filipino, and Filipina, as well as those beyond this binary expression.

produced content experiences, (Simon 2010) in practice. It brings co-curation volunteers and staff alike into new territory, rife with uncertainties, anxieties, frustrations, and compromises. It therefore prompts important questions about the cultural and social power imbalances between museums and partners, and the ways in which authority and expertise are negotiated. It works to reimagine objects of heritage that are embroiled in a colonial past, and must continually navigate the institutional goals and resources shaping its execution.

### *Methods and Research Plan*

In seeking to understand how the social action I observed within the Philippine Co-Curation partnership, is coordinated through and by its setting in the Field Museum, I utilized the methods of institutional ethnography as described by Dorothy Smith (1987). Drawing from Marx a materialist mode of social inquiry, Smith (1987) argues that traditional forms of research in the social sciences use theory, and not experience, to make sense of the social world. Since this theory was formed in a White, male, heterosexual dominated social world, and was necessarily shaped by this positioning, Smith views this inquiry as confined to a historical exploration of these conditions, rather than an engagement with lived social activity. Smith's proposed methods, then, begin by creating space for "an absent subject, and an absent experience that is to be filled with the presence and spoken experience" of the experienced social realities of subjects outside this point of view. In this way, Smith argues that social inquiry must begin in the real, material processes of social life by utilizing ethnographic methods grounded in generating descriptions of and stories about actual events as they unfold, allowing these to form the foundations of any theory ventured (Dingwall et al, 1983).

Further, Smith's (1987) institutional method of inquiry highlights the necessity of situating these lived experiences in the context of the "ruling relations" or the "ruling apparatus"

that shape and coordinate social action. Institutional ethnography therefore commits to understanding how these moving parts fit together and operate, shaping and affecting the lived experiences of those working within them, (Dingwall et al 1983; Nichols 2014). These “ruling relations”, including mechanisms of social coordination as well as contributing contextual factors, organize people’s activities on a large scale and across multiple sites, often in unknown, unseen, or unarticulated ways. Therefore, this method seeks insight into how social action is organized through processes of administration and governance, power relationships and hierarchies, morality structures, and organizational categories (Devault & McCoy 2006). These complexes of social relations and contributing contexts coordinate the everyday work of administration as well as the social action of those who operate within administrative systems. To locate these experiences, institutional ethnography aims to situate the lives of subjects in historical and political context, and elicit descriptions from informants with a diversity of experiences and positions within the field of action (Ibid: 1983).

While this method has not broadly or widely been applied to studying museum contexts, several notable exceptions offer important instruction. Sharon MacDonald’s (2002) investigation of the constructions of science for public consumption at the Science Museum in London and Handler and Gable’s (1997) exploration of the sociality and historical representations generated by the Colonial Williamsburg complexes showed applications of the institutional ethnographic approach to studying museums. Marzia Varutti’s (2013) study of collaboration between large national museums and small indigenous ones in Taiwan, and Jennifer Shannon’s (2014) exploration of collaborative practices at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) further offer important demonstration of this theory in practice.

Building on the methods discussed by these scholars, I began my fieldwork by attending, participating in, and observing several *Pamanang Pinoy* events, and other relevant programming throughout 2016 and 2017. Operating somewhere between an event attendee and an unofficial co-curation volunteer, I arrived at the Field Museum about an hour before events, assisted with event set up and preparation, and observed interactions and conversations as visitors arrived. As I watched programmed activities and social interactions unfold, I tried to lend a hand wherever I could—sometimes distributing programs, helping at the registration table, or assisting with object tables, and once leading a discussion group that pertained to my previous research—while meeting and interacting with as many visitors and volunteers as possible. I also assisted in “tear down” after events ended, and listened in on any debriefing sessions held by staff and volunteers. Participant observation studies are among the strongest methods employed by institutional ethnographers to better understand social processes and lived action. This method allows ethnographers the potential to explore multiple dimensions of information gathering including stories, authors, place, time, motion, bodies, ruling relations, and organization (Diamond 2006). By assisting co-curation partners and staff in executing events, I gained insight into how they make decisions, recognize expertise, delegate responsibility, and shape community discussions. I noted how they interact with visitors as well as the types of conversations the events foster and how they connect to identity, heritage, and community relationships with the museum. Additionally, I engaged in conversations about object selection and interpretation, the planning process surrounding events, expressed goals and the ways in which they are met or were unfulfilled, and the perceived and expressed impacts of these events. I also noted the frustrations and tensions that arose as hopes and ideas came into contact with institutional policy, architecture, goals, and reputation as well as the ways that the expressed desires of the museum

affect the decisions and discussions of co-curation partners. To record my observations, I followed the methods described by Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw (1995) as well as Roger Sanjek (1990). The guidebooks they provided offered invaluable advice for producing descriptive field notes. They directed me toward recording concrete sensory details, unexpected occurrences, emotional responses, and what those in the setting regarded as interesting or important.

As my participant observation research revealed key stakeholders to the co-curation partnership, I began to organize more formal interviews. I worked to gather a broad array of perspectives from several demographic categories of volunteers, as well as staff members at multiple levels of the Field Museum's institutional hierarchy. These interviews allowed me to explore topics identified through participant observation with flexibility, depth, and clarity (Dingwall et al 1983). DeVault and McCoy (2006, 26) describe interviews as an "analytic rehearsal" in which researchers can check their understanding of certain topics or ideas by offering them to the interviewees for confirmation, clarification, or correction. This definition proved instructive for my interviews, in which interviewees and I discussed their experiences as co-curators, the connection they feel to this collection of heritage objects, their evolving relationship to the museum, and in what ways the project could be improved or made more accessible. Interview questions with anthropology staff focused on the major goals of the project and how interviewees feel they are being met or falling short. Following the guidelines established by DeVault and McCoy (2006), I scheduled interviews in ascending order of chain of command to build strong foundations of background information and the input of those with less governing authority before talking with those who wield the greatest institutional power. For this reason, I conducted interviews with volunteers first before speaking with the staff members I

knew well from their regular interaction with me at events, followed by more senior collections staff, curators, and administrators associated with the partnership.

Time and distance, however, revealed themselves as major barriers to and limitations of my research. As a graduate student living in Milwaukee and without access to a car, I was largely dependent on transportation assistance and lodging from (sainted) friends and loved ones, to traverse the roughly one hundred miles between my apartment and the Field Museum. My full work, teaching, and course schedule offered additional logistical challenges. While the aid of my personal network and the Amtrak system were invaluable to my field work, these challenges undoubtedly limited my analysis, as they limited my day-to-day contact with co-curators and observation time at staff meetings, regular work days, and social gatherings. Further, for the sake of convenience, some of the interviews were conducted over the phone, with detailed preparation of interview questions, and follow up conversations at subsequent events to account for the limitations of phone conversations (Helgren 2015; Irvine 2011). I scheduled in-person interviews in locations that were convenient for both parties, often away from the Museum for the purpose of fostering candid conversations. I met most of the volunteers I interviewed at local coffee shops (some were kind enough to invite me to lunch at their homes), and staff members either in their offices or also in coffee shops. For both in-person and phone interviews, I recorded dialogue using a digital audio recorder which I later transcribed using Express Scribe software.

As participant observation and interviews strengthen each other, they also provide a framework for the interpretation of texts and text-mediated devices through which relationships become objectified in institutional systems (Dingwall et al 1983; Nichols 2004; Devault and McCoy 2006). Increasingly, and according to historic shifts in forms of social coordination and technological advancements like mass printing and capitalist production, these documents shape

and form institutional relationships. These records are not always literal descriptions of the relationships and ideas they encode, but are accounts that organize and to some extent create the reality they describe. Through the foundational knowledge and insight I gathered through ethnographic methods, I analyzed and interpreted textual sources such as the project's online presence, including its Facebook page, *From the Vault: The Philippines Collection* and institutional webpage. I considered how co-curators use both as important marketing and discussion forums, to inform the public about the project and gather community input and feedback. A monthly newsletter detailing recent activities for those belonging to an email sign up list, programs and brochures for each event, feedback surveys, and promotional materials served as other sources of data. These proved extremely informative in considering the ways in which these texts create chains of organized action, the coordinate activity, and enact social hierarchies (DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Smith 1987).

### *Organization and Literature Review*

To discuss the ethnographic insights I gathered, I organized my findings into four major parts. In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I explore some of the historical and cultural contexts that continue to shape the relationship between the Field Museum and the Filipinx community in Chicago, as well as the “ruling relations” (Smith 1987) of the Museum. The Museum's roots in the Columbian Exposition of 1893, and its early goals and priorities, set important precedents about who the Museum was for. To discuss these goals, I explored the archived writings about the Museum's founding available on the institution's website, and brought them into conversation with scholars of museum studies like Carol Duncan (1995), Donna Haraway (1984), and Michaela Giebelhausen (2003; 2008), who analyzed the inbuilt messages about access and belonging that museums communicate.

The racial attitudes, scientific methods, and educational philosophy of the time all affected how the Museum came to exist, how it conducted business, and whose opinions it valued. Further, the United States' colonial occupation of the Philippines around this same time period had significant impacts on the ways the European Americans thought about and interacted with Filipinx and Filipinx-Americans. As documented by Teodoro Agoncillo (1990) and Gabriel Casal (et al 1981), and discussed by Daniel Goh (2008), José Fermin (2004), Dierdre McHale (2004), and Thomas McHale (1962), these impacts are visible in popular literature of the time, in advertising media, in art and music, and—of course—in museums. It was in this context that the Field Museum was born, and in this context that its scientists gathered one of the most comprehensive collections of Filipinx objects in the world. Insights from curators across the decades, including Donald Collier (1969), as well as Warren Haskin, Stephen Nash, and Sarah Coleman (2003), and Stephan Nash and Gary Feinman (2003) further helped to contextualize these foundations. This historical background is inseparable from the story of the Philippine Co-Curation partnership—it is the catalyst against which the partnership continually reacts. It forms the foundation of why partnerships like this one are so important.

Chapter 3 discusses the shift that the museum world—and the Field Museum—experienced in the middle to late 20<sup>th</sup> century now known as the New Museology. This shift in priorities and goals sought to address certain problematic aspects of representation, marginalization, and interpretation that museums perpetuate by involving local communities in more primary ways and valuing more diverse voices. Many scholars (Vergo 1989; Karp 1991a, 1992, 1992a; Clifford 1992; Lavine 1992; Davalos 2001; Falk and Sheppard 2006; Kreps 2008, 2013; Golding 2013) have explored this shift, offering insight and perspective into its goals, potentials, pitfalls, and necessity. Several Field Museum scholars additionally made important

scholarly contributions to this paradigm shift, exploring the need for change as well as important experiments toward enacting it, including Dr. John Terrell (1991), who is featured prominently in this study. Major shifts in policy and practice followed as the museum aligned itself with an increased emphasis on community engagement, fostering conversation, broadening audiences, sharing authority, and justifying their existence. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several curators implemented collaborative programs that sought to address these goals. The partnerships that they formed, and the lessons they learned in the process, formed the theoretical framework of what would become the Philippine Co-Curation partnership. Terrell helped to build a now multi-decade relationship with the Maori people of Tokumaru Bay in New Zealand. This partnership, as recorded in his own writing (Terrell et al 2008), solidified for him the importance of collaborative partnerships and served as the inspiration for early discussions of a partnership with the Filipinx-American community of Chicago. As Terrell and his team built relationships, sought support, and acquired grant funding, the partnership began to solidify into a community digitization and interpretation initiative known as 10,000 Kwentos. Through this initiative, the Philippine Co-Curation partnership worked to rehouse, photograph, and digitize the records for about 80% of the collection. They created a digital collections portal that made the information they recorded accessible via the Internet for comments and additional insight from community members. Insights from co-curators themselves, including two student pieces (Quaintance et al 2017; Domingo 2015) offered particular insight into these ideas.

As the partnership, and the partners, continued to shift and evolve, volunteers and staff recognized the importance of sharing the information they uncovered while digitizing. For this reason, the team began to organize and host regular community events throughout 2016 and 2017. This event series is the focus of Chapter 4. From June 2016 through August 2017 I

attended and observed nine such events as well as their impacts for the committed volunteers who staff and organize them. Corrinne Kratz and Ivan Karp (2006) who discussed the often conflicting and multiple functions of museums, and Gustavo Buntinx and Ivan Karp (2006) who wrote about the tactical approaches museums can take to address these functions offered particular insight into how partnerships like this one work to expand the Museum's capacity to fulfill its broad mission and goals. The events fostered and strengthened important relationships among community members of multiple generations, between the Museum and the Filipinx-American community, and between participants and their heritage. They offered a gathering space where community expertise could be heard, encouraged, and valued, improving and enriching the information the Museum records about the collection. Further they inspired conversations that recognized and discussed the lasting impacts of colonial practices and ways of thinking while connecting the collection to the lived experience of a modern community. In this way then, the partnership embodied many of the teachings of Constance Perin (1992) and Viv Golding (2013) by seeking to build a "communicative circle" linking museum visitors and those who create museum experiences by building collaborative relationships based on trust and respect. As the product of a singular department, and the brainchild of a single curator's team, however, the partnership and its events continue to face limitations and barriers that threaten its sustainability.

To understand these barriers, in Chapter 5 I explore the Philippine partnership's relationship to the Field Museum as a major institution. As one of several experimental forays into collaborative programming from several different curators and staff members, the Philippine partnership must compete for both attention and resources across several levels of bureaucracy. Nina Simon (2010)'s practical discussion of and guide for implementing successful and

sustainable collaborative practices was particularly instructive in this section. As she described, deeply entrenched departmental divisions, limited communication and collaboration among these various projects, and evolving goals and practices make the partnership's challenges significant ones, and limit how ambitious these partnerships can be. In this way, it forms significant parallels with the bureaucratic challenges observed by Jennifer Shannon (2014) at NMAI. Additionally, while the major shift in museum practice toward community collaboration has resonated with many of the curators and staff at the Museum, it has yet to be identified as a major institutional priority. This may potentially change soon, as the Museum is, at my writing of this thesis, engaged in its Strategic Planning process to identify and clarify such priorities for the coming decade, and has recently supported additional research on the impacts and potentials of these programs. Elevating participatory and collaborative projects that engage the community to one of these institutional priorities could offer the kind of consistent support and resources to maintain and improve these partnerships. In this way the important and historic value that they offer, both to participating museums and community members, can become a thriving and sustainable part of the museum's future.

## **CHAPTER 2: BUILT INTO THE FOUNDATION**

When I arrived at the East Entrance of the Field Museum to attend my first *Pamanang Pinoy* event, I paused for a moment to take in the impact of the building before me. Standing tall and proud on the Chicago's lakefront with stately pillars, an impressive marble staircase, and massive graphic exhibition banners, the building solemnly exudes the magnitude, dignity, and esteem that the Museum has built over the last century. Since erecting the building in the early 1900s, the Field Museum has sponsored exhibits, built collections, and conducted research that have impacted Chicago, the United States, and the world in important ways; shaping what we know and understand about the cultural and natural world.

This building forms the literal background and foundation for how the Museum interacts with its audiences. Its architecture and design structure how the public engages with and behaves within the Museum, and helps to define the communities that feel welcomed in its hallowed halls (see Geibelhausen 2003 on the role of architecture in shaping perception of museums). As museums are planned to last across the decades and preserve important ideas in perpetuity, the collections, funds, and goals that shaped the beginning of the Field Museum survive to shape that relationship in lasting ways. Founded at the end of the nineteenth century, as part of a movement to establish Chicago as the Midwest's principal cultural center, the Museum was always intended to inspire Chicago's publics to use it as a resource to elevate and improve themselves. Necessarily, however, understandings of who needed improvement, and whose thoughts and ideas would aim to do the improving were informed and shaped by the racial attitudes and power distributions of the late 1800s. For the collection gathered in the Philippines—at that time a colony of the United States—this social context dictated many decisions regarding what the collection included, what information about it was documented, and how that documentation was

interpreted. As the Museum built collections and created representational displays, racist evolutionary and hierarchical attitudes towards culture further shaped this relationship.

### *Framing the Foundations*

To discuss these early foundations, and the ways they continue to affect Museum activities, I've relied on the writings of former Field Museum curators and directors as well as several scholars who sit at the intersection of anthropology and museum studies. George Dorsey, the Museum's Chief Curator of Anthropology at the time the Philippine Collection was amassed, wrote a retrospective of the Field Museum's first six years that offered significant insights into the motivations and goals of the then new Museum. Donald Collier, a Field Museum Anthropology Curator in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, further discussed this period in an article featured in the Field Museum's bulletin in 1969 reflecting on the Museum's first half century. Using these sources as historical evidence, as they include direct quotes, descriptions, and explanations from the time of the Museum's founding, I aim to situate them within the arguments of several scholars, including Corinne Kratz and Ivan Karp (2006) as well as Elaine Hermann Gurian (1992) who discuss the various frictions that arise between the multiple roles, responsibilities, and goals of museums that often conflict and contradict each other as well as the ways that early museum goals persist in the modern era. These arguments are further developed in conversation with those made by Karen Mary Davalos (2001), Carol Duncan (1995), Michaela Giebelhausen (2003; 2008), and Donna Haraway (1984) who discuss how museums signal visitors about appropriate use of their space, which audiences the museum serves, and which persons make up which groups.

The Philippine collection that co-curators now engage with was shaped, and continues to be affected by, similar processes. By reviewing the history of the United States' colonial

relationship with the Philippines and the racist attitudes that shaped American actions in the Philippines, I hope to offer insight on how the problems associated with acquiring the collection continue to shape its use in modern activities. A common theme of discussion at co-curated events, this history shapes which objects the collections contain, which stories it can be used to tell, and how modern Filipinx-Americans interact with it. To understand the attitudes that helped to build the collection and shape its exhibition, I've relied on the writings on the history of the Philippines written by Gabriel Casal (1981) and Teodoro Agoncillo (1990) to understand the timeline and major implications of important events. More specific commentary on the racial attitudes of the time came from Jerico Domingo (2015), a co-curation volunteer who wrote her thesis on the racial background of the collection, as well as my own previous work on the subject as an undergraduate student (Carlson 2013). Additionally, Mark Van Ells (1995), Daniel Goh (2008), and Dierdre McKay (2006) offer significant insights on the American presence in and impact on the Philippines. Jose Fermin (2004), Nancy Parezo (2004), Cherubim Quizon (2004), all writing on the centennial anniversary of the St. Louis World's Fair which exhibited thousands of living Filipinx people in horrendous conditions, and inspired the involvement the chief financier of the Field Museum's Philippines collections voyages, offer discussion of the Fair and its impacts. Insights by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1992), Susan Pearce (1993) and Nicholas Thomas (2010) about how these contexts affected the collecting process are also discussed.

### *The Founding of the Field Museum*

The Field Museum<sup>2</sup> as we know it today was born out of Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893. By that time, Chicago was largely rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1871 and was growing in population and national reputation as a major hub of manufacturing, trading, and

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<sup>2</sup> Also known as the Columbian Museum of Chicago, the Chicago Natural History Museum, and the Field Museum of Natural History, although I will use its most commonly used name throughout this thesis.

railroad transportation. Seeking to further establish the city as a cultural center, and inspired by the success and grandeur of the Centennial Exposition in Paris in 1878, Mayor DeWitt C. Creiger established a committee to convince Congress that Chicago should host the next World's Fair. In 1890, Congress agreed, passing "an Act to provide for celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, by holding an International Exposition of Arts, Industries, and Manufacturers, and products of the soil, mine and sea, in the City of Chicago" (Collier 1969: 3; Bolotin and Laing 2002). They allocated \$1.5 million to organize the exhibition, set an opening day of May 1, 1893 and the planning process began.

Frederick W. Putnam, then the Curator of the Peabody Museum and a professor at Harvard, saw further opportunities in the Columbian Exposition, insisting it was the perfect occasion to build "a perfect ethnographical exhibition of the past and present peoples of America...an important contribution to science...as it will be the first bringing together on a grand scale of representatives of the peoples who were living on the continent when it was discovered by Columbus" (Collier 1969: 4). Enshrining such a collection in a museum would further help to establish Chicago as a major American city, allowing it to stake claims of regional prominence, providing education and excitement for those who could not travel to New York or Washington D.C (Kratz and Karp 2006). Putnam was named the Chief of the Department of Ethnology and recruited Franz Boas and George A. Dorsey to help in amassing a huge collection of objects and research that extended to all reaches of the American continent, as well as several other countries around the world (Jacknis 2002). The World's Columbian Exposition, ran from May 1 to the end of October 1893 (Bolotin and Laing 2002). Its organizers envisioned it as the biggest and best in the history of expositions placing special emphasis on educational features, such as the latest developments in science and industry. Spanning more than six hundred acres of

land, the Fair welcomed some twenty-eight million visitors to view dozens of architectural wonders and some sixty-five thousand exhibits from around the world. People came from near and far to ride the world's first Ferris wheel and witness the splendor of electric lights in person (Ibid).

Because these displays formed the foundational collections of the Field Museum, the practices shaping their formation remain embedded in the collections today (Gurian 1992). Significantly, the Fair and Museum planners specified that the objects collected from these pre-Columbian or non-European peoples would be enshrined in a natural history museum, codifying into practice the 19<sup>th</sup> century belief that non-European cultures represented the objects of science rather than art, history, or culture (Clifford 1992; Greenhalgh 1991). While collecting voyages aimed for comprehensive representation and ethnographic objectivity, goals which few modern anthropologists view as possible, the racist attitudes and evolutionary thinking of the time fundamentally shaped the object collectors chose, filling the Fair with the “strangest” and most “exotic” objects and ideas that collectors could locate (Rydell 1987; Greenhalgh 1991; Domingo 2015; Quaintance et al 2017). In this way the cultures displayed at the Fair were interpreted in terms of how they differed from Euro-American culture. Groups of people and objects on display were organized and framed to shock and delight visitors, so rather than promoting cross-cultural understanding, the Fair establish a visual hierarchy that placed Euro-American cultures squarely at the top (Rydell 1987; Greenhalgh 1991). While these ways of thinking are no longer academically accepted, they remain deeply and structurally embedded in modern society, and within natural history museums. Further, although the Field Museum has long worked to mitigate and address these views, they remain embedded in and structure the collections they house. Because these attitudes structured what objects were included in these collections, the

information we know about them, and the purpose for which they were gathered together, they continue to shape the kinds of interpretations and activities that the objects make possible in a modern museum setting, as well as the Field Museum's relationship with its audiences. In this way they contribute to the underlying context shaping action and behavior within the social space, or what Smith (1987) calls the "ruling relations" of the institution.

The financial foundation of the Field Museum embedded similar hierarchical relationships into the institution's "ruling apparatus" (Ibid) as wealthy patrons became lionized in the names of stately halls (Duncan 1995). Early museum governance, led by Edward E. Ayer—a member of the museum association finance committee who later became the first President of the Museum—included a Board of Directors and a Citizen's Committee of nine wealthy patrons who began seeking financial support to construct a building and plan research endeavors. Ayer recruited the first major donor, Marshall Field, the entrepreneur and merchant who founded Marshall Field's department stores, by appealing to his desire for immortality, asking if Field imagined that any young people remembered the name of A.T. Stewart, an entrepreneur who made his fortune in a lucrative dry goods business. When Field responded with doubt, Ayer continued:

Marshall Field, he was a greater merchant than you...*and he is forgotten in twenty-five years*. Now, Marshall Field, you can sell dry goods until Hell freezes over; you can sell it on the ice until that melts; and in twenty-five years you will be just the figure that A.T. Stewart is—absolutely forgotten. You have an opportunity here that has been vouchsafed to very few people on earth. From the point of view of natural history you have the privilege of being the educational host to the untold millions of people who will follow us in the Mississippi Valley. There is practically no museum of any kind within five hundred miles; and these children who are growing up in this region by hundreds of thousands haven't the remotest opportunity of learning about the ordinary things they see and talk about and hear about every day of their lives, and it does seem a crime not to provide them with the information they need (Collier 1969: 6)

After a tour of the Columbian Exposition collections, Field agreed, pledging \$1 million to open a Museum that would allow his benevolent act to improve the common population of Chicago (Dorsey 1900; Collier 1969). Investing his money—and later his name—in the Museum project offered Field the chance to build a lasting legacy, an opportunity reserved for the few and the extremely wealthy (Duncan 1995). Other members of the Chicago monied elite, including George Pullman, Harlow Higinbotham, and Mrs. George Sturges quickly followed with large contributions (Collier 1969). These early donations allowed the Museum to build collections, establish departments, and build their Chicago presence as a haven built by the wealthy to improve the poorer and non-White public with education they would otherwise miss. In this way, they sought to perfect and improve those viewed as flawed by poverty.

Similar motivations structured the Museum’s architecture, the marble hall through which visitors accessed high-minded academic improvement. When the Museum first opened its doors, it was enshrined in a holdover from the Columbian Exposition—a grandiose, pillared edifice that now houses the Museum of Science and Industry (Dorsey 1900; Collier 1969). When Marshall Field passed away, he left an additional \$8 million to the Museum to build its endowment and construct a fine new building on Chicago’s lakefront, where it currently sits (“Demonstration of Plans” 1908). Over the next decade of construction and moving, Museum planners sought to replicate the stately “monumental character” (“Demonstration of Plans” 1908: 80) for the Museum’s new home.

It has been held by art critics since the World’s Fair, that this building as perhaps as perfect a one as has been designed since the old Greek times, Augustus St. Gaudens, who was an exquisite critic of proportion and detail, not only of his own work in sculpture, but also architecture, unqualifiedly said that it was the most beautiful building since the time of the Parthenon. So there were strong reasons for using it as the starting point and bending our efforts to adapt it to museum needs (Ibid: 74)

This Greek inspiration is emblematic of Davalos's (2001) argument that museum architecture frequently references Greek and Roman styles to lend themselves authority, as these were seen as the height of European perfection, and regarded by many as the height of Western civilization. In this way, Davalos joins Duncan (1995) and Giebelhausen (2003; 2008), in arguing that museums use architecture as tools to improve their visitors, particularly those lacking an Anglo-American pedigree, elevating them towards lofty Western ideals. This idea is clearly articulated in Field Museum planning documents, reading "The idea is that everyone who comes to Chicago will see this building... many times and learn from it, if it is beautiful enough; then they will go away feeling that they know more about architecture and will perhaps take the lesson with them to all parts of the country" ("Demonstration of Plans" 1908: 74). In this way the architecture was purposefully designed to communicate the Museum's authority to visitors, and bring them closer to the ideals established by its wealthy, White founders (Duncan 1995).

Duncan (1995) highlights that museums are not "neutral sheltering places" for objects, but complex entities, imbued with an awesome power of representation and recognized academic expertise. In calling museum experiences "Civilizing Rituals" (1995) she notes that implicit power of imposing museum architecture, elements of performance and drama, and the perceived infallibility of the curatorial voice approximate rituals or religious experiences, making museums a kind of "civic ritual" (Ibid). Field Museum planning documents again show their intent to implicitly instruct visitors in proper behavior by architecturally suggesting the "proper" behavior.

As the visitor reaches the main vestibule he sees a very important stairway leading to the second floor so that it is impressed upon him then and there that the Museum occupies at least two floors and that the public is expected to visit them.

This idea is further emphasized by a great stairway at the far end of the central hall which he sees immediately on entering (“Demonstration of Plans” 1908: 77)

In addition to these behavioral instructions, museums offer important architectural clues to identify intended audiences. By showing certain types of people—generally those of non-European descent—as the subjects of exhibitions, and assuming that other—generally European descended—constituencies make up the viewers of exhibitions, museums implicitly define the museum’s audience. They further instruct their visitors about proper nationalism, ideal citizenship, and boundaries between insiders and outsiders (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991; Bennett 1995; Duncan 1995; Davalos 2001). Shaped by historic racism and what Davalos (2001) calls “anglo-nativism” that persist into modernity, museums aim to civilize and Americanize the public, especially poor, non-white, or foreign visitors to museums. Haraway (1984) further extends this ideal visitor type as male, young, and conforming to a certain type of outdoorsy, adventurous masculinity in her study of what she calls “Teddy Bear Patriarchy” at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The male pronoun used in the above quotation (and throughout the rest of the document) seem to reinforce that this represented the museum’s first target audience.

The Field Museum has changed considerably since these early days, fostering world-class exhibitions, research, and programming that seeks to balance or negate many of these processes and ideas. This work is commendable, and intensely necessary, as the structural inequalities built into the marble halls of the Field Museum can only ever be partially neutralized, and only through direct and purposeful action (Clifford 1997). Museums are designed to survive through time, often witnessing, documenting, and highlighting social change. The collections, money, and architecture that helped to establish the Museum remain a part of its story, and continue to structure its relationship with audiences.

## *The United States and the Philippines*

The Philippine Co-Curation partnership works to reimagine the relationship between the Museum, constituent communities, and collections. In many ways, the Philippine collection, one of the largest in the world, represents a microcosm and metaphor for the ways the racial attitudes of the past persist to shape modern activities using historical collections. Like the larger Museum, the collection was inspired by the “exotic” and “strange” peoples displayed at a World’s Fair to a rapturous crowd. Designed to highlight American achievement in manifest destiny, the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition held in St. Louis in 1904, largely referred to as the World’s Fair, sparked national and academic interest in faraway lands. The Philippine Village, a display featuring indigenous peoples brought to the fairgrounds to perform for crowds, was a particularly popular attraction



*Figure 2.1: The Field Museum as seen in 2013 (Photo by the author)*

(Fermin 2004; Parezo 2004; Quizon 2004). In the nine years since the Columbian Exposition, while the Field Museum was recruiting donors and amassing artifacts, the United States had entered and won the Spanish American War. The spoils of victory included a number of Spain’s territories, including the Philippines, and Americans were eager to learn all they could about their new colony (Carlson 2013; Domingo 2015).

Once a collection of hundreds of autonomous ethnic groups across thousands of islands, what we now recognize as the Philippines was organized into its current shape by Spanish and

American colonizers (Casal 1981; Goh 2008; Carlson 2013; Domingo 2015). These islands, and the distinctive and diverse peoples who inhabit them, are now loosely organized into three geographic regions: the northernmost island of Luzon, the central islands of the Visayas, and the southern regions including Mindanao and the Sultanate of Sulu, and home to a diverse group of Muslim ethnic groups that Spanish colonizers reductively titled the Moro. When Ferdinand Magellan attempted to circumnavigate the world, he made port at Samal Island in the Visayas in 1521 (Casal 1981; Agoncillo 1990). Although Magellan would die on the island, after getting involved in some local political rivalries, news of his voyage sparked interest in subsequent expeditions to, and an increasing Spanish presence in, the archipelago—especially in the Visayas and Manila in Luzon (Agoncillo 1990). The most successful of these expeditions, Miguel López de Legazpi's voyage in 1564, located a lucrative sea trade route with Mexico and motivated Spain to formally declare the Philippines—named for King Phillip II, a monarch Filipinx people had never met—a colony in 1565 (Agoncillo 1990). Spanish occupation and rule continued for over three hundred years, unifying the previously independent groups of the archipelago into an organized colony, and introducing public education, Christianity, and national law in the form of military police. Spanish missionaries and settlers largely occupied coastal lands and attempted to force the conversion of indigenous Filipinx peoples to Catholicism, pushing lowland indigenous groups into the inland mountains (Casal, 1981; Carlson 2013).

Overwhelmingly, and often violently, Filipinx indigenous groups resisted Spanish authority and influence. To some extent, they were successful in maintaining a vulnerable, often displaced, autonomy but did not organize a formal revolution against Spain until 1898, when the Spanish-American War had weakened Spain's influence. This revolution resulted in a brief period of Philippine independence in 1898 (Casal 1981; Carlson 2013). At the end of the war,

however, Spain and the United States signed the Treaty of Paris, which gave the United States governmental control of the Philippines (Casal 1981; Agoncillo 1990). American control of the Philippines lasted forty-eight years, despite a bloody revolution that became the Philippine-American War (also called the Philippine Insurrection). The war formally lasted from 1899 to 1902, although violence began before, and continued long after these years, with both sides continuing to suffer periodic losses as late as 1913 in the southern Moro regions. While these variable dates, famine, and disease make precise casualty figures difficult to calculate, the war was extraordinarily brutal. Most agree that at least 4,000 American soldiers lost their lives in the conflict, while 20,000 Filipino soldiers and an additional 250,000 Filipino civilians also perished (Fermin 2004; Domingo 2015). The United States retained governmental rule of the Philippines, imposing foreign religious, educational, and cultural practices, for nearly half a century before the Philippines were returned to independence in 1946 (Agoncillo 1990).

### *Colonial Views*

American goals of the Spanish-American War most likely did not include annexation of the Philippines, but the archipelago's strategic location made it attractive as the first concrete imperialistic opportunity to expand the American empire (Goh 2008; McHale 1962). Further, maintaining control seemed preferable to returning it to Spain, a recent enemy, or passing it to economic rivals like Germany or France, while racial attitudes of the time made independence for the Philippines seem out of the question (Goh 2008; McHale 1962; Carlson 2013; Domingo 2015). In this way, the Philippines represented what Daniel Goh (2008: 261) called the "accidental conquest in America's struggle for global democracy", suspended in ideas about manifest destiny and the search for the American frontier. Nakedly imperialistic ambitions, however, conflicted with professed American ideals of equality and freedom and did not inspire

positive public opinion (McHale 1962; Van Ells 1995; Paulet 2007). For this reason, American leaders sought to demonstrate that their ambitions were motivated by mercy rather than imperialistic greed. This “mercy” was in many ways shaped by the same bigoted racial attitudes and deep-seated beliefs in white supremacy that shaped American interactions with other non-white peoples, particularly Native Americans (Paulet 2007)

Representations and discussions of the new territory, therefore, cast Filipinxs as childish, primitive, and in desperate need of salvation and improvement in the form of American religion, education, and democracy (McHale 1962; Van Ells 1995; Paulet 2007). Mark Van Ells (1995) shows how Rudyard Kipling’s early 1900s poem, “The White Man’s Burden,” written expressly about the Philippines, articulated these beliefs. The poem reads:

Take up the White Man's burden--  
Send forth the best ye breed--  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild--  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child... (Kipling 1899, cited in Van Ells 1995: 607)

The poem demonstrates that many white Americans believed it was their God-given duty to improve non-white, non-Christianized peoples through baptism, democracy, and Euro-American teachings.

Dierdre McKay (2006) argues that such racism placed Filipinxs in a “tribal slot” for white Americans, equating them with Native Americans due to their indigenous identity. As such, similar methods were employed for Americanizing them, or aiming to “improve” them to a standard capable of self-government. Missionaries and teachers flocked to the Philippines, mirroring the ways education was forced on Native Americans in order to assimilate them into white American society. Anne Paulet (2007: 173) articulated these practices as attempts to “kill

the Indian in him but save the man”, a quote first attributed to Colonel Richard Henry Pratt who helped to found the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1879 as a means of forcibly educating Native Americans in Euro-American practices. This racism would continue to manifest itself in paternalistic attitudes, forced assimilation into an invading culture, suppression of cultural practices, and often extreme violence.

At the same time, horror and revulsion at the perceived primitiveness of the Filipinx natives created in Americans a fascination and curiosity for their exotic “otherness” (Goh, 2008; Parezo, 2004; Quizon, 2004). Most Americans of this time would never travel outside their own country, let alone half way around the world to the Philippines, and distant and different cultures captivated their imaginations. Concepts like headhunting, G-strings, and ceremonial consumption of dog meat shocked, horrified, and fascinated them leading to an ambivalent moral outrage mixed with curiosity, objectification, and wonder (Parezo 2004).

#### *The St. Louis World’s Fair*

This fascination found manifestation in the St. Louis World’s Fair, which opened to the public on June 18, 1904 for a six month run (Parezo 2004; Quizon 2004). The fair offered an opportunity to educate the American public about their new territory, and persuade public opinion that American presence in the Philippines was lucrative, worthwhile, and beneficial to its inhabitants (Quizon 2004, Parezo 2004). Jose Fermin (2004), Cherubim Quizon (2004), and Nancy J. Parezo (2004) explored how a combination of fascination and justification led to the display of not only objects, but thousands of living indigenous persons as well—including at least 1200 native Filipinxs. Conditions for the performers were brutal, unsanitary, unsafe, and—especially during St. Louis’s colder months—frigidly cold. Fermin (2004: 166) noted that “A total of 276 people from the Philippine Exposition were hospitalized, including 256 and 20

Americans...122 of them were infected with beriberi, chicken pox, and mumps, attributed partly to the unsanitary conditions, faulty construction, and lack of care and proper supervision”. He recounts the deaths of at least thirty-three members of the Philippine Village, including a six month old infant. He further argues that Fair planners were acutely aware that conditions might prove fatal, as planning documents include designs for graveyards “large enough to hold forty graves” and detail a particularly horrific proposal to divide the “soft parts”, skeletons, and brains of the corpses between several major museums (Fermin 2004: 163). These negotiations appear to have taken precedence over establishing more livable conditions.

Villagers were expected to perform dances and cultural re-enactments in as “savage” a manner as possible to amuse and intrigue crowds of onlookers, and seemingly paradoxically, also spent part of each day in American style classrooms, available for public viewing to demonstrate the supposed positive impact American education could have on their civility (Fermin 2004; Quizon 2004; Parezo 2004). Filipinx performers were organized into a unilateral Eurocentric evolutionary hierarchy ranging from Negritos (“little dark ones”), those perceived as the most wild and least European, to the Visayans, a lighter skinned and largely Christianized people from the areas with the heaviest Spanish presence (Parezo 2004; Fermin 2004; Domingo 2015). In this way, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1992) discusses, physiognomy was seen as a stand in for moral character, allowing visitors to form assumptions about the people on display based on their arrangement in the exhibition. Such displays attempted to show cultures like those of indigenous Filipinx “in situ” and as a whole, which is never a neutral or complete process (Ibid). In working to recreate a “Philippine Village” as a facsimile of travel, theatrical spectacle came to overwhelm any sense of scientific seriousness (Karp 1992). The spectacle of the World’s Fair proved a major success, raking in about \$3000-\$5000 nearly every day of its run—

an astonishing sum, as the general admission cost for a day at the fair was only \$0.25 (Parezo 2004), and inspiring a renewed and strengthened interest in anthropological inquiry and learning about the world. The kinds of understandings about the world that it produced, however, were decidedly slanted toward Euro-American and white supremacy.

### *Collecting Voyages*

As the young Field Museum moved into the beginning of the twentieth century, it joined a museum trend toward amassing large, systematic, and representative collections of objects from around the world. These collections went on to inspire significant scientific knowledge, new disciplines of study, and innovative methods of disseminating that knowledge that still shape museum activities today. Fearing that the diversity of cultures and materials around the world would soon disappear as Euro-American influence spread—and fearing that other institutions would beat them to the punch—the Field Museum focused much of its institutional efforts and activities toward mounting collections expeditions across the far reaches of the world (Haskin, Nash, and Coleman 2003). Dr. John Terrell, the Regenstein Curator of Pacific Anthropology at the Field Museum refers to this period as the “Pier 1 Moment”<sup>3</sup> because “We were definitely looking for stuff, a lot of stuff, and stuff that wasn’t too expensive”. George Dorsey, then Chief Curator of the Anthropology Department and referred to as the “greatest museum builder of the period” (Haskins, Nash, and Coleman 2003) was particularly intrigued by the success and drama of the St. Louis World’s Fair’s Philippine Village.

While the Smithsonian Institution quickly purchased most of the Filipinx pieces from St. Louis, the Fair inspired a wealthy Illinois grain merchant named R.F. Cummings to build a relationship with Mr. Dorsey (Haskin, Nash, and Coleman 2003). Eventually, he pledged

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<sup>3</sup> Pier One is a chain retailer providing an assortment of furniture, home-decor items & tableware for discount prices.

\$20,000 to the Field Museum to fund collections voyages to the Philippines for the purposes of building a grand exhibition that rivaled the educational opportunities of the Fair (Quaintance et al 2017; Domingo 2015). Using these funds, and informed by these goals, four anthropologists—S.C. Simms, William Jones, Laura Benedict, and Faye Cooper-Cole who worked alongside his wife, Mabel—set out for the Philippines. Between 1907 and 1910, they gathered thousands of objects—including textiles, weapons, ritual equipment, baskets, carvings, musical instruments, pipes, carriers, ceramics, personal adornment items, and several other types of objects to form the foundation of the Museum’s impressive collection. They largely focused their efforts in Luzon in the north and Mindanao in the south while the more heavily Spanish-influenced Visayas, the central region of the Philippines, remained largely absent from their collecting endeavors. The collectors’ journeys were extremely grueling and difficult, with Jones dying violently in Luzon (see Jones 1908; Davis 2001) and Benedict being hospitalized following her fieldwork (see Bernstein 1998).

These scholars represented the highest ideals, training, and practices of anthropology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Several completed their graduate work under the tutelage of Franz Boas, and so were heavily influenced by his methods and insights (Haskin, Nash, and Coleman 2003). He taught them to define and understand local knowledge based on local categories of organization, understand the indigenous experience, and practice highly systematic and thorough research aiming to document the ways of life they studied (Jacknis 2002). Boas further served as the first Curator of Anthropology at the Field Museum (Haskin, Nash, and Coleman 2003). Terrell notes that the collectors sought to “in a sort of Boasian way...be able to document the lifeways, the cultures, the people by getting not just sort of pretty stuff but in fact everything”. The ways that collectors understood what constituted “everything”, the boundaries around the

collections, and the decisions that shaped them remained, however, deeply shaped by the social, racial, and anthropological contexts that inspired their journeys.

As noted by Nicholas Thomas (2010), “anthropological collections are always also historical collections...the products of, the evidence for, and maybe even memorials to entangled histories” (8-9). In this way, collections reveal at least as much about the anthropological (and museum) moment in which they were gathered, and the persons who collected them as they do about the people who made the objects (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1992). The attitudes that led to American annexation of the Philippines, and inspired and organized the World’s Fair also fundamentally shaped the social upbringing, education, and anthropological training the collectors received. Like all anthropologists, they carried this background with them into the field, and it influenced the research and collection they produced. Terrell explains. “On the one hand we were in a sense very much in salvage anthropology, salvage ethnography, salvage work, trying to preserve. But there was also, very clearly the idea of cultural evolution and that we were on the top”. Here, Terrell references the salvage paradigm discussed by James Clifford (1987) which reflects “a desire to rescue ‘authenticity’ out of destructive historical change” (121). In this way, the salvage paradigm assumes that “peoples seen to be moving out of tradition and into the modern world remain tied to inherited structures that either resist or yield to the new but cannot produce it” (Ibid: 122). As a methodology of collection, salvage anthropology is excessively rigid and idealizes an assumed moment of ethnographic purity. The very regions the Field Museum anthropologists chose to visit—essentially ignoring the more heavily Europeanized Visayas—belies a desire to locate “true” or “authentic” indigeneity, and capture the most “different” examples of objects they could find.

As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1992) famously described, museum objects and the ethnographic research and documentation supporting them, are mere “fragments” of significantly larger narratives. Collectors select, define, segment these fragments in deciding which elements of a culture should be marked as meaningful and elevated for public display. In this way, collecting is a descriptive process, actively constructing the paradigms through which audiences understand cultures. The ways in which the collectors’ culture and academic discipline assigned value to objects and ideas, combined with their individual opinions of beauty, quality, rarity, strangeness, and difference to play a major role in forming the collecting that would represent the Philippines to an American public.

Because these contextual factors shape what the collection does and does not include, and what documentation does and does not remain to interpret it, the racial climate and evolutionary attitudes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century remain structurally embedded in the Field Museum’s Philippines collection, and significant work is necessary to reinterpret it. The objects that collectors chose, the ones they left behind, and the information recorded about them were fundamentally limited by the socio-historical circumstances, biases, assumptions, and oversimplifications shaping them. As such, much of the key information recorded about the collection, including field notes, letters and ephemera, accessioning and cataloging documentation, and much of the research describing this time period, is—like all anthropological research and exhibition—one-sided and incomplete, and reveals at least as much about the collectors as the people they collected from. While the objects are beautiful and well-preserved, and collectors strove to be systematic and thorough, the information they left behind is now divorced from the collection. Some objects were used by diverse ethnic groups for different purposes, referred to by many names, or associated with important cultural or spiritual practices

that were never recorded. Some documentation contains information inferred by the collector and documented as fact without verification. Some is simply too brief or vague to be of much use.

The Field Museum staff, especially in the Anthropology department, is acutely aware of this background and context, as well as its current implications for their collections activities. Much of the information relayed above is publicly available on the Field Museum website, freely offered by staff and interns, and exhaustively retold at most of the events I attended. At least two co-curators have written significant academic works on these topics (Quaintaince et al 2017; Domingo 2015) with substantial support from staff. In this way, the Field Museum recognizes the “sins of its past” and is actively working, especially through collaborative partnerships like Philippine Co-Curation, to amend, rework, and overcome them. Like the Museum’s architecture however, the attitudes and ideas that formed the collection form a lasting legacy that can never be fully erased and continue to shape its use and interpretation.

### *Exhibiting the Philippines*

After the collecting voyages, Field Museum Anthropology staff set about mounting a major exhibition representing the many peoples of the Philippines. Featuring a wide selection of objects collected from the R.F. Cummings Expeditions, the Field Museum opened its Philippine Islands exhibit in 1928. Housed on the ground floor in the Museum’s Exhibition Hall H, the gallery was “arranged as to emphasize the outstanding characteristics of the principal pagan groups throughout the archipelago” (“General Guide” cited in Domingo 2015: 20). Plagued by the same biases, exoticism, and representational concerns as its collecting process, the exhibit relied heavily on exaggerated dioramas and cultural stereotypes. Jerico Domingo (2015), a Filipinx co-curation volunteer who wrote her undergraduate thesis on the Philippine collection,

called the exhibition “inherently racist” (20) and argued that it “manifested from the voyeuristic Western gaze” (21) in displaying Filipinx people based on how they differed from Euro-American ways. Domingo’s insights point toward what Karp (1992: 375) has called the “exoticizing exhibitionary trope” that uses difference as an organizing principle to produce an image of the “other.”

Between 1958 and 1971, the space dedicated to the Philippines Exhibition was slowly combined with displays representing other nearby geographic regions including Melanesia, the Malay Peninsula, and Indonesia (“Exhibits”) until it occupied only a small corner of the Island Cultures of Southeast Asia exhibition (Domingo 2015). In 1985, Dr. Terrell (who joined the Field Museum staff in 1971) decided to take the collection off of exhibition, and staff returned the objects to storage. In July 1998, about one hundred objects, along with several loaned from the local Filipinx community, were used in two temporary special exhibits (*The Philippines* and *Vanishing Treasures of the Philippine Rain Forest*) which discussed significant events of Philippine history and the creative skill of Filipinxs (Domingo 2017). Between 1998 and 2005, when the Philippine Co-Curation project began, only one object from the 10,000 artifact Philippine collection was on display—a Golden Tara, or Buddhist statue exhibited in the Regenstein Hall of Gems, contextualized for its beauty and value rather than its local cultural meaning. The rest waited in collections storage, lovingly cared for by decades of Anthropology staff and occasionally used by researchers but largely forgotten by Filipinxs, Chicago, and the world.

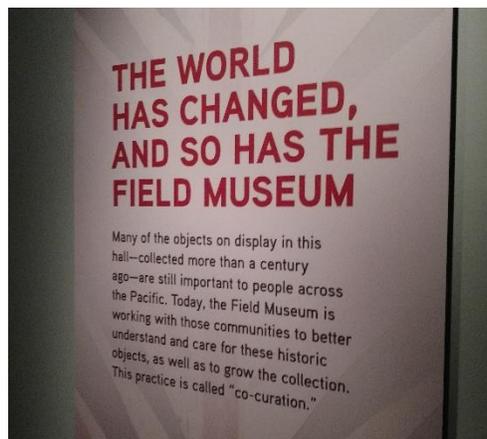
### *Conclusions*

These reductive and exoticizing trends of collecting and exhibition are more than common among museums with as long and storied a history as the Field Museum. Ivan Karp

(1992: 378) argues that these problems are “inherent in exhibiting other cultures. The two perils of exoticizing and assimilating can be found in the exhibitions of virtually every museum that devotes any part of itself to exhibiting culture”. It is for this reason that I find it useful to highlight them here. The history that underlies many, if not most, ethnographic museum collections does not simply fade with time. In a later work undertaken with Gustavo Buntinx, Karp (2006) describes these issues by saying, “The results of institutional transfer associated with colonial rule and the like are incorporated in local orders and interpreted in new ways, which are themselves associated with global processes (Buntinx and Karp 2006: 208). This process puts new museum activities in constant conversation “if not debate” with the past (Kratz and Karp 2006: 6). It is this history that the Field Museum must contend with to broaden its audiences, and alter its relationship with local source communities. It is this context that projects like Philippine Co-Curation must navigate.

### **CHAPTER 3: THE FIELD MUSEUM AND COLLABORATION**

In 2016, the Field Museum debuted a renovated and redesigned Regenstein Hall of the Pacific on its second floor. When I walked through the gallery's new entry, a panel caught my eye. "The World has changed. And so has the Field Museum", it read (Figure 3.1). It highlights that while the collections on display were accessioned more than a century ago, they retain a lot of meaning and value for people. It also explains that the Field Museum is working with communities to better understand and care for the objects, as well as to grow the collection. The objects in the case the panel introduces were selected and interpreted by



*Figure 3.1: This sign announces how the collaborative process has begun to shape display techniques at the Museum (Photo by the author)*



*Figure 3.2: This co-curated case features objects chosen by partners, and interpreted through their voices (photo by the author)*

The panel introduces a case of Philippine objects chosen and interpreted by and interpreted by members of the Philippine Co-Curation partnership. The new gallery represents a significant shift in museum theory and practice that has been slowly manifesting in museums around the nation and the world over several decades. This shift prompted museums to question the kinds of collecting, representation, and collections care practices discussed in the previous chapter. By recognizing that such practices were reductive—and often cruel—museums began the long and difficult process of changing how they conduct their activities. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, offering

multiple and diverse viewpoints, engaging local communities, and finding ways to resonate with new audiences were largely recognized as goals that museums should strive toward. At the Field Museum, this shift manifested itself in a number of major changes in staffing, departmental structure, collecting practices, and exhibition design. It further engaged Field Museum curators in debates and discussions that would shape innovation in community engagement across several departments. This innovation helped to lay the intellectual framework that would inspire the Philippine Co-Curation partnership.

### *Documenting a Shift*

As the Museum moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it encountered—and in many cases contributed to—the ongoing shift in priorities and relationships across the scholarship and practice of museums known as the New Museology. A number of important writers of this tradition shaped my discussion of its major ideas, including Peter Vergo (1989), Eileen Hooper Greenhill (1992), Ivan Karp (1992, and with Steven Lavine 1993), Stephen Weil (1999) and John Falk and Beverly Sheppard (2006). I took particular guidance from James Clifford’s (1992, 1997) ideas of museums as “contact zones” as well as Constance Perin’s (1992) communicative circle of sharing and disseminating information. To discuss how these changes were implemented in and changed the Field Museum, I utilized many of the ideas articulated by Field Museum curators in the *Fieldiana Anthropology: Curators, Collections, and Contexts: Anthropology at the Field Museum 1893-2002* (Nash and Feinman 2003), including Stephen Nash and Gary Feinman’s notes on the history of the museum and thoughts about the future as well as Dorren Martin-Ross and William K. Barbett’s discussion of the shift toward preserving and prioritizing information as a museum resource. John Terrell’s (1991) thoughts on the role of the curator, shifting

departments at the Field Museum, and the tensions such changes produce also proved instrumental.

Terrell (with Wisse and Phillipp 2008)'s experiences with building a collaborative relationship with the Maori of Tokumaru Bay further proved highly instructive in discussing his motivations for beginning the Philippine Co-Curation Partnership and his conceptualization of what this kind of partnership should look like. Ideas about the implementation, importance, and goals of such collaborative programming were additionally shaped by Viv Golding's (2013) discussion of a new kind of relationship between museums and their audiences that she calls "Museum Different," as well as their fundamental difference from projects that fall lower on Sherry Arnstein's (1969) "Ladder of Citizen Participation." Gustavo Buntinx and Ivan Karp (2006) further articulate many of the various frictions between museum functions and expectations that projects like Philippine Co-Curation must navigate while James Clifford's (1992) discussion of multiple iterations of indigenous representation at museums in the Northwest Coast further frame how such projects were founded.

As the Philippine Co-Curation project began to move from theory to practice, it was documented by several Field Museum staff members, volunteers, and interns. These writings, including Hannah Quaintance (with Stephanie Jamilla and Floréncia Almeda, also co-curators, 2017) detail many of the early activities of the partnership that I was unable to witness in person. I bring these activities into conversation with Nina Simon (2010)'s approach to participatory museums, as well as well Haidy Geismar (2012)'s and Ramesh Srinivasen (et al 2010)'s discussions of digitally mediated collaborative projects in museums.

## *A New Museology*

As the United States moved through the Great Depression, two World Wars, and the Civil Rights Movement, emphasis slowly shifted away from the collecting impetus of the “Pier 1 Moment” and toward attracting new audiences and maintaining financial health. Major shifts in museum theory and practices began midcentury and continued to develop, and impact museums in the United States in later decades (on these developments, see Peter Davis’ 1996 discussion of the development of eco-museums and other forms of community driven museology). By the 1980s and 1990s, widespread dissatisfaction with Eurocentric, alienating and elitist, top-down and hierarchical views of culture and history, as well as a broad lacking of funds, inspired a reimagining of museum representation, methods, and purposes (Vergo 1989; Greenhill 1992; Karp 1992; Weil 1999). Karp (1992) further highlights the financial reality that as state and federal funding has dwindled, museums have desperately needed to seek new stakeholders, donors, and fundraisers in order to keep their doors open and their important collections safe. No longer chiefly concerned with amassing large and culturally representative collections, museum activities and staff have become more heavily focused on engaging new and expanding audiences through informal learning opportunities that offer personal and memorable experiences, and encourage repeat visits.

As changes in the political landscape in the US continue to expand the battle for equal opportunities into the cultural sphere, audiences expect more cultural sensitivity, diversity, and inclusion from museums (Karp 1992). Indigenous communities in the United States, Canada, and Australia have called for substantial changes to museum policy that, as Amanda Cobb wrote, “acknowledge their power as institutional colonizers (2005: 364). As a result, museums have begun to make important strides in changing their relationship with Native peoples and other

marginalized populations. The passage of the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1991, marked a major and visible shift in museum practice and theory in the United States regarding Native American cultural patrimony, combining with these critical perspectives in both the indigenous and professional museum community to form what Vergo (1989) titled the New Museology.

The New Museology recognizes an ongoing shift within the museum field toward critical analysis of previously accepted practices, democratization of voice and interpretation, and expanding engagement in local communities (Vergo 1989; Karp 1991, 1992, 1992a; Greenhill 1992; Karp and Lavine 1993; Clifford 1997; Weil 1999). In the postcolonial era, this critical perspective often questions the once-assumed authority of museums to represent others, the ethics and practice of representing non-Western culture, and issues of cultural appropriation (Karp 1991, 1992, 1992a; Clifford 1994, 1997; Varutti 2013). This literature recognizes that knowledge production and even “rational” interpretation are socially constructed and contingent (Greenhill 1992). It strives to reimagine the scope and reach of museums beyond the role of a storehouse of precious objects or scion of inaccessible knowledge toward their role as a forum and gathering place, closely engaged with the needs and desires of their communities (Perin 1992; Karp and Lavine 1993; Falk and Sheppard 2006). In this way, museums are seeking to shift from what Steven Weil (1999) calls “being about something, to being for somebody”.

These critiques inspired and motivated projects around the nation and the world that sought to put such principles into action. Significant examples include the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle, Washington and the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The Wing Luke aims to empower community members to tell meaningful stories by engaging them in every step of exhibition development (Simon 2010). Their award winning, community-curated

exhibition *If Tired Hands Could Talk: Stories of Asian Pacific American Garment Workers* (May 2001-February 2002) featured first person narratives gathered from a collaboration with fifteen garment workers (Ibid). As their website indicates, the museum aims to tell “Real stories of real people. Hardly told in the school books. Rarely seen on TV. Almost never on the silver screen.” In addition to exhibitions, the museum works to co-produce programs like neighborhood tours and other events that encourage discovery and contribution. In this way they seek to attract new audiences, offer a fresh approach to education, and address social and economic issues, thereby positively impacting their community.

The NMAI, an important addition to the Smithsonian Institution, cares for one of the world’s largest and broadest collection of Native American artifacts from throughout the Western hemisphere. Across three facilities in New York, Maryland, and Washington D.C., the museum offers exhibitions, performance spaces, and programming in addition to conservation, repatriation, and research activities. It also engages in significant off-site outreach including websites, traveling exhibitions, and programming. Through extensive partnership with Native communities across the nation, the museum has worked to bring Native voices and perspectives into everything the museum produces. As indicated by the museum’s website, NMAI is dedicated “to acting as a resource for the hemisphere's Native communities and to serving the greater public as an honest and thoughtful conduit to Native cultures—present and past—in all their richness, depth, and diversity.” Jennifer Shannon’s (2014) insightful ethnography of the museum’s collaboration with Native voices to curate the major exhibition *Our Lives* demonstrated the museum’s commitment to exploring the collaborative process and valuing Native expertise in meaningful ways. In this way, the museum is a major example of the museological paradigm shift toward collaboration and a sharing of curatorial authority.

These examples, chosen from hundreds, illustrate the major shift in focus from objects to visitors, as well as in increasing reliance on alternative forms of expertise in museum practices (Shannon 2014: 260). Simon (2010) organizes the scholarship surrounding such endeavors into three main categories: one in which the audience is the main concern (see Gurian 2006; Weil 1999), a second in which visitors construct their own meaning through personal interaction with the museum (see Hein 1998, Falk and Dierking 1992), and a third in which users' voices inform and invigorate museum knowledge and representation (see McLean and Pollack 2007). For the Field Museum this paradigm shift meant incorporating a number of key changes in the way the Museum operated. These changes included reimagining the roles and structures of staff, changing their approach to engaging audiences, prioritizing the preservation of information as well as objects, and conducting a number of broad experiments in participating with and fulfilling the needs of local communities.

#### *The New Museology and the Field Museum*

Since the Museum's opening in the 1890s, highly trained and specialized curators from the four academic departments—Anthropology, Botany, Zoology, and Geology—were largely responsible for planning, researching, and executing exhibits (Terrell 1991). The work they produced became some of the most famous and well-received displays of their day. In 1966, however, seeking to invigorate old galleries and entice new and growing audiences, the Museum established a Department of Exhibitions. Some Field Museum curators, notably Terrell (1991) who would later pioneer the Philippine Co-Curation partnership, believed the creation of the new department displaced the work of curators, building a divide between the scientific research that produced content for exhibitions and the art of exhibition design that aimed to make them engaging. In this way, the new Exhibitions Department marked the beginning of a

decentralization of authority of the curatorial voice that is emblematic of the New Museology, and also produced, or at least exacerbated, a continuing tension between Science and Art in the Museum<sup>4</sup>.

In 1969, the Museum also established an Education Department and by the 1980s, educators, exhibition designers, and curators had forged a means of collaborating that that they came to call the “Team Approach.” Terrell (1991: 151) describes it as “a commonsense way of putting a museum educator, a science curator, and an exhibits designer in the same room at the same time and actually getting results. Maybe not always on schedule. But good results nonetheless”. In the early 1980s, Carol Blackmon, then the chairperson of the Department of Education, received a large grant from the Kellogg Foundation to teach this approach to other institutions (Blackmon et al 1988, cited in Terrell 1991). It produced such popular and well-received exhibitions as the Northwest Coast hall and “Te Maori: Maori Art from New Zealand Collections”, a collaboratively produced exhibit that would deeply shape the Philippine Co-Curation partnership. By 1985, however, worrying visitor numbers and narrow audience demographics led the Museum to seek fresh eyes and fresh talent, again placing exhibit developers at the helm of exhibition development. This shift in control aimed to right the wrongs of past display techniques (the blame for which Terrell (1991) finds misplaced on the shoulders of curators alone) and offer new and exciting experiences for a broader range of museum goers. By undermining the collaborative process, however, it fractured—or continued to fracture—

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<sup>4</sup> As Nash and Feinman (2003: 7) note, changes in the leadership structure of the Anthropology department, as well as a shift toward the professionalization of non-curatorial collections positions such as collections managers, registrars, conservators, and exhibition designers and developers offer further insight into the changing mission of the museum from a “repositor[y] of collections and curiosities” to “full-fledged research and public learning institutions”.

tenuous lines of interdepartmental communication and collaboration that have yet to be repaired through additional, almost continuous, departmental reorganizations.

The New Museology further highlights the primary role of museums as educational institutions aiming to facilitate social and informal learning. This role de-emphasizes the use and power of objects and encourages the creation of educative programming and interaction with others and with exhibits (Vergo 1989, Srinivasen et al 2010: 667). It repositions visitors as more than passive recipients of authoritative curatorial representations of history and culture. Instead they are viewed as “participant consumers” (Isaac 2008: 302), whose positive and individualized experiences are of paramount importance (Vergo 1989; Falk and Sheppard 2006). This focus on the audience informs the new museology’s approach to community engagement and further advocates for dialogue with participants through interactive and engrossing exhibits, programs, and projects (Vergo 1989, Clifford 1997). When John McCarter became President of the Museum in 1996, he helped to set the Museum’s sights on increasing visitor numbers, improving visitor experience, and increasing attendance revenue through traveling blockbuster exhibits, such as *Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs* (2006), *Jackie Kennedy: The White House Years* (2004-2005), *Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns & Mermaids* (2008), and *The Nature of Diamonds* (2009-2010) that were massively popular, but also exceedingly expensive to host.

In 1997, McCarter also oversaw the purchase of what is now arguably the Museum’s most popular attraction, most Instagrammed spot, and strongest emotional memory for many visitors—Sue, the largest, most complete, and best preserved Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton ever discovered (Sue at the Field Museum, n.d.). Through a series of systematic corporate sponsorships, donations, and months of planning the Field Museum purchased Sue from a

Sotheby's auction on Saturday, October 4, 1997 for \$8.36 million, the largest amount of money ever paid for a fossil (Sue at the Field Museum, n.d.). When she was unveiled to the public in May 2000, the Museum made headlines around the world, and since then more than 16 million people have come to see her. In February 2017, she was taken off exhibit to be cleaned, rearticulated, and moved to a newly contextualized space on the second floor to make way for an even bigger Titanosaur (so large that its skull will peer over the second floor balcony), but remains a Chicago cultural icon and a hallmark of the museum.

Like nearly all museums and heritage institutions, financial issues continue to spur debates about how education and entertainment can be combined to both serve audiences and raise funds (Kratz and Karp 2006: 14). These projects did change the public's relationship with the Field Museum, as well as the Museum's exhibition style and process, its mode of communication with audiences, and some of the persistent perceptions that the Museum is stodgy, dusty, and unwelcoming. Their gigantic cost<sup>5</sup>, however, coupled with large infrastructure projects including a refurbished East Entrance and a state of the art collections facility that opened in 2005, left the Museum deeply in debt. When McCarter left the Museum, making way for Richard LaRiviere in 2012, the Board of Governors stipulated that the financial situation had become too perilous, prompting massive layoffs, additional restructuring of departments, and a decided tightening of the belt. So, even as their goals continued to modernize, slanting toward increasingly collaborative and community based initiatives, money was tight and the administration had to be both strict and creative to keep the Museum operational.

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<sup>5</sup> The Field Museum completed \$254 million in capital projects during this time but raised only \$150 million to cover these costs (Gillers 2013). As Chicago Tribune reporter Heather Gillers described "Like many other cultural institutions, the Field Museum took on a heavy debt load around the turn of the millennium, a time of swelling endowments and low borrowing costs. But the Field shouldered more financial risk than its peers and has endured greater cutbacks, offering a window into how ambitious building projects can stress even a well-established cultural institution" (ibid)

While museums once justified their existence, and focused most of their interpretive power on objects themselves, some scholars of the New Museology note that an object-centric approach creates temporal, spatial, and conceptual distances between objects and people, neglecting the social and cultural dimensions of interpretation (Kreps 2003; Thomas 2010). This moves emphasis from collecting objects to collecting, preserving, and providing access to the information associated with them (Martin-Ross, Dorren, and Barbett 2003). A Field Museum strategic initiative in 1999 identified information technology as a strategic focus for the future to enhance research, public education, and outreach (Ibid: 247). That information extends far beyond merely identification of objects, but includes all data associated with objects (i.e. provenience and provenance, images, field notes, accession data) as well as the research that objects support.

Museums are now, more than ever, centers for creating and storing knowledge (Nash and Feinman 2003: 251). By serving as a repository for both objects and information, museums like the Field Museum serve an expanded role as the primary location for the information associated with basic anthropological research, and allow communities to reconnect with cultural patrimony gathered from their ancestral homelands, often without their knowledge or consent (Martin-Ross, Dorren, and Barbett 2003: 248). Similarly, improved access to the information the Museum houses can produce new categorizations of ideas that can allow for research in new directions, and protect collections by allowing for more targeted use in research (Martin-Ross, Dorren, and Barbett 2003: 246-247). When this information is integrated with relevant scholarship, it can serve as a core resource for managing collections and understanding past and present societies (Nash and Feinman 2003).

James Clifford's (1997) seminal metaphor of museums as contact zones highlights the potential of museums as spaces of dialogue and multicultural encounters. Clifford's work problematized the previously one-way relationship between museums and indigenous peoples. He offered theoretical language to recognize the tensions inherent in museum interpretation, as well as a framework to understand how museums and constituent communities can negotiate power differentials toward mutually beneficial outcomes. His model privileges dialogue and exchange as well as multidirectional communication, learning, and change. In this way, he entered into dialogue with others (Karp 1991, 1992, 1992a; Greenhill 1992; Perin 1992, Karp and Lavine 1993; Weil 1999; Kreps 2003; Falk and Sheppard 2006; Thomas 2010; Golding 2013; Varutti 2013; Bouquet 2015) who advocate for decentralizing the museum's interpretive role and embracing its potential as a community forum. These scholars argue that museums are more effective when they are involved, connected to, and in dialogue with the communities they serve, building a stronger "communicative circle" among exhibition makers and viewers (Perin 1992).

While few would argue against these goals, the process of building such collaborative projects is fraught with difficulty. As Clifford argues, "When museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship—a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull" (Clifford 1997: 192-3). This push and pull makes collaborative museum programming effective battlegrounds in which opposing sides vie for control. Careful and deliberate scaffolding of expectations, practice, and measurements of success are necessary to balance the needs of multiple parties (Simon 2010). Expanding participatory options does not make projects faster, cheaper, or less work intensive for museums. Staff must expend significant labor in building strong relationships, listening

carefully, and using their expertise and knowledge to guide and facilitate participation. While navigating the competing needs and viewpoints of multiple stakeholder groups, structuring clear and well-defined activities, and training participants in museum practices, staff must also work to mitigate what Clifford (1992: 224) calls “the risks of liberal paternalism, the stubborn custodial power of the museum, an unwillingness to look critically at the history of specific acquisitions” while also producing meaningful and evocative content. As the museum world shifts to recognize the value and importance of collaboration, then, they must also navigate significant challenges to make these collaborations function.

### *Communities and the Center for Cultural Understanding and Change*

At the Field Museum, curators across several departments have worked for decades to establish several experimental partnerships that engage local communities in research, display, and discussion. In addition to several exciting crowdsourced digitization programs, a thriving volunteer and internship program, and several other collaborative efforts, in 1993 the Field Museum developed a forum to generate such partnerships known as the Center for Cultural Understanding and Change (CCUC). Its website articulates the Center’s goals in saying:

The Center for Cultural Understanding and Change (CCUC) at The Field Museum uses problem-solving anthropological research to identify and catalyze strengths and assets of communities in Chicago and beyond. In doing so, CCUC helps communities identify new solutions to critical challenges such as education, housing, health care, environmental conservation, and leadership development. Through research, programs, and access to collections, CCUC reveals the power of cultural difference to transform social life and promote social change.

Through participatory action research and programmatic activities, the CCUC aimed to deepen the relationships between the Field Museum and the diverse communities of the Chicago area, making the Museum more relevant. Dr. Alaka Wali, Director of the Center from 1995-2010, worked to build connections with several community based museums and heritage centers in

Chicago in support of a groundbreaking exhibition called *Living Together* which highlighted shared concerns across various cultural divides. Starting with six local organizations, the CCUC established regular programming to discuss diverse reactions to common challenges. When she met with me to discuss her collaborative projects, she describes the CCUC by saying:

The programs were designed to be intercultural, so it was never about ...the Poles do this and the so and so does that. The idea was looking across cultures [comparatively] so like, there would be a theme, ... So how do the Poles do it and how do the, you know, Mexicans do it and how do the 'so and so' do it, that way you build a connection...They got to determine the theme of the program, every year there was like a season, so what was...the common concern for that season of programs, and who would work with whom and ... how to structure [it], and our job was to facilitate those conversations and then to help them see the underlying... different responses and why and how they are connected.

As the program continued, relationships flourished, and additional connections became possible. Over ten years, it grew to include over twenty organizations, tackling important ideas, and bringing together the expertise and ideas of many diverse perspectives.

While the CCUC was established and in many ways supported by the Field Museum and its administration, however, it was not a part of its institutional structure but, as Wali says, "basically ad-hoc." The Center had the Museum's encouragement to pursue their activities but was responsible for organizing and funding those activities on their own. "We had a space you know" Wali says, "we had... like a little bit of support but it was all soft money." Around 2005, it became increasingly clear that the CCUC would be unable to financially support the Cultural Connections program indefinitely and began to seek alternatives to grant raising. They put together a feasibility study to test the idea of reimagining Cultural Connections as an independently run external group. In 2008, it became the Chicago Cultural Alliance, a standalone group with a similar mission to the CCUC and about thirty-five members.

The efforts of the CCUC complemented similar work by Debbie Moskowitz and her team, who then ran the Field Museum's Environment and Conservation Program (ECP). This program aimed to "bring the Museum's tradition of rigorous science to bear on practical challenges" through conservation action (Keller Science Action Center, n.d.). Its current website articulates its goals of "translating museum knowledge into lasting results for conservation and cultural understanding, both in the midst of a great urban center and in the wildest, most remote places on Earth (Keller Science Action Center, n.d.). In the early 2000s, Moskowitz received a large grant to pursue these efforts in the Amazon rainforest, and, recognizing the need for a social component to that research, began collaborating more closely with the CCUC. As the ECP shared a similar mission with the CCUC and had a large amount of funding to boot, the two began collaborating. As this partnership continued to solidify, the Museum went through a major restructuring that included the creation of a new division called Environment, Conservation, and Culture (ECCo) (now known as the Keller Science Action Center) as an institutionally supported home for collaborative science efforts. As Wali explained "So that's where a lot of the kind of collaborative work is happening, in that center, with the community that we started at CCUC...it's all about integrating the concerns of people with the concerns of nature whether it's in the Amazon or the Chicago area."

In 2012, facing massive debt and financial peril, the Museum's administration decided on another restructuring effort. In addition to laying off a significant number of curators and other staff, and encouraging early retirement for others, this restructuring shifted the Museum from academic departments (Anthropology, Botany, Geology, and Zoology) to action oriented ones (Research, Collections, Learning and Action). Importantly, this move elevated Action, which included the ecological and cultural outreach efforts of ECCo to a fully equal fourth branch of

the Museum's main activities. Following a major contribution from Mrs. Connie Keller, this branch is now known as the Keller Science Action Center and seeks to solve community identified problems using action oriented scientific research. Dr. Wali is now the Curator of North American Anthropology at the Field Museum and utilizes collaborative principles by working with Native American artists to refresh and reimagine how Native Americans are represented at the Museum through exhibitions and programming (See Ch 5).

### *John Terrell and the Marae Partnership*

Experimental forays into the community like these made early progress at building the Museum's capacity to make itself more relevant to, inclusive of, and useful for Chicago's local communities. For Terrell, however, they do not go far enough in reimagining the Museum's institutional relationship with those communities, engaging them with the collections themselves, or fundamentally changing the Museum space to be one of knowledge production rather than consumption. His views on collaboration are deeply influenced by his decades-long partnership with the Maori people of Tokumaru Bay in New Zealand. This partnership informs how the Museum cares for, uses, and teaches through the 19<sup>th</sup> century Maori meeting house, or *whare* that the Museum houses and stores.

This remarkable building, known as Ruatepupuke II, came to the Museum in the early 1900s when George A. Dorsey purchased it from a German curio dealer (Terrell, Wisse, and Philipp 2008: 90). It is now one of very few such meeting houses kept anywhere outside of New Zealand and the only one in the Western hemisphere (Field Museum n.d.). Built in 1881 to honor Ruatepupuke, a legendary hero credited with bringing the art of woodcarving to the Maori people, (the second such building, after the first was lost to war and time), the *whare* is a deeply spiritual and powerful *taonga* (heirloom, or cultural treasure) for the people who built it. The

striking wooden house, decorated with intricate wood carvings of ancestors with glittering abalone eyes, embodies the spirit of this hero, with its ridge pole representing his spine and the rafters (*heke*) his ribs. The wide boards along the front of the *whare* represent his outstretched arms, welcoming visitors to the *marae* (sacred space encompassing a *whare*), for these spaces were primarily used to welcome, honor, and engage with communities (Terrell, Wisse, and Philipp 2008: 92). When it fell into disrepair in the late 1800s, it was dismantled and sold to a Mr. Hindmarsh from JFG Umlauff of Hamburg, Germany without consultation from many local Maori, causing considerable division in the community (Terrell, Wisse, and Philipp 2008).

The Field Museum was largely unaware of these concerns, and with a few exceptions Maori people were largely uninvolved in interpretation of the *marae* complex until around the early 1970s when Terrell joined the Field Museum's team and reached out to the Tokumaru Bay community for guidance in conservation and restoration work. By the 1980s, this partnership had expanded considerably, and in 1986 the Museum (utilizing the Team Approach, mentioned above) worked with Maori leaders to host a three month travelling exhibition called *Te Maori: Maori Art from New Zealand Collections*. Later, Terrell and eighteen other representatives from Chicago traveled to New Zealand to discuss the possibility of the *whare's* repatriation. After much discussion, it was ultimately decided that the *whare* would remain in Chicago, where it could be restored "as a living Maori symbol in the New World in collaboration with the museum" (Terrell, Wisse, and Philipp 2008: 95). In this way, the *whare* could serve as a conduit for teaching visitors to the Museum about Maori culture, and foster connections between the cultures of Chicago and New Zealand that could never have been possible if it had been returned to its original home.

In 1990 the Museum formed the Taonga Maori conference as elders in the Maori community voiced that it was time to “address the sadness” that many felt about the *whare*’s distance from home (Ibid: 95). Terrell and a delegation from Chicago again travelled to New Zealand to discuss the *whare*’s future. To assuage Maori concerns and better inform the Museum’s conservation efforts, these representatives worked to engage these “spiritual owners” in the decision making process, reflecting that objects “do not exist in a vacuum but must be connected to people and their communities” (Lindsay 1991: 7, cited in Terrell, Wisse, and Philipp 2008). In this way they seek to re-establish connections between the things taken from New Zealand and the communities that created them, helping to “conserve the essence—the life force (*mauri*)—of the taonga themselves (Terrell, Wisse, and Philipp 2008: 95-96).

In 1992-1993, these efforts coalesced in the restoration and relocation of the *whare* to the upper galleries of the Regenstein Hall and significant discussion on how to meet both conservation demands and cultural necessities while dismantling, cleaning, treating, reassembling, and interpreting the *whare* for public use. Terrell and his team worked closely with Arapata Hakiwai (from Te Papa Tongarewa), Cliff Whiting (a Maori artist and preservationist), and the people of Tokumaru Bay (lead by Piripi Aspinall and Ben Pewhairangi with significant input from community elders), as well as Maori carver Hone Ngati, and Maori conservator Hinemoa Hilliard, Connie Potae-Pewhairangi, Kumeroa White-Smith, Cara Pewhairango, Doreen Costello, and Kay Kapua to complete the restoration work (Ibid). Later, Terrell and Hakiwai published a book (*Ruatepupuke: A Maori Meeting House*) about the experience and additional delegations visited New Zealand, building additional workshops and conversations that have spanned several decades and continue to grow.

These partnerships rest on the idea that the knowledge base informing decisions about objects should include consideration of their original cultural settings. In the process, staff from the Museum came to recognize that for the Maori, the house was a living entity representing their history, tradition, cultural pride, and prestige (Ibid: 106). Catherine Anderson discussed these broadened understandings in saying

Our approach to caring for Ruatēpupuke II at the museum since 1986 has been guided by one basic idea: there is no single standard and no one solution. Inevitably, there are different points of view, and there is always the potential for disagreement and conflict. But there is also the unusual potential for conservation work to be an eloquent way of bringing together all of those who genuinely care about the past, present, and future of the world's heritage--the world's taonga.” (Ibid: 108)

Bringing these varied interests together produced some important compromises. For example, a compromise had to be reached when conservators identified a need for the building's heavy ridge to be secured with a support system. Maori leaders preferred a hidden mount which preserved the beauty of the carved and painted designs but required drilling holes into the beam, while conservators found this drilling unacceptable, preferring to use a cradling technique that covered part of the design. In the end, the cradling system was used, and painted to match so the decorations and symbols were also preserved (Ibid: 105-106). Additional compromises were forged through the Maori belief that the house needed to be visited and “kept warm” to fulfill its purpose while conservators wanted to protect it from wear.

In forming and supporting these choices, the team drew upon the “Decision Making Model for the Conservation and Restoration of Modern Art” (CRMA) from the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art in Amsterdam in 1997 (Incca.org or CRMA model). The CRMA Model emphasizes that wise decision making is usually built through a working compromise between differing, often opposed, perspectives and that “Need for treatment is

determined based on evaluation of both current *physical condition* and current and past *meaning* (Ibid: 100). These principles shaped the ways that Maori people and Field Museum staff continue to work together to preserve, interpret, and use the *marae* in ongoing Marae Encounter<sup>6</sup> programming. In this way, they hope to reimagine the relationship between the Museum and the Maori community. Terrell, Wisse, and Philipp (2008: 209) articulate this in the summary of their writing about the partnership in saying:

We are of the opinion that the Maori concept of the marae may potentially be New Zealand's (and, by extension, the museum's) greatest gift to the world. For over a century, our museum has been famed as a place where people come to learn about other people and places on earth. We are convinced that the museum can also become renowned as a place where people come to learn from one another. By fostering what we are calling 'Marae Encounters', Ruatēpūpūke II and the marae on which it stands within the museum will bring home to Chicago and to the world how people everywhere on earth enrich our understanding of what it means to be human.

The concept of the marae as a gathering space for communities, and the idea that multiple forms of expertise should shape collections based decisions formed the theoretical background on which Terrell would later build the Philippine Co-Curation partnership.

The ideas, lessons, and possibilities Terrell encountered formed, he said in an interview with me, "the inspiration I think more or less, a feeling that something else was possible". Over time, his thoughts about extending such possibilities continued to grow and, "I entertained for a long time, gee wouldn't it be neat to see whether one could change the dynamic, change the relationship, enter into a kind of co-governance relationship with people who are the descendants of the people who made the stuff that we have." Expanding these concepts into a more ambitious and ongoing community outreach project with the Maori community in Chicago seemed

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<sup>6</sup> Marae Encounters describe a specific kind of community event in which two communities meet on the sacred space of a *marae*, or Maori gathering space, to discuss community concerns, identity, and belonging. Dr. Terrell and his team have organized a website with instructions for hosting such an event, and explaining the motivations for doing so, at [www.maraeencounters.org](http://www.maraeencounters.org)

impossible, as it is quite small, but he “sort of had in the back of my mind, gee the Philippines collection, that's a reasonably numerous diaspora to Chicago, so it had long been an idea in the back on my mind”<sup>7</sup>. For most of Terrell’s career at the Field Museum, the Philippines collection fell under the curatorial responsibilities of Dr. Ben Bronson, Curator of Asian Archaeology and Ethnology. When he retired in 2005, however, the collection was reabsorbed by the Pacific collections that Terrell curates, and he began seeking opportunities to apply part of the model established with Maori collaborators to reimagine what was possible for the Philippines collection.

While Terrell chose to begin his collaborative efforts with this community, however, he is quick to stipulate that this first partnership was a proof of concept intended to inspire expansion with other communities. “It's not just about the Philippines, it was just Test Group A. One step at a time was the way my mother liked to say, one step at a time...it wasn't just the Philippines, it was a proof of concept”. He hopes that in time, the foundation the team laid with the Filipinx-American community could pave the road to co-curation partnerships with other groups from the Pacific and around the world. In this way, he hopes to utilize the *marae* space as the Maori do—as a gathering place where different communities meet one another. He formalized many of these ideas with the creation of a Facebook page in 2015 that he titled “Museums and Global Heritage”. Its mission statement, written by Terrell, reads:

OUR GOAL: to work more closely together on the care, interpretation, and celebration of world heritage collections through shared projects promoting co-curation, global heritage management, digital access to collections, and other activities central to reinventing museums in the 21st century as vigorous contributors to global understanding, heritage appreciation, and peace.

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<sup>7</sup> As of 2016, the Chicago Metropolitan area was home to about 82,000 Filipinx-Americans (Zong and Batalova 2018)

The Facebook page now has over 3000 members from around the world, across many communities, and across many levels of expertise in museums and anthropology.

### *Creating Co-Curation*

An ethical undercurrent runs through Terrell's arguments for the necessity of collaborative initiatives that reimagine the Museum's relationship with its audiences, highlighting that these projects are often part of an ideological model (Buntinx and Karp 2006: 213; Varutti 2013). Terrell's suggestion aims to fundamentally change the Museum space, and the organizational logic that structures it (Smith 1987) which vitally includes addressing racism and stereotypes by seeking broader and more accurate perspectives (Golding 2013: 14). This includes moving from what Clifford (1992: 224) calls a "colonial" museology to a "cooperative" one in which museums and audiences communicate more effectively, and democratize both authority and interpretive power. In this way they not only work to address past and ongoing injustices, but expand current audiences, improve modern experiences, and produce more accurate information and ideas. Further, they help to create stakeholders in the local community and strengthen their bond to the Museum, both offering arguments for support from the state and supporters willing to stand up for the Museum (Gable 2013: 38). "We want this place to be seen as a welcoming community," Terrell says, "a space where communities can come and feel welcome or... celebrate their heritage, talk about their heritage, explore their heritage, be it through collections, be it ...through performance or dialogue or... the stories and the information that they want to share".

Terrell argues that engaging communities in the care of the collections offers a better use of the objects than a traditional exclusively museum professional caretaking. Therefore in using these collaborative methods, he hopes that co-curation partnerships might offer a "proactive

insurance policy” for calls for repatriation that he fears would limit museum collections from helping to build important human connections and cross-cultural learning. While co-curators and museum professionals alike have mixed and changing opinions about repatriation, Terrell argues that increasing access to the collection, and engaging source communities in this way could make Museum ownership of the collection, and existence as a community gathering space where connection with the collection is possible, a valuable and appealing compromise. This is especially true, he argues, for diasporic communities who no longer have regular access to objects made and used in their native country. Through co-curation, Terrell hopes to build opportunities for diasporic or immigrant communities to engage with objects of their heritage that they may otherwise never encounter.

The fundamental difference that Terrell recognizes between co-curation and other participatory ventures at the Field Museum and around the world hinges on involving local communities in the co-governance of collections, offering interpretation and decision making power to those whose ancestral homes produced the objects. He is careful to stipulate that this relationship must go beyond consultation, and must work to break down traditional power hierarchies through respectful collaboration and sharing of expertise in sustainable long term ways (Golding 2013). “We had somebody here who was saying ‘oh well people have been doing co-curation for a long time’ and I said... ‘you think that because people have a practice of consulting with [community members] before they put on a show [you have co-curation?]. That is not co-curation that is consultation.” Golding (2013) makes a similar distinction in describing such relationships as “Museum Different”, a new kind of collaborative relationship that goes beyond the spirit of inclusion, or even the addition of diverse voices in authored texts, to involve a key role in critical thinking and reflexivity as well. This kind of relationship views truth and

history as one point of view with a specific agenda, and insists that Museums work to acknowledge and remember the suffering of the past in a productive way, reconnecting and re-contextualizing it within the lived experiences of modern peoples. In this way it is several rungs higher on Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969) than consultative projects. The key difference she identifies between consultative projects, which allow for conversation but lack the power to insure that constituent views are heeded by the more powerful institution, and higher levels of citizen engagement are decision making clout, or as Terrell says "changing who has the right to call some shots".

In this way, co-creative projects like the Philippine partnership, as Nina Simon (2010: 272) puts it, "challenge institutional perceptions of ownership and control of content" more than any other kind of visitor participation. They require a radical trust in the ability of all parties to perform complex tasks, work together, and respect one another's rules and priorities. This fundamental restructuring toward partnership redistributes planning, decision making, and governing power, as well as responsibility for the collection from a solely internal museum process to a distributed one that involves community stakeholders. As Varutti (2013: 70) highlights "collaboration implies shared authority and responsibility as part of an ongoing, long-term relationship" in a process that "requires time, trust, and commitment from all partners". For these reasons, Terrell considers co-governance of the collection to be fundamental to reimagining the Museum as a collaborative space where co-curation can occur.

In addition to interpretation and decision making power, Terrell's view of co-governance further extends to a shared responsibility for the caretaking of the collection. Terrell specifies that this responsibility must necessarily extend to financial support if power relations are to be realistically renegotiated. "It's not easy to raise money" he said, "[But] I think that it would be

instrumental, and changing the dynamic to a more balanced one if they [in this case the Filipinx American community] did raise some money for something they wanted.” Financial support is also key to making such partnerships sustainable and justifiable to the Museum’s painstaking financial administration, he argues. “Especially in Chicago, this hand washes that hand. And if the hand is only our hand and it’s not balanced by any other hand it makes it a lot harder to other people that the hand should be out in that direction.”

As the Philippine partnership was a pilot program, intended to demonstrate that this concept was possible, the institutional structure of the Museum has not yet built an established or formal system for enacting this shared decision making power. While Anthropology staff work to consider, respect, and implement community concerns wherever possible, as the project of a single department—the staff working with a single curator—the partnership lacks the institutional clout or legal foundation to, as one co-curator put it, “make moves” with the collection. In this way the complex of organized practices that coordinate museum activity, what Smith (1986) calls “ruling relations”, do not grant co-curators the power to make decisions affecting the collection independently. “Like I don’t think I can actually make global changes to the collection, no, no, not at all, it’s owned by the Field Museum, I can only like get people to look at it and bring the public to talk about it or suggest things...but... I don’t own it” she said.

While the co-curators have been intimately involved in major decisions related to the collection, including accessioning new collections items and building an exhibition case, the partnership does not change the legal ownership status of the collection, establish formal staff positions for community members, or offer a consistent means of communication with the administration or other departments of the Museum. Therefore the partners’ ability to co-govern the collection is limited to the Anthropology department’s power to make the partners’ needs and

desires heard. As the Museum is ultimately—legally, ethically, and professionally—responsible for making decisions that affect the collection, sharing the authority to do so makes many at the Museum uncomfortable. As Rusty Russell<sup>8</sup>, the Museum’s Director of Collections explained

If a co-curator sitting down with John...or anybody else in collections or research and they're talking about the context of an object, I would see them as being equal colleagues, both discussing the context, discussing information, suggesting what should or shouldn't happen to it or what might or might not happen to it, but not making that decision... ultimately, the water's edge is what happens when it's time to make a decision... Sometimes the decision is trivial and sometimes it's going to be incredibly important depending on the object. We're not going to make a decision about a highly sensitive, contentious, object disposition by saying, 'well one of our Philippine co-curators said we should so we will'. Now we can agree that we will or agree that we won't but it won't be because that was the final decision.

Here, Russell highlights that the expertise and experience of museum professionals remains important and valuable in preserving collection held in the public trust, in perpetuity. As Miriam Clavir (2002: 7) notes, Western museology generally focuses their efforts on preserving and displaying objects while indigenous knowledge “often place living cultures at the core of processes of knowledge productions.” In this way, engaging communities in the care of collections presents a tension between the objects’ preservation as material objects and their preservation as fragments of experiences and memory. Balancing both these perspectives remains an evolving challenge for collaborative endeavors like the Philippine partnership.

While the Museum retains legal ownership of the collection, however, partnerships like this do expand community members’ access and decision making power in important ways, offering significant increases in access to the collection, use of the objects as catalysts for learning and discussion, and influence over how the objects are used and interpreted. As Russell continued,

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<sup>8</sup> Russell was the Director of Collections at the time of writing, but has since moved on to other projects, with Christine Giannoni serving as interim Director at the time of publishing.

I think there are a number of activities that they have gotten involved with where they have made decisions about ways to use the objects in promotion or in public engagement or various things like that, and that's where I think their sensitivities and their cultural knowledge really come into play. So there was this great little cookbook<sup>9</sup> and [that] wouldn't be the kind of thing where we said 'we don't want you to'. Those are the kinds of decisions they can make, and we can produce those...I think what [the partnership is] trying to do is to empower them as much as possible.

This empowerment is key to creating space where Filipinx and Filipinx-American experiences and perspectives are recognized, valued, and included—dramatic progress from the exclusion of previous decades. This space must necessarily negotiate, however, the existing priorities, professional standards, collections knowledge, reputations, responsibilities, decision making processes, political contexts, and power hierarchies—the “ruling relations” (Smith 1987)—already at work in this setting.

#### *A Performative Declaration and Pizza Meetings*

When Terrell took curatorial responsibility for the Philippines collection in 2005, he began to put these concepts into practice. In part and as noted above, he chose to further these efforts with the Philippine community because of their sizable diaspora in the Chicago community. Additionally, the collection had not enjoyed much access or use in the years since it was taken off exhibit. Its problematic collections history was another concern—the collection desperately needed additional interpretation that would be deeply aided by the contribution of local communities. As Terrell’s vision of co-curating the collection involves a primary engagement with the objects in the collection, he worked closely with Jamie Kelly, then the Regenstein Collections Manager (now the Head of Anthropology Collections) to organize how the partnership would materialize. As such partnerships and collections based projects are highly

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<sup>9</sup> Members and supporters of the Philippine Co-Curation partnership created a popular cookbook titled “Co-Curating Adobo” featuring 28 family recipes for pork and chicken adobo. The book was released in October 2017 and was available for sale at Pamanang Pinoy events.

labor and time intensive, they also recruited several interns and volunteers to help build relationships and organize activity (in the Summer of 2012, I was one of these interns).

Staff and volunteers are also careful to note that Philippine Co-Curation should be understood not as a finite project with defined goals and end dates but as an ongoing partnership that evolves and changes. As Simon (2010: 231) puts it, “If contributory projects are casual flings between participants and institutions, collaborative projects are committed relationships”. The Philippine co-curation partnership aims to involve communities in collections and heritage management in a permanent and continuing way that must necessarily change and grow over time rather than a one-off term-limited project after which both parties go their separate ways (Wood 2014).

Further, as an experimental foray into collaborative collections management, its goals and activities frequently shift as new challenges and barriers are met or co-curator priorities evolve. One staff member whom I interviewed made this clear in correcting my view of co-curation as an established activity. “When you talk about it, you talk about it in a way like we all got it figured out...like you’re observing co-curation,” the staff member explained. “I don’t think you’re observing co-curation, I think you might be observing us working out a partnership.” When I asked for additional clarification, the staff member explained “what it is, is that John [Terrell] made a performative declaration...and the performative declaration is that this collection is now yours, and ours, that’s what co-curation is. Um, do we do anything? [laughs] I really, I really don’t know, most of what co-curation has been has just been figuring out what John meant.” While the partnership does not legally transfer ownership of the collection to the community, it does engage them in the process of caring for and interpreting the collection in new ways.

With these ideas in mind, The Field Museum's small team began to reach out to Filipinx-American community members, beginning with personal acquaintances and building connections through established networks. Terrell framed these introductions to the collection around a key question: Do you care? "And I read faces and it was delightful to see the look on the face[s] the look was 'are you shitting me?'" he said, laughing. "So it was a great sort of relief to see there was a potential connection there". The team continued to ask this question at local festivals and cultural events to establish a presence and get to know people. Kelly says that the "resounding answer was we didn't know you had this collection. It was kind of unusual I think for a big institution like us to go ask the community, usually it's the other way around with the community asking for access. It kind of gained momentum and snowballed". Some connections with the Chicago Cultural Alliance/Center for Cultural Understanding and Change were also strengthened as individual members got more involved with the collection. The team sketched out the collections holdings, and its history, and slowly, a core group of volunteers began to emerge.

Kelly and Terrell hosted a number of what they call "Pizza Meetings" to discuss the potentials of a partnership with this core group, as well as many behind-the-scenes collections tours. While building an exhibition to showcase the collection was an early point of interest, "it's kind of hard to really develop an exhibit if you don't know much about the collection, so we tried to encourage them to think about the first step being just to get to know the collection better" says Kelly. For that reason, digitizing the collection and building a forum to increase discussion about the objects, quickly became a focus of the meetings. He clarifies, however that "it was really the community that sort of outlined what their goals were and what they wanted to achieve and I just really tried to help them do that with the logistical planning here at the museum".

The team also organized several events around the *whare* known as Marae Encounters held in the Maori *marae* space but using the Philippines collection that brought community stakeholders into conversation with selected objects from the collection. Starting with a kick-off celebration featuring many co-curation partners, the Field Museum hosted three to four of these meetings in 2013-2014. Terrell was encouraged by these early gatherings, particularly the First Welcome, as “it gave them the excuse to talk to one another within the community so it gave them an excuse to reach out across these local divides ...they had five speakers and they made a point of selecting their speakers from...at least a sampling to acknowledge the diversity of Filipinx-Americans in Chicago”. He was further encouraged by the breadth of conversation that the events generated:

Including one woman who berated all of us, she was tired of it, why is it that a man can only have one wife? You should be allowed to have five! The Quran says! And she took that opportunity to speak her mind...Right! Let's talk about five wives! And so that was good, in other words, they got it! They got the point.

That point was, in Terrell's view to have conversations the community wanted to have, and use their knowledge to reclaim a sense of ownership over the collection.

This kick off meeting set the stage for additional events focused around the collections and the discussions that they can make possible. Kelly describes these events in saying “we worked with the core community members...and they went in and selected objects for these events and they started coming up with sort of themes that they could sort of explore so from there we brought out objects and some basic information.” Community groups, performers, and speakers often added to these events and “then they also had these sort of round tables where they would engage people at the tables and then have people come up, look at the objects, and talk about what they knew about the objects and compiled information that way.” Interns and volunteers recorded and transcribed as much of this information as possible and added it to the

collection's documentation files, thereby expanding knowledge about the collection by tapping into community expertise as a resource of learning.

### *10,000 Kwentos*

As these events, the core group of co-curators, and their focus on digitizing and reinterpreting the collection continued to evolve, a name for the project emerged. It was soon known as 10,000 Kwentos, which translates to "10,000 Stories" in Tagalog, one for each object in the collection. In this way, the core members of 10,000 Kwentos emerged as "amateur object anthropologists" seeking community aid to find and record the stories that were neglected when the objects were collected. To realize these goals, Terrell made important contacts with an anonymous granting agency and collaborated with co-curators to "sketch out the idea of the digitization project as a hands on way to beginning to sort of do something". After some negotiation, editing, and limitations of scope to make it less expensive, the team ultimately received funding to digitize 80% of the collection over a two year period by photographing and rehousing objects, and scanning collections documentation into an online portal that used accessible language to promote discussion through comments on objects.

Accessible through the Field Museum website, visitors to the portal can create a profile through a third party site, and access digitized collections records with the ability to write comments on what they see, exchanging information about what the objects mean and the ways in which they are used. (Steps n.d.). The co-curation webpage details that "This is a key component of co-curation, for it is through making objects visible and known that individuals and communities contribute to the curation process" (Steps n.d.). The co-curation partnership also uses social media and internet marketing to reach and partner with those who may otherwise have never visited the museum, aligning with the new museology's goals of increased access.

Further, a Pacific Collection sub-site accessible from the FMNH's redesigned and simplified website, details the holdings of the collection, the goals and accomplishments of co-curation, departmental research endeavors, and collections care tips. As noted by Haidy Geismar (2012), webpages like these make processes and ideas that have historically been obscured in museums visible and accessible.

The grant also established funding for a limited term Assistant Collections Manager who would oversee digitization efforts and serve as a community facilitator throughout its 2014-2016 run. Cassie Pontone, then a Collections Assistant in the Anthropology department, was hired into this role. Pontone was excited for the role, but quickly realized the complexity in overseeing a project this large.

I will admit that it wasn't the most sophisticated system in terms of how we were getting this done. It was a pretty large scale digitization effort and to have one person in charge of all of it was a lot...a lot of the digitization process was actually carried out by volunteers, most of whom were from the Fil-Am community in Chicago but not exclusively from there, who were coming in and transcribing catalog cards, transcribing exhibit labels, scanning both of those types of documents, scanning accession files, taking photos of the objects, carrying out inventories, all of that and it was kind of, it was definitely overwhelming work when you're talking about a collection that has been largely neglected... having an idea of what you're dealing with and then getting into the deep with it is like, 'wow this is more than we thought'.

Although experimental in form, the initiative provided the opportunity for volunteers to develop a new relationship with the objects in the collection, allowing them to encounter their physical characteristics, and explore their form and material, as well as the information associated with them. Many shared stories and knowledge from their own lived experiences to flesh out information about the objects (Quantaince et al 2017: 6).

Similar discussions were made possible through the online portal that aimed to foster dialogue around the meaning and contexts surrounding objects that often differ by region, time

period, or use. Goals of the project include, then, building a structural and text-mediated space (Smith 1987) where the perspectives and knowledge of Filipinx community members can join and challenge the largely Euro-American interpretations of the collection recorded in the early 1900s. While the grant term is now completed, however, and its stated goal of 80% digitization accomplished, the portal remains largely un-accessed in a hidden corner of the Field Museum's webpage. While many studies of similar collections portals are highly celebratory, as they represent communicative and structuring mechanisms that increase access to museums, it is important to focus on how such technology challenges conventional understandings of museum collections, as well as the "ruling relations" (Smith 1987) that structure the organizational logic and rationale of museum practices (Geismar 2012). Srinivasen (et al 2010) found that building such a portal on its own would likely not produce much substantive engagement with objects. They argue that commenting ability alone does not sufficiently allow users to learn about or engage with objects through catalog entries, as these entries are often esoteric and heavily laced with museum jargon (also see Simon 2010). This limitation of online portals highlights the importance of the Field Museum's collaboration and partnership building efforts with the Filipinx community, as such a relationship offers a contextual starting point for engagement through establishing expert narratives and engaging stakeholder groups to participate in the projects. In addition to providing object photos and colloquial language intended to facilitate easier use, social media initiatives and marketing in the Filipinx community in Chicago and abroad further offer resources to facilitate discovery opportunities essential for achieving substantive engagement (Ibid: 667-668).

While digitization took up most of the co-curators time and effort in 2014-2016, other outreach efforts remained key to the process of increasing access. During this time, staff worked

together with Almira Astudillo Gilles to win a MacArthur grant to organize a collaborative mural project that brought five Filipinx-American artists in Chicago and five Filipinx artists in the Philippines together to discuss identity as they understood it, in a project called “Art and Anthropology: The Portrait of the Object as Filipino”. Together, the ten artists produced ten individual murals depicting their thoughts on Filipinx identity <sup>10</sup>. Further, each delegation of artists traveled to each other’s home nations to produce a collaborative mural on the same topic. This impressive artwork hung in the Marae gallery for much of the time this research was conducted (2015-2017), framing the discussions held in the space. It is now traveling to other galleries in the Chicago area, and around the world.

Additionally several co-curators, including Pontone and Lani Chan, a co-curation volunteer, travelled to the Philippines in late 2015 to build local connections and continue building the meaning of this collection through the gathering of stories about the different objects housed in Chicago. These representatives returned to some of the areas where the objects



Figure 3.3: The collaborative mural, with contributions from both Filipinx-Americans and Filipinx nationals about Filipinx identity was situated among about a dozen individual pieces on the same topic (Photo by the author)

<sup>10</sup> Artists included Leonardo Aguinaldo, Elisa Racelis Boughner, Jen Buckler, Cesar Conde, Emmanuel Robles Garibay, Florentino G. Impas, Jr., Joel Javier, Trisha Oralie Martin, Jason Jacobo Moss, and Othaniel M. Neri

originated in hopes of gaining insights into the history and context of particular pieces. Using a methodology called “photo elicitation” (see Harper 2002; Clark-Ibanez 2004), Pontone and Chan brought photographs of select objects at The Field Museum to several villages, asking locals if they would be willing to discuss their knowledge of the artifacts and their feelings about their being located in Chicago. Similar collections fieldwork, with a focus on experiential knowledge rather than physical objects themselves, has been used by other Field Museum Collections Managers as well. Its intention is to build relationships with members of source communities and to continue challenging the museum to attend to the interests of more distant stakeholders (Quaintance et al 2017). It further worked to build trust and friendship within the Filipinx community that continues to evolve.

#### *Challenges and an Evolving Purpose*

While community collaboration projects like 10,000 Kwentos have pushed the Museum to be more responsive and engaged in facilitating active dialogue on difficult contested histories that contribute to the promotion of a more just and human society, (MacDonald 2009) the celebratory language frequently used to describe them minimizes the challenges they present. As 10,000 Kwentos progressed as a pilot project, staff and volunteers encountered difficulty in coordinating the needs of a diverse community, appropriately generating and filtering community expertise, and maintaining consistency in goals and personnel. These challenges contributed to a shift in the priorities and activities of Philippine Co-Curation over time away from digitization and toward programming.

As staff frequently reminded me, as well as themselves, the Filipinx community—or any community—is far from a homogenous or effortlessly harmonious entity. Golding (2013) highlights community as a “warmly persuasive word describing an existing or alternative set of

relationships which never seems to be used unfavorably (20).” Filipinx-Americans in Chicago represent the heritage of over 7,000 islands and hundreds of once-autonomous ethnic groups. They or their ancestors immigrated to the United States for many different reasons, across different decades, and at different ages. Their identity is connected to the American and Filipinx experience in differing ways and the ways in which they connect to, or decide not to connect to their heritage further fluctuate. As Rick West of NMAI said “We are not Gregor Mendel’s cross-pollinated pea plants; we are people. Our ethnicity and cultural identity is tied to our collective and ancestral history, our upbringing, our involvement with our tribe and community, our experiences, memories, and self-identity” (cited in Golding 2013: 20). For this reason, Karp (1991) says community is a noun, but not a “thing” and Golding calls for recognizing that the community interaction museums seek must necessarily refer to “communities of practice” rather than oversimplified genetic groupings that homogenize the experiences of a diverse people. As Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) describe, we are all engaged in various “communities of practice” as we live our lives and pursue our goals, forming groups of people who share in joint enterprises and build mutual social connections. Over time, these connections and experiences build shared repertoires of activity, conversation, commitments, and memories. These shared ways of doing things and social interactions help to cement and facilitate strong and meaningful relationships that are built upon and through social learning. “For newcomers”, Lave and Wenger (Ibid: 108-9) comment, “the purpose is not to learn from talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn to talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation”.

Even among Filipinx cultural organizations, as Kelly describes, “there are groups that are really focused on immigration reform and groups that are focused on sort of like their ties to their

university alumni group from the Philippines, and others that are sort of focused on their Catholic faith or their more indigenous connections to their ancestors, so it's really variable." These groups are structured with internal hierarchies, tensions among various personalities, and inconsistent goals and priorities. As is true in any large group of people, as one co-curation volunteer put it "There's no such thing as a Filipinx leader. There are almost as many Filipinx organizations as there are Filipinxs...and there's always drama, and divisions, and contested elections". These divisions can present a serious challenge when seeking Filipinx community leaders to offer expertise and knowledge about their experience. Paring down multiple voices and complex identities into clear messages for museum interpretation is a complex challenge (Karp 1992) as is negotiating existing tensions between individuals.

As the relationship between museums and communities continues to shift, audiences transform from passive entities to active agents. Through this process, self-appointed or delegated representatives of specific communities contest standard narratives by articulating their points of view (Karp 1992: 13). In this way representative voices play a major role in making the public an actor. A major challenge for collaborative ventures like Philippine Co-Curation then, is determining whose voices are magnified through this process. In the early days of 10,000 Kwentos the process of choosing collaborators was largely serendipitous as staff reached out to personal connections and built networks at public events. This serendipity produced its own challenges however, as one staff member described

I like to think about the alien ship landing in the movie Star Trek: First Contact. The Vulcans land for the first time on Earth and like all the earthlings are trying to figure out, okay, who are we sending over there to talk to them and I'm sure the Vulcans are trying to figure out the same thing. Who's the first person to run up to the ship?

Some of the early adopters were highly passionate about museums, some had a stronger connections with objects and stories. Some held leadership roles in other community organizations and had become accustomed to playing that role. Oftentimes, they had conflicting priorities and ideas, personal tensions, and differing motivations. As various projects progressed, questions about who in the community was best suited to represent others, and who could contribute the most knowledge continued to emerge.

Additional tensions arose between Museum staff's quest for expertise from a community seeking knowledge from the Museum. While many co-curation volunteers are what Pontone calls "natural born storytellers" brimming with primary knowledge about objects, "that's not everyone", she cautions. Many Filipinx-Americans, especially those of a younger generation or who were born in the United States, lack primary knowledge about the objects and their use, and many feel that this knowledge has been hidden from them. Few American schools devote significant instruction time to Filipinx history, or its interconnectedness with American history, and many second-generation Filipinx-Americans were never taught their parents' native languages—in many cases they were actively prevented from learning them. Some volunteers learned the history of the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair at co-curated events or through interactions with staff and the objects, involving Philippine Co-Curation in their emotional processing of that information. Pontone described this tension in saying "Something that we were encountering not all the time but a large portion of it was that people didn't know, and we were sort of in this awkward position of then being involved in people's identity formation and maintenance." In some ways, this dynamic left less knowledgeable volunteers beholden to those with more primary knowledge.

The nebulous nature of the evolving project offered additional challenges. Pontone, hired several years into the relationship building process, found herself responsible for facilitating a partnership largely envisioned by Terrell. While the grant which paid her salary was written by him and a few key co-curators, interpreting its manifestation was largely on her shoulders. “While it had specific needs and requirements those needs and requirements were very loose. So the idea was that we were going to digitize 80% of the collection. Now what that meant more or less was up to me,” she says. Digitizing a major collection required important determinations of priority, process, and analysis that required significant improvisation and creativity. The decisions she was charged with making ultimately and necessarily shaped what the project would look like and accomplish. Further, she faced barriers in building her own relationships with co-curation volunteers recruited by and accustomed to working with Kelly and Terrell. This turnover in facilitation extended throughout the project as at least four interns (including myself) and dozens volunteers contributed to the project over time, making consistent relationships, priorities, and activities difficult to maintain across a time and labor intensive project.

Additionally, as Pontone describes, digitization requires extended and long term “grunt work”, and volunteer staff members often struggled to commit to such a schedule, not because they lack the interest but “because of commitments that adults have like jobs or families or anything like that” (See Chapter 5). Further, she says “you end up with kind of too many cooks as well because we have too many people working on a project and they’re not always coming in regularly.” Over time, as tensions among volunteers, between staff and volunteer priorities, and loosely defined goals continued to coalesce, the core group of volunteers contributing time and energy began to drift. Kelly cautions that this is a common side effect to community work “from your local PTA to school board to a political group or what have you”.

As some core volunteers drifted away from the partnership, Pontone and the remaining co-curators focused efforts on engaging with the community at events, building connections, and inspiring interest. Over time, a new volunteer force emerged, with new goals, priorities, and personalities that pulled the partnership in a new direction. And, as Kelly says, “10,000 Kwentos sort of drifted away, which was sort of sad to see...if it weren't for them we probably wouldn't have had support and we needed support to get the grant but once the grant got going we were trying to really just broaden our reach so that we were open to everybody”. These new volunteers were mostly younger, largely students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago seeking a connection to their community and with creativity to burn. As they learned about the objects in the collection, their understanding deepened and enriched through dialogic sharing, they wished to share and enhance what they learned through programs and events. While digitization continued throughout, and even after, Pontone’s grant funding expired, Philippine Co-Curation began to move into a new era—that of a monthly event series called *Pamanang Pinoy*.

### *Conclusions*

As the shift toward the New Museology began to register in practice in museums around the country and the world, some museums dramatically changed how they operate, conduct business, set goals, and connect with audiences. As these changes took hold at the Field Museum, new experimentation in community engagement and participatory action helped to further perpetuate this shift. Recognizing potential for a new kind of partnership that focused on collections, shared ownership, and interpretation, Terrell built upon his experience establishing a collaborative partnership with the Maori to imagine a new kind of relationship between the Museum and its constituent communities. Eventually, this shift, these motivations, and this

theoretical background inspired the early days of what became the Philippine Co-Curation partnership.

## CHAPTER 4: PAMANANG PINOY

When I returned to the Field Museum in 2016, four years after my internship had ended, to conduct ethnographic research, I found a deeply changed Philippine Co-Curation partnership. No longer focused solely on digitization, co-curators had begun planning monthly object based public programming events called *Pamanang Pinoy*, which translates to “Filipinx Heritage”. The shared workspace that Pontone and her team organized in the Anthropology Lab now featured several computers gathered on white countertops with a large conference table in the center of the room, inviting conversation as volunteers worked. Just inside the door, a large dry erase board detailed the team’s accomplishments including, as of February 2017, 6667 objects

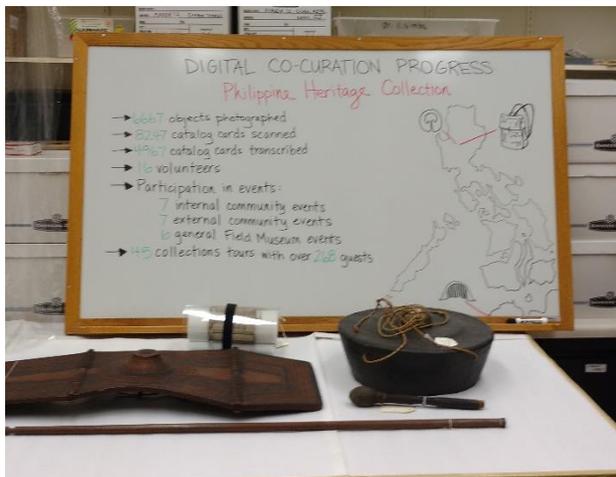


Figure 4.1: A dry erase board details the co-curators’ accomplishments while (Figure 4.2) their portraits decorate their workspace (Photos by the author)

photographed, 8247 catalog cards scanned, 4967 catalog cards transcribed, sixteen volunteers, seven internal and seven external community events as well as six general Field Museum events, and 45 collections tours for over 268 guests. Along the back wall, about a dozen beautifully hand drawn portraits of several new team members were featured. Drawn by Kayla Delsen, a former intern and co-curator who still frequents events, the bold and finely detailed portraits feature the members of the current team of co-curation volunteers—many of whom were art students in Chicago. These portraits represent another side of these American

college students, reimagined in the clothing of indigenous Filipinxs, wearing highly detailed textiles, headpieces, and tattoos. As these new faces entered the Co-Curation Partnership, they elected to use the digitized information they had gathered to engage the public at monthly events.

These events were generally held in the Marae space that helped inspire them, with the powerful structure's glimmering eyes watching over the day's activities. On the other end of this space, the bright colors of the murals created through the Art and Anthropology MacArthur grant framed the Marae gathering space. As people arrived, they checked in at the Registration table

for a nametag, and usually a hug, and filtered through the space to observe the carefully chosen objects, lovingly displayed on white-linened tables, and to chat with other visitors in arranged folding chairs until the formal program began.

One Saturday, early in my fieldwork, this shift was

signaled by Trisha Martin—a co-curation volunteer since 2014, and an artist represented in the mural before her—when she picked up the microphone and introduced herself before giving a brief overview of the co-curation partnership. She explained that the day's activities were themed around resistance and revolt in the Philippines, and launched into a Powerpoint presentation discussing Lapu Lapu—a ruler of Mactanin Visayas widely considered the “first Filipinx hero”



*Figure 4.3: Co-curators gathered in front of the Marae during the Retrospective Pamanang Pinoy (Photo by the author)*

and the “first to resist colonization” as the leader of the Battle of Mactan where Ferdinand Magellan was killed, delaying Spanish occupation for over forty years (Agoncillo 1990). After her presentation, Tristan Espinoza and Vi Bautista, students at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and volunteers with co-curation since 2015, described the Silang Revolt, another famous anti-colonial battle, connecting it to the objects on the tables behind them, and noting that “we are not experts but still learning ourselves”. Next, Lorén Ibach, also an art student who recently curated an art exhibition on Filipinx identity with Bautista, discussed the Katipunan, perhaps the most famous anti-colonial resistance group from northern Luzon, advocating for learning “in a child’s way”, driven by curiosity.

After the presentations, Neal Matherne, a postdoctoral researcher working as a facilitator for the Philippine partnership and event series, asked the crowd before him for questions and input. After a pause, he prompted “Why do the Katipunan wear hoods?” Then Juanita Salvador-Burris, one of the first co-curators of the 10,000 Kwentos project chimed in. “They symbolize different things,” she said, “what rank you are and like that”. “Kind of like fraternities and their letters” said another man. People begin to raise their hands for the microphone to be passed to them, offering their thoughts on the revolts discussed that day. One visitor who described himself as a “long time listener, first time caller” highlighted the labels people use to describe each other by, noting that Magellan and his crew likely thought of themselves as heroes, and the resisters as traitors. “We all think we are the good guys” he said, “but heroes have selfish motivations too and traitors think they are heroes”. Another discussed his Mexican-Filipinx heritage, and the ways that Spanish colonialism shaped his background and identity. Another remembered learning about the Katipunan as a child in 1950s Catholic school, discussed the “fusion between Filipinx and Catholic culture.” “The Katipunan came with the sword and the cross” she said

proudly “the Philippines embraced the cross...we’re the only Catholic Asian country.” Another felt differently, citing the Moro warriors who resisted Catholic priests for “over 400 years” calling them “the first heroes” and beginning a conversation about pantheism and differing combinations of indigenous and colonial culture across the diverse Philippines that brought everyone’s attention back to the objects. They feature a mix of iconography—one with a page of the Quran embedded in its folds, one with a cross detail, and some featuring Filipinx amulets (*anting-anting*) and the symbolically potent color red.

Through dozens of events like this one, held on the third Saturday of each month, the curation team worked to engage their local community with the information and ideas they uncovered as Field Museum volunteers. They worked to mobilize and value community expertise in a way that redefined the Filipinx public’s relationship with the Museum and redefine the objects in the collection. In so doing, they worked to confront the history in which the objects remain irrevocably enmeshed while connecting them with the lived experiences of a modern community. Throughout this process, the partners worked to establish and strengthen relationships within the Filipinx-American community, between this community and the Museum, and between individuals and their heritage, family, and identity. The friendships that participants built created lasting effects for those involved while bringing a previously underserved population into regular contact and communication with the Museum, allowing for new conversations and connections with the collections the Museum holds. The tasks that volunteers undertook to make these events possible further expanded their skill-sets and competencies. Organizing programming sessions build important experience in education and event planning, as well as research, marketing, and public speaking. These skills are vital to a 21st century workforce, and are empowering to artists honing their craft, as well as to college

students seeking their niche, while further building the dialogic skills to articulate, confront, and discuss social issues that directly affect these participants.

### *Participation in Action*

Much of my discussion of the event series that the Philippine partnership produced was informed by my participant observation research as well as interviews with key collaborators. Several key thinkers, however, were fundamental to understanding the processes I observed. Golding's (2013) discussion of collaborative practices in museums helped to reveal many of the goals of the partnership and how they fit into larger changes in the museum world. Similarly, Buntinx and Karp's (2006) writing on what they call "tactical museologies" helped to articulate the broad issues and tensions that museums face in their daily activities, as well as how new projects like the Philippine partnership can be mobilized to confront them—or at least make a start. For similar reasons, Kratz and Karp's (2006) discussion of "museum frictions" offered important language for discussing the kinds of problems that collaborative processes seek to address.

To discuss how the events are structured, the team processes that create them, and the outcomes they produce, I leaned upon the writings of Nina Simon (2010), Jennifer Shannon (2014), and Marzia Varutti (2013). Simon's *The Participatory Museum* offers a practical guide for discussing, structuring, and improving participatory ventures in museums that proved extremely helpful in organizing my thoughts about the Philippine co-curation partnership. She discusses examples of both similar and dissimilar collaborating programs at other museums, offers classification schemes of different types of collaboration, and provides clear steps for strengthening collaborative relationships by building effectively scaffolded experiences that proved highly instructive for my work. Shannon's (2014) and Varutti's (2013) insightful case

studies of participatory endeavors at other museums were clarifying for similar reasons.

Shannon's discussion of the collaborative curation of the *Our Lives* exhibition at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) offered many striking parallels with the experiences articulated by co-curators at the Field Museum, as well as useful language for discussing the barriers both partnerships encountered as part of large bureaucratic institutions. Varutti's discussion of collaborative processes in Taiwan offered other informative parallels, as well as insights about indigenous identity and heritage management.

To discuss how these projects work to change the museum narrative through a process that co-curators call "decolonization", I turned to the work of Christina Kreps (2003), and Amy Lonetree (2012), as well as Kreps (2009) chapter in Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa's *Intangible Heritage*. Similarly Ellen Hoobler's (2006) discussion of the importance of decolonizing activities in the museum world, and Tinde van Andel's (2017: 8-9) call to action to "Open the treasure room to look what is hidden there, digitize it and make it available for research" highlighted the relevance of these ideas to museum goals. Nicholas Mirzoeff (2017) tracked how the term was used in student protests in South Africa to confront hegemonic representations by changing the narrative surrounding it. This discussion offered important insight in interpreting Jonathan Paquette's (2012) articulation of two distinct waves of decolonization activities, tracking the shift of the term's use in a quest for self-determination toward its use to reclaim institutional power by rearticulating symbols, meanings, and colonial practices.

#### *Pamanang Pinoy, Ang Susunod Sa Pamanang Pinoy, and Common Heritage*

As Pontone built her team of volunteers, and a new post-doctoral researcher, Neal Matherne joined the team in February of 2016, new priorities and ideas shaped how the

partnership operated. Trisha Martin, an artist who had volunteered with Co-Curation since the Art and Anthropology project of 10,000 Kwentos, sought to expand the partnership's efforts toward public programming. While digitization continued, and formed the foundation of what events would be discussed, Martin, energized by what the volunteers were discovering, wanted to share it. With support from Pontone, other staff members, and volunteers, Martin developed what she called a "free school" model that connected community members with the information that volunteers uncovered during digitization, and allowed them to learn from one another at events. Further, as volunteers increasingly realized that their own knowledge about the objects was incomplete, Martin's model aimed to bring many community members together to seek as much information as possible.

When I interviewed Martin she explained, "Co-Curation, my understanding of that was to have both skills sharing and knowledge sharing," she said. "I think we got the most from events because people could see the objects and engage with them and then we could talk with them and you know pick people's brains a little bit and I found those to be the most rich and the true heart of co-curation so I, one day, pitched to Cassie like having an event every month." With these goals in mind, Martin took a leadership role in developing an event series similar to the Marae Encounters of 10,000 Kwentos that came to be known as *Pamanang Pinoy*. Held on the third Saturday of each month to simplify scheduling for community members, *Pamanang Pinoy* events aimed to facilitate dialogue by bringing selected objects to the Marae space where community members could gather and discuss them. As Hannah Quaintance, Stephanie Jamilla, and Floréncia Almeda, (2017)—all former volunteers and interns—discussed, this kind of public engagement with collections reconnects ideas from the past with the lived experiences of a modern community. The result of such engagements, they write "is the transformation of the

museum from a space of unidirectional knowledge dissemination to one in which new knowledge is collaboratively produced by people of different generations and experiences in the presence of objects of shared heritage” (Ibid: 8). In this way events seek to reimagine the Museum space as a community center and cultural resource for the Filipinx community.

Events offer free Museum admission to those who pre-register and typically begin with lively social gathering time, followed by a presentation by a speaker, some engagement with objects on tables near the Marae, and some kind of discussion or activity. South Sea Asian Cuisine, a restaurant in Bolingbrook, IL which is owned by Co-Curator Jerica Doming’s parents, provides delicious snacks. Like the Marae Encounters of 10,000 Kwentos, *Pamanang Pinoy* events are structured around themes chosen by the group<sup>11</sup>. At planning meetings, the group discussed and chose themes like food, gender, music, weaving, and resistance that show both the interests of the team and the strengths of the collection. As events crept closer on the calendar, they reached out to speakers and performers or planned activities, workshops, and discussion sessions. A week or two before the event, whoever was available selected and researched objects relevant to the theme, wrote labels for them, and developed supplementary material like brochures, bulletins, or zines to assist with community interpretation. The team met regularly, generally bi-weekly, and communicated frequently via email and social media.

While Martin largely spearheaded events, and Pontone and staff worked to facilitate access and organize tasks, duties were often delegated based on time availability, or who showed initiative in suggesting new ideas or leadership over a particular theme. The volunteer who

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<sup>11</sup> Event theme titles included: From Blades to Spirits; Portrait of the Object as Filipino; Pamanang Pinoy (Filipino Heritage); Objecting the Filipino Identity; Ceremonies; Weaving; Gender; Rice; Accessorized; The Art of Resistance; DATU/HATAW Filipino History Month Performance; Musika; Pre-Filipino Living Traditions; (Ang Susunod sa Pamanang Pinoy) Tattoos; Shields and Armor; (Ang Susunod sa Pamanang Pinoy) Immigration; Backstrap Loom Weaving; (Ang Susunod sa Pamanang Pinoy) Weaving; Retrospective; NEH Common Heritage (two events).

suggested, or felt particularly enthusiastic about a particular theme largely took organizational responsibility for it, with Martin's and Pontone's help. As Alpha Sadcopen, a longtime volunteer and graphic designer from Northern Illinois University who also has also served as a paid Collections Assistant for the partnership, explained "if you're going to throw out an idea like are you willing to spearhead it? Because that's not just all on the staff, it's also like your responsibility if you're going to toss in an idea like are you willing to put in all that work? Or who do you expect is willing to put in that work?" As one staff member described, events are generally "one co-curator's idea, executed by the rest" but stipulated that this was not an official policy. "[In planning events] I would be hard pressed to call us a team. There was no formal structure and no formal leadership. In fact, I think we were more 'anti-team' in this regard. Folks really just did what they wanted to do".

In October of 2016, Pontone's grant funding expired, and she was assigned to new duties in a different wing and department of the Museum. While in many ways this shift required Matherne to assume new duties, he purposefully and intentionally acknowledged that he could not carry the load of both positions and attend to his other responsibilities in the Museum effectively. As a result, I re-engaged with the partnership during a period of significant change and fluctuation to its goals, planning processes, and priorities. One consequence of these shifts was that volunteers took on larger responsibilities for event planning than ever before, and placed increased emphasis on extending community outreach efforts beyond the walls of the Museum. The group began to plan off-site discussion events as follow ups to *Pamanang Pinoy* events called *Ang Susunod* ("And Next") *Pamanang Pinoy*, allowing themes to last for two months instead of a single event and increasing the partnerships presence in the community. One of these events was held at the Jose Rizal Center in Chicago, and highlighted immigration issues

in collaboration with the Alliance of Filipinxs for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment while another focused on Backstrap Loom Weaving at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. These events were far less object-centered and more focused on collaboration and discussion than traditional *Pamanang Pinoy* events.

As part of this outreach, the team further planned to expand their digital presence, leaning more heavily on their team-run Facebook page titled “From the Vaults: The Philippines Collection.” The page often features photos of objects being digitized, and encourages community conversation in photo comments and wall posts. It also helps them to advertise events to a broad audience and document photos and videos of their activities to share with those who cannot come to the Museum space. As more college-aged volunteers joined the co-curation team, and as staff presence scaled back, these digital initiatives expanded to include Facebook live videos of entire events, a series of short interview based videos crafted by Rose Tibayan, and additional printed media like zines and brochures.

An additional form of the Co-Curation event series manifested in the Summer of 2017 as funds from a National Endowment for the Humanities grant became available. Organized and planned largely by Matherne, who wrote the grant proposal, these events encouraged community members to bring their own objects and stories into the Museum for two digitization events that aimed to record both what the objects look like and the meanings that community members associate with them. When community members arrived, they were given a numbered flash drive and a series of forms. A volunteer worked with them to fill out the forms, detailing as much information about the objects and the memories surrounding them as possible before accompanying them to the scanning or photography stations. The team also set up a quiet space with recording equipment where oral histories could be recorded. After digitization was

complete, the Museum retained digital copies of the information recorded and the community members were given the flash drive containing their stories to take home. Developed with much clearer structure, and with outcomes reportable to the NEH, these events functioned quite differently from *Pamanang Pinoy* programming but operated on similar principles of valuing and recording community expertise to elaborate on Museum knowledge of objects. While this event series took several forms and covered broad themes, events largely worked to achieve similar goals. By seeking to engage community knowledge about their heritage and the collection, these events aimed to redefine the kinds of expertise valued by the Museum, thereby creating new relationships among participants, and empowering individuals within the community.

### *Building Relationships*

When attending events, observing volunteers, sitting in on meetings, or helping to prepare for or clean up after a public event, perhaps the most palpable takeaway of this group is the rich friendships and social connections it has helped to foster. When regulars arrived they were greeted by a sea of hugs, well wishes and, asking after the family. There were at least a few regular attendees or volunteers I never got the chance to chat with, as they were quickly whisked away by friends and loved ones. The core team in particular grew very close, infiltrating each other's social circles, social media profiles, weekend plans, and in some cases apartments. The friendships they built were especially palpable at Martin's last *Pamanang Pinoy* event before moving across the country to be nearer to her family in Summer of 2017. In saying goodbye to the audience and the team, Martin said, "I am so grateful that when I proposed this idea to Cassie, the team jumped on board...that we have built a family of volunteers". These kinds of social engagements help to build the meaningful and memorable experiences at events that make co-curation valuable to community members and volunteers alike, and an emerging "community

of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991). In this way, the events at once constitute both an arena and a means for building and perpetuating community identities (Kratz and Karp 2006: 3).

For older co-curators, those who were born and raised in the Philippines, events offer the chance to connect with their contemporaries as well as the younger generations. Through events and volunteering they can share and perpetuate stories, values, and knowledge. When I spoke with Etta McKenna, a volunteer since 2015, about her motivations for volunteering with co-curation, she described the first event she attended. “There were a lot of younger people” she said. “And they were so, you know, enthusiastic, exploring what their identity is and so I was kind of impressed with that and I said, that’s pretty good that they have this...and I joined you know, I volunteer.” McKenna volunteered digitizing objects at least one day a week for well over a year, and she and her husband John were a regular staple at events. The primary knowledge that these first generation Americans bring to the partnership help to bridge gaps of understanding for those born here, and stimulate memories and connections for those born in the Philippines.

Younger people return this affection with respect and terms of endearment—frequently referring to elders as *Tita* (“auntie”) and *Tito* (“uncle). Sadcopen explains this connection by saying, “I don’t have access to like, speaking with my grandmother or like aunts and uncles in the Philippines. I feel like I kind of get that fix being in the project. I get to talk to these people that have like stories to tell and like knowledge and to be able to be around that is pretty great.” Such contact also offers the opportunity to recognize and confront generational differences in identity and issues. As Ibach described “just to talk across generations is always interesting because we’re dealing with a lot of different things and a lot of us were born here... [our identity

is] very much here in America...there's totally different perspectives going around, there's not one singular thing which is good.”

In this way the events offer a means of building relationships both within the Filipinx community as well as between Filipinx immigrants and their heritage. As Buntinx and Karp explain, the co-curated events work to combat the threat or reality of continued “uprootedness” or a “longing for community” (2006: 213). In moments like these, “the power of these constructs lies in their willingness and capacity to ... house the very sentiment of loss or even absence” (Ibid 213). Domingo articulated this power in saying, “For me as a person that came to America at four years old... The objects themselves represent like you know a culture, a history that I never learned growing up and when I saw them the first time I was like really surprised and elated and also like weirded out.” In this way, the discourse that events foster therefore remakes and transforms the collection into new kinds of objects (Varutti 2013). For Ibach, co-curation became an “entry point” to understanding her heritage “I didn’t even know there were indigenous people in the Philippines until I came to SAIC,” she said. “I don’t walk around and see Filipinx represented like in high school too, like, no, that would never happen... like in a textbook where they do talk about like American Imperialism for like a second in the Philippines it’s like that one paragraph.”

Further, the relationships built through the partnership help to constitute a sense of community that many in the group felt they were lacking. Ibach explained that part of her motivation for becoming involved with Philippine Co-Curation was the chance to build a sense of community in her new home after relocating for school.

I was coming from a place (California) that was very very diverse and it was normal to be Filipinx, all the time, there’s Filipinx everywhere... I never really had to question myself or my identity until I came to college and I feel like that’s when things when things started shifting for me, and I didn’t have a place in a

community that I belonged to and I felt really like lost and displaced, especially in the art world where like there's not a lot of Filipinx artists to look towards, too ... there was just no resource, no access to that kind of community.

Volunteering for digitization projects, learning about ancestral objects, hearing stories from multiple generations, and building events to share that knowledge therefore offer a means and a space for strengthening community connections and enriching personal experiences.

#### *Access and Expertise—Changing the Museum Space*

At one event, while I stood in my nitrile gloves behind the table, ready to answer whatever questions I could, encourage conversations, and divert over-eager hands, Juanita Salvador-Burris, one of the first co-curators to join 10,000 Kwentos, rushed over to draw my attention to a large ceramic vessel on the table before me. “We had one of these,” she told me excitedly. “I grew up in Manila where we had no water during the day, only at night. My family would save water in a water jug like this one to keep it cool and clean for drinking.” Others gathered around the table as her memory prompted an illuminating discussion. As we all rejoined the larger group in the folding chairs facing the Marae, Martin asked over the microphone if anyone would like to discuss an object. Salvador-Burris stood and told the group about her memories of the jug, offering rich detail of life in the Manila of her childhood and reminding the group of the spiritual power and necessity of water. “It is essential to life” she said. As she spoke, I glanced at the label next to the object, which simply read “jug”. Without her memories, that would have been where the discussion ended.

Insights like Salvador-Burris's were regular occurrences at *Pamanang Pinoy* events. Frequently, visitors expanded upon and enriched the descriptions recorded by the objects' collectors in the early 1900s, because, as Tim Boon described, “an object looks different if you know that it relates to your ancestor's experience” (Boon 2011: 385). Domingo explained in my

interview with her that “the collection is missing a lot of information... We look to the community to fill in the gaps and find out how they relate to contemporary issues”. Through the event series, co-curators work to value lived experience and use it to better understand the collection. They seek to recognize that the traditions and memories that help people understand and give meaning and value to objects are a part of what Christina Kreps calls “people’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage” (2009: 193) and should be preserved and protected alongside the objects themselves. In the postcolonial era, awareness of this idea continues to reshape the relationships between ethnographic museums and the communities from which their collections originate. As Varutti highlights “Such relationships are now based on the recognition that museums are no longer the sole legitimate and authoritative interpreters of cultural artifacts.” (Varutti 2013: 68).

By planning object oriented and discussion focused events, the co-curation team works to design a meaningful space for articulating, discussing, and sharing primary experiences of cultural heritage both within the community and with the Museum so that it can further understanding of complex histories. As Golding (2013: 14) describes, purposeful creation of such a discussion space helps the museum to “display evidence of our common humanity and cultural diversity while posing questions about what a museum is and can be, which vitally includes addressing racism and working to dispel fearful stereotypes for more accurate perspectives”. In this way, co-curators seek to expand the narrative surrounding the objects in the collections by expanding the definition of an expert beyond those who followed an academic path to gather information and credentials by valuing the authority of lived experience. As Simon (2010: 95) puts it, these efforts “prioritize the social cooperation and competition that takes place when many hands dig in the sand”.

Labeling community members as experts in this way constitutes what Shannon (2014: 87) calls “an ethical stance, a self-consciously subversive classification of sorts, a balancing of academic and oral traditional modes of knowing...a form of activism in which staff were seeking to change museological language and practice.” In this way, dissolving the exclusivity of curatorial authority (Ibid: 106) represents a guiding principle of the Philippine Co-Curation partnership. Staff aim to establish links where they did not exist before, developing a more fruitful, productive, and multi-directional transfer of knowledge (Varutti 2013).

Mobilizing this kind of expertise is fundamentally contingent upon expanding both physical and academic access to both the collection and the Museum as well as relationships of trust and respect. To make this possible, staff and volunteers attended local Filipino events and festivals and hosted dozens of collections tours for individuals, researchers, and Filipino cultural organizations. Expanding the volunteer presence in the collection further expanded access to the collection, prompting a closer relationship with a constituency that once felt unwelcome at the Museum. “I think I inherently thought there was nothing for me.” Domingo explained. “I never knew about like the Filipino collection...I also am not a fan of dinosaurs, I don’t know...you know it’s just like an issue of representation it’s like if I don’t feel like I’m represented in an institution then I really don’t necessarily care for it.” Additionally, several co-curators expressed that before engaging with the partnership, the Museum felt financially out of reach for them. Sadcopen recalled only visiting the Museum once before engaging in Co-Curation. “It was one of the free days that’s why we went, um but yeah. I’d always seen it as like this amazing building but I was like ‘it’s too expensive to go in there.’”

General Admission to the Field Museum is \$24 for an adult, \$17 for children, and \$21 for seniors and students. An All Access Pass to attend Special Exhibits and other activities in the

Museum is \$38 for adults, \$27 for children, and \$33 for students and seniors (Field Museum n.d.). Once when visiting the Museum, I stood in line for tickets behind a father of three who was visibly shocked and shaken when the cashier read him his \$150 total. I sympathized with him, remembering Kratz and Karp's (2006: 217) musing, "if museums are so liberating, why do they have to be so expensive?". \$150 for a leisure activity for a family of four is a prohibitive expense for many, including many in the Filipinx and other diasporic communities in the Chicago area. Field Museum volunteers receive free admission to the Museum with their identification badges, which expanded access dramatically for those like Domingo and Sadcopen who could offer a regular commitment. Similarly, those who pre-registered for *Pamanang Pinoy* events received free admission on the day of the event in question. Sadcopen explained the necessity for this policy in saying "If this is gonna be like a partnership it would be weird to be like 'hey come do this thing and be part of it but like it's like twenty dollars' ...people will be like 'this feels wrong, like you're literally profiting off like my stories'". Through policies like these, the Philippine partnership offered some alternatives to such dilemmas, although issues with the Museum's imposing architecture, limited representation, expensive parking, and distance from many collaborators' homes remained obstacles.

In light of these persisting barriers, Pontone explained that increasing physical and financial access the Museum would not go far enough to avoid what Golding (2013) calls "tokenistic" inclusion. "I also would consider the difference here in access with co-curation is that there's an accessibility to trust and respect," Pontone said. "That is the stepping stone to then possibly move into collaboration, partnership, and a mutual understanding that like all sides of the coin are valid." Building trust and respect takes time and purposeful effort but plays a key role in building relationships that over time lead to fruitful dialogue. For this reason, Pontone

describes relationship management (see Yee-Man et al 2012) as the most difficult and most rewarding part of her job. “The way that I viewed this work was to build more of a familial bond and I was hoping that the workspace that we were in would serve more as a community center as opposed to a workshop” she said. She worked to build relationships that were more personal, long-term, and ethical than they were contractual and finite (Shannon 2014: 81). “And it's not as easy as it sounds, it's a lot of work and a lot of time just being there. I don't know how many Filipinx events we just went to so that we would build up that relationship, the rapport, the reciprocity” she said. The team continues to promote Filipinx community events through their marketing initiatives and online, and co-curators often volunteer with other organizations, building symbiotic benefits for many groups of participants.

This relationship and trust building, however, could only go so far in negotiating the issues and power, authority and control that underpin museum representations and practice (Golding 2013). As Pontone explained “[Some of the elders] they have a lot of knowledge, they were born in [the Philippines] but I mean, how often are they forthcoming with information? It has to be comfortable, and feel like a conversation between friends, not that they're representing The Philippines.” As Varutti (2013: 62) encountered in her own research, attempts at including new viewpoints or expertise can wind up reinforcing “the superiority of one actor over another, through the very act of invitation...it may also reinforce the central dominant position of those who include.” As Sadcopen explained, “We'll hear people talking about objects or memories to their friends ...and we'll be like ‘Wait what was that? We want to write that down!’ And they're like ‘Oh no, that was nothing, it's nothing, it's not important, that's just my memory’, and I'm like that's what we want!”

I encountered this hesitation while interviewing McKenna during the first NEH Common Heritage event. McKenna had brought the passport with which she immigrated to the United States in the 1967 as well as several photographs to be digitized. While the intake paperwork she filled out simply named the objects she brought, in talking to her and asking questions about the objects, an amazing story emerged. She told of friendships that sustained years and oceans of distance, a seven-year immigration paperwork delay interrupted by martial law and massive inflation, of an overnight layover in Tokyo—“no direct flights in those days”—and lost luggage in California. She told me about her first winter coat and her first Chicago snowstorm, her first job, and the family members she inspired to emigrate. By the time of the next Common Heritage event, staff and volunteers had restructured the intake process to make recording such details easier.

As Simon (2010: 34) highlighted, “Cultural institutions are like volleyball courts. Expert visitors and staff already know how to play”. These changes helped to more clearly articulate what kinds of information the Museum sought, to make it clear to community members that their stories were valued and appreciated. Continuous restructuring like this highlights that Philippine Co-Curation is not a static event, but an evolving process seeking to continually reshape relationships and access. It further highlights that facilitating productive conversations necessarily includes designing sufficient scaffolding to “robustly and consistently support dialogue...bridge the social barriers that keep people from naturally talking to strangers...[and] set expectations for what would happen” (Ibid: 104). As a pilot program (a “proof of concept” as Dr. Terrell put it) and an emerging approach, this is one major hurdle that the Philippine partnership encountered time and time again, requiring staff to continually reassess their practices.

At the same time, staff members were positioned as the mediators between the Museum and the community—a delicate balancing act of the needs of all parties. As Shannon (2014) noted in observing collaborations between Native American consultants and the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), Field Museum staff had to carefully manage the expectations of collaborators within the Museum context. Shannon describes this in saying

Although the trust relations developed through the community-curating process for *Our Lives* were essential for creating its exhibitions about Native identity, each community's request--to visit the museum at the opening or to have parts of its exhibit loaned or displayed in the community after objects were removed--was consistently met by curatorial staff with something along the lines of "we'll ask but we can't promise anything" Curators did press for these requests within the institution, but they did not have the authority to fulfill them. Co-curators were keenly aware of this dynamic and the history of broken promises to Native peoples when negotiating with federal institutions (Shannon 2014: 80)

Like the NMAI curators, Field Museum staff who were the public face of the program lacked the power to make the institution accountable to the community member's opinions and requests.

Like the NMAI co-curators, Field Museum partners were keenly aware of that fact. As one staff member explained "it would be like, 'oh the Field Museum has our back', but, in truth, Neal and Cassie had their back. But then when we couldn't do something, the Field Museum failed and it's very difficult to communicate". NMAI curators described themselves as "facilitators" of community engagement who "advocate" for Native communities within the museum, viewing Native community members as "content specialists" and squarely placing "the 'prerogative'" of engagement with them (Shannon 2014: 91). Similarly, as the Philippine co-curation partnership evolved, staff worked to find a balance between "facilitating" and "orchestrating" community activity. As one staff member put it "John Terrell, said, you facilitate you don't orchestrate. And that is when I got it. Like it had taken me that long to [understand] it... We facilitate we don't orchestrate. Because we had been orchestrating."

In some ways, staff facilitation was what the Anthropology department at the Museum offered to the Filipinx community—the expertise of the Museum alongside that of the community, working together to strengthen one another. As Shannon (2014: 84) indicated “the museum’s responsibility is to synthesize and evaluate...Not to say, whatever, you, Native person, have to say is what we’re going to do. Because that’s...I think that’s unfair. So part of it is being better at having conversations. We’re just not very good at it yet.” In this way, Shannon calls for a greater staff presence and role in guiding and shaping community than the Field Museum could provide. Simon (2010) makes a similar argument in discussing building collaborative ventures with enough structure and scaffolding to encourage contribution. This kind of structure lowers the barriers to participation by removing some of the uncertainty around the action. But as this was a pilot program—ever-changing, ever-emerging, ever-understaffed, ever-underfunded, and with an ever-jeopardized future—scaffolding remained in flux. This flux generally meant that participation in co-curation required high levels of open-ended expression, which requires self-directed creativity (Simon 2010: 12). This need for creativity could help explain why nearly all of 2017’s active co-curators had an art or creative background.

#### *Situated in the Past, Held in the Present*

When postdoc Neal Matherne spoke about the Field Museum’s Philippine partnership at the Smithsonian’s Seminar Series, his abstract highlighted that through the Philippine partnership, “volunteers and community members regard this museum space as a ‘contact zone’ (Clifford 1997) between older and young generations, first and second generation immigrants and a variety of views on class and acculturation in the U.S.,” he wrote. These views include “the messy history of the American colonial/imperial enterprise, ethnic and racial relations within the U.S., and the acceptance of disparate versions of these histories of domination, acquiescence, and

resistance.” In this way the partnership serves as a “liminal space where Filipino/a culture is negotiated through the efforts of a vibrant local community”. His description highlights that the partnership brings together many Filipinx-American identities, memories, and viewpoints regarding the history of the collections and the ways that history continues to shape the present. In this way events provide the space to name, remember, and discuss the injustices of the past and the ways in which they persist today.

As Domingo puts it “The collection itself ...is like representative of the country’s history, especially its colonial history...[look at] how the collectors of the Field Museum avoided all the Christianized areas to go to the north and south regions. Where they’re you know...less Westernized to get like the ‘true ideal’ Philippines”. This early 20<sup>th</sup> century decision continues to manifest itself in the collection today as only limited representation of the Visayas are possible, changing how Filipinx-Americans like Ibach whose family comes from the Visayas feel about them. “I had never seen anything like those objects before like I was in awe, I felt like I was unlocking a, literally, some sort of magical puzzle... I also feel like I’m also really not a part of them either. It’s not my specific history”. For Ibach, her lack of representation in the collection is a reminder of the pain of the past. “Definitely a sense of anger and just like kind of a hollowness like a shakiness about it because it, I just feel...it wasn’t for them and...when I look at them, it wasn’t for me. I feel uncomfortable for sure and I just, it makes the idea of the whole collection like falter before me.” By offering an arena in which to name and discuss these colonial processes, and the ways in which they are perpetuated in modern American society, events become a transformative site for engaging with a “mutating sense of community. And as a focus of social organization and mobilization. And as a healer—perhaps” (Buntinx and Karp

2006:214). In this way, they engage in a process that some of the co-curators have called “decolonization.”

As museums and other cultural institutions moved into the post-colonial era, scholars and indigenous people alike began to call for what Ellen Hoobler (2006: 447) calls the “decentralization of the bureaucracy of cultural policies.” She calls this a process of “decolonization”, through which community members could “portray their identity that they wished to display to the world...[and] present a counterdiscourse to hegemonical representations” (Ibid 451). At the NMAI, this process meant building the museum with the Native universe and Native sensibilities in mind (Shannon 2014), gathering knowledge and ideas from cultural leaders that refreshed exhibition narratives, and created the museum as a community forum as well as an “active monument to colonial oppression” (Golding 2013: 17). In this way, projects of decolonization seek to celebrate survival and endurance within the context of a “pernicious and racist history” (Ibid). Amy Lonetree (2012: 5) highlights that one of the major goals of the New Museology is “to assist communities in their efforts to address the legacies of historical unresolved grief by speaking the truths of colonialism and thereby creating space for healing and understanding.” She argues that the decolonizing project must do more than move museums away from being “elitist temples of esoteric learning” and even more than fostering community engagement, but “must be in the service of speaking the hard truths of colonialism. The purpose is to generate the critical awareness that is necessary to heal from historical unresolved grief” (Ibid: 6). By making service to source communities a central goal of the decolonization process, then, museums can help communities to understand colonization as “the origin of historical and ongoing harms” (Ibid: 8). In this way, she notes the “great irony” that museums are at once inextricably linked to colonial processes, but also serve as sites where

this difficult history can and must be “clearly and forcefully told. Only by doing so can we address the legacies of historical unresolved grief.” (Ibid 9)

In this way, decolonizing the interpretation of collections represent a goal of current museology and museum best practices. The term is used broadly, across many disciplines and motivations, and is borrowed from the language of activism. Students at the University of Cape Town used the phrase when organizing to “decolonize the curriculum” by making the means of learning more accessible to more people” (Mirzoeff 2017: 13). As student activist Brian Kamanzi noted, the central goal of this decolonization process is not merely about reinterpreting content but about challenging the “hierarchical relations of authority” through building different “ways of seeing” (Ibid: 13). In this way, the process of decolonization that the students, as well as the co-curators, engaged in is representative of a second wave of reclaiming control of the narrative. As Jonathan Paquette (2012: 130-131) explains

While self-determination and national independence were at the crux of the first wave of decolonization, the second wave deals with the complexity of multicultural societies marked by a coexistence of European colonists and their descendants with members of indigenous populations. There are four typical measures associated with this second wave--1) Representative bureaucracy, 2) Re-articulation of symbols in public administration 3) Structural re-articulation of decision making and services, 4) Inclusion of indigenous knowledge in administrative processes and practice.

In this way, this second wave seeks to challenge public institutions that reproduce and perpetuate colonial practices as well as the Euro-American approach to public administration.

For one guest speaker at *Pamanang Pinoy*, decolonization of the collection was an internal process. “For me decolonizing is about expanding the narrative...I insist on my right to these objects, and to allow for the inclusion of multiple relationships and perspectives that are learned in multiple ways.” he said. “Decolonization is about insisting these objects are yours, giving access to those who are interested and acknowledging that their being here in the museum

isn't the end of their story". He was not the first to use this loaded phrase, and he would not prove to be the last. For Martin, co-curation is a form of decolonization because, "we are looking to each other for the answers, looking to each other to define things and then also putting them into use." She also described using the objects and the knowledge she gathered as a Co-Curation volunteer to "decolonize myself" and "reflect on the words, language, the clothes" that she chooses. "It makes me question the information given to me, especially about my heritage" she said in our interview. Domingo cited similar concerns in saying she uses "these objects as a mnemonic device to know myself, and undo centuries of misinformation." For Ibach and others, however, the authority to define artifacts did not go far enough in changing the existing power structures. "I don't think you can change the narrative" she said. "I can suggest creative ways and platforms for people and us to talk about it but I don't think I can actually make moves with it...it's owned by the Field Museum... So it's only accessible as long as I'm there [volunteering]. In this way she highlights that the process of decolonization is far from complete. It is an ongoing shaking up of institutional practice and administration—and events like *Pamanang Pinoy* are only the beginning of this tenuous process. As Nicholas Mirzoeff reminds us, "decolonization is not a metaphor'. It's work in and on the real. The long history of decolonization should be an ample reminder of the possibility of failure in the best of times. Which these are not" (Mirzoeff 2017: 7).

### *Diversity and Modernity*

By connecting the collection with lived experiences, the partnership further works to modernize perceptions of local and global Filipinx identity, developing interpretations that acknowledge the vibrant, diverse, and contemporary Filipinx community of the 21st century. In this way, events like the *Pamanang Pinoy* series and other co-curated activities help to restore

the collection to what Buntinx and Karp (2006: 214) call an “interrupted cultural continuum”. Re-inscribing them into this contemporary landscape helps to combat some of the salvage narratives surrounding the collection (Clifford 1987). As Domingo put it “A lot of people think you know those people are dead, or ...ancient, of not existing anymore. But with our programs you know we say to society that our culture is still alive. And our culture is also still developing. And the Philippines are still developing.”

The team also works to feature discussions and topics that are relevant to a modern community. Team members choose event themes that resonate with them personally to highlight ideas that feature the collection’s connections to modern concerns. For Domingo, the collection offers exciting opportunities to discuss issues of sexuality and gender in the Filipinx and Filipinx-American community. The topic resonates with her personally, and her passion for fostering discussion around these issues in conversation with Filipinx identity is one motivation for her engagement with the partnership.

We have a lot of like artifacts that related to gender and like gendered use but then we also set like the panel of people living now and like how gendered relationships work, how queer gendered relationships work currently in our society...I feel like I offer a very unique perspective especially on the like the gender event I think was like one of the first of its kind, honestly to address [these] issues.

Domingo helped to organize panels of experts and catalysts from the LGBT+ community as well as personal connections to discuss topics including the HIV/AIDS epidemic, intersections of LGBT+ concerns and the heavily Catholic Filipinx community, and their own experiences in navigating sexual orientations and gender expressions. As one such panel highlighted, while Spanish and English pronouns both differentiate binary genders, Tagalog like other Austronesian languages does not, affecting the conversations and expressions of those beyond the binary. “A lot of queer history has been written out of history because of like

cis/heteronormative society. And you know a lot of cultures around the world have had you know, have always had people who don't prescribe to the gender binary. But because of European colonization that gets erased" Domingo explained. The stories and ideas that she works to highlight, and the conversations she aims to facilitate between and among generations with diverse perspectives, is one way that the co-curation partnership seeks to use objects from the past to talk about the present, seeking to address the community that exists today.

The team encountered additional opportunities to modernize the interpretation of the collection by expanding it. Team members are often consulted about new accessions to the collection, or asked for input about other collections matters including photo usage and decisions about the co-curated exhibition case. As Ibach says, "There are so many cool objects that are happening right now...it doesn't have to be this antiquated thing that just looks ancient...I want to challenge like what could be in that collection." Similarly, in December 2017, Trisha Martin's wedding dress—designed and created by her friend and fellow co-curator Lorén Ibach, a design student at SAIC—was mounted and put on display near the co-curated Philippines case in the Regenstein Pacific Hall in place of a Fijian bark cloth wedding dress which previously occupied the space. Ibach says,

Whoever was in charge of thinking about the case wanted something more contemporary...and me and Trisha are always talking about how we can make this traditional clothing more contemporary or make it more her, or something new but reflecting on those old things, our history um and so I think that they just kind of were like oh let's just put in Lorén's dress cus she's very much a part of it, it was very, we're both co-curators and it was reflective of the conversations we were already having.

In this way the dress represents important elements of the modern Filipinx-American experience as lived by Ibach and Martin. As Martin puts it, "I was really excited especially because it wasn't just my dress, it has the snake vertebrae headdress that I wore and that was exciting

because we have that in the collection too.” The decision was moving for both of them, as well as for their fellow co-curators (who had some of the most excited social media posts I’ve ever seen on the day of the installation).

### *Empowering Major Actors*

As the display of Ibach’s dress indicates, for many co-curators, participation in the program helps to empower them in important ways. Each event or activity that the team puts together requires a tremendous amount of work and skill. As Sadcopen puts it, “we’re content creators at this point.” In addition to choosing themes, researching objects, and selecting representative pieces, volunteers work with staff to share their message with both visitors and other departments of the Museum. Such a task requires skill in writing, communicating, and public speaking as well as poise, tact, and a thorough understanding of complex anthropological nuance. Further, they help to promote events by developing promotional material, maintaining an active social media presence, and documenting their accomplishments. To execute events, they coordinate with multiple departments within the Museum to secure equipment and necessary permissions, as well as locating, securing, and planning discussion leaders or speakers. They frequently execute demonstrations, perform, or speak at events—occasionally offering independently researched presentations of historical or anthropological topics. They answer questions, help to foster active and interesting discussions, and assist with whatever equipment events require.

Along the way they have built important skills and competencies across broad areas of expertise, gaining confidence as well as—especially for the college aged volunteers—marketable resume boosters. As Lois Silverman (2010: 55) notes,

Competence in communication and work are not only needs of the self, they are requirements for a functional society. Museums benefit both individuals and the

world in which we live by helping people to develop relevant skills and to apply them in vocational opportunities. Through such efforts, museums subtly influence social conditions related to competence in two essential ways: they fight unemployment and enhance public service.

Co-curators have gained a sense of belonging in a Museum from which they once felt alienated, and skill in discussing delicate issues and concerns important to them, their families, and their communities. Ibach remarked “The opportunity to teach people new skills with my weaving workshops and get people to get interested in...learning these traditional processes, realizing they’re not these ancient far far away things, they’re real and you can practice them and talk about them...that’s my favorite part” (See Figure 4.5). “It’s so empowering” said another volunteer whose words are displayed in the label for the Philippine Case, “to have my thoughts recorded in a place like the Field Museum.



*Figure 4.5: Lorén Ibach leads a demonstration and activity of back-strap loom weaving with the help of Jerico Domingo and Trisha Martin (Photo by the author)*

Several co-curators have gone on to other prestigious internships and positions. Export Quality, an art collective to which several co-curators contribute, recently made their international debut at a show in Toronto, and has participated in several events since. Volunteers now share their skills with other organizations in the Chicago area and around the world, assisting with events like Kultura, Piyesta Pinoy, and dozens of others. Domingo, Bautista, Sadcopen, and Espinoza facilitated a workshop with “Filipino Americans Coming Together” (FACT), an annual conference hosted by the Philippine Student Association at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Their workshop, “Common Threads” held in November 2017, discussed differences and similarities of Philippines textiles from a variety of regions, accompanied by a hands-on tutorial on backstrap weaving. In this way, the skills and confidence for speaking with authority about their experiences, thoughts, and research helps to empower key contributors to expand their impact, facilitating important conversations across broad topics and ideas.

### *Conclusions*

The Philippine Co-Curation partnership and the event series it has created offers Filipinx-American community members new opportunities to build relationships with one another, with the Museum and with their heritage. The partnership makes important and significant strides in expanding access to the collection and in making the interpretive process a multi-directional conversation that recognizes the authority of lived experience. In creating the opportunity to host and encourage active discussion, events work to change the museum space into one where knowledge is produced, multiple perspectives are encouraged, and discourse is inspired. In this way, the events create a liminal or contact space where Filipinx-Americans from many broad backgrounds can gather to share ideas, memories, and values and to build important and lasting

social bonds. Further, the events work to confront the colonial history of the United States and the Philippines and discussion of both the lasting impacts of this struggle and the means of empowering modern Filipinx-Americans. In so doing, they work to reclaim a sense of power over how the objects are understood, and the stories that can be told about them as well as how they relate to the concerns and experiences of a modern community. The process of planning events further offers important skills and training for volunteers—many of whom are college aged and seeking careers and lives that allow them to connect with their heritage and share their knowledge.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE FIELD MUSEUM**

One Saturday, early in my fieldwork, a team of about ten volunteers gathered in the Anthropology workshop to debrief following the day's event. It had come together somewhat haphazardly, as at the last minute as a speaker fell through and volunteers were suddenly responsible for the day's presentations. Each had offered a short talk on Shields and Armor, the day's theme, and how they related to specific significant Filipinx resistance movements. While their performances seemed smooth, organized, and well-planned to me, and had inspired a lively and interesting discussion, upstairs the speakers' nerves about public speaking and worries about quality were beginning to show. As we settled in and distributed snacks, Lorén Ibach, commiserated with her friend and fellow student and volunteer, Vi Bautista that she wished they had all practiced together because while she was "ready and researched" a week before the event, she had felt "nervous to speak" and unsure "about pronunciation and fact checking". We all gathered in a circle around the conference table to discuss as Alpha Sadcopen opened the debriefing session by commending the group's performance. Others seated around the room voiced similar approval, saying that each presenter "really knew their stuff" and had engaged their audience well, "addressing what we could while making it clear that we are not experts" but interested in furthering conversation and "making people comfortable to contribute".

A staff member jumped in to elaborate on the process. "The research came a long way, and we all came together in the clutch in a real team effort. But this whole thing came together way too late." Others agreed, and began to voice possible solutions—more regular and instructive emails, earlier planning meetings, or Skype practice sessions. Then one volunteer, who had been holding his jaw a little tight said, "When though? How? We are all students, we have no time, no planning or practice time." Ibach, agreed, adding "it says a lot about how much

we all care about this project. We all have so much to do and this just gets shoved on top”. As a group, they discussed time and stress management techniques, and reassured one another about their performances. A staff member ended the meeting by saying “I always operate under the idea that you don’t go to war with the army you need, you go with the army you have...It could always be better or different...but I think you do better than you think you do...all things are done by people who know 75% what they’re doing and if we never have a guest speaker again, I’m fine with that”.

I reflected on this debriefing session often over the course of my research, especially during interviews with volunteers who expressed exasperation or frustration at a lack of consistent and measurable support from the Museum. As Sadcopen explained “It’s this feeling that like, they don’t really care...we have definitely had moments throughout the project where like we’ve been left out of things or people don’t get back to us or ... something as small as people being like ‘Oh what are you guys? What do you guys do?’ No one knows what we’re doing”. She hints, here, at a lack of effective communication across the various departments and projects at the Museum, which has limited the partnership’s ability to lobby for support and make their mission well-known. With the exception of two term-limited staff, and the aid of the other Anthropology staff members who horse-shoe time with the partnership into already full schedules, the partnership is largely volunteer-run. This system gives volunteers significant responsibility and important roles, but leaves some feeling overwhelmed and underappreciated, and limits the time and effort they can realistically extend, often leading to a somewhat improvisatory organization. As the only dedicated funding for the partnership expired and along with it the only dedicated Field Museum staff members, these volunteers must now take on more and more responsibility to keep the partnership functional. As paying careers and other

opportunities beckon, the future of Philippine Co-Curation and its event series is currently in a state of scaled-back limbo.

While the Philippine partnership is unique in its focus on collections, governance, and interpretive power, it is not alone in trying to reimagine the Field Museum's relationship with communities. Many other participatory projects and activities across all departments and disciplines are currently at play in the Field Museum. These projects work to accomplish broad goals, using a wide variety of methods, which often leads to confusion, repetition, and tension between and across projects. Understanding why communication across these similarly-motivated projects is so limited requires a discussion of the Museum's staffing strategies, organizational structure, institutional priorities, and approach to participatory endeavors. This institutional context illustrates many of the challenges that the Philippine partnership faced, as well as their hopes to continue, expand, and thrive in an uncertain future. Ultimately, to move out of the experimental pilot program approach the partnership currently resides in, and into a permanent and sustainable future will require the Museum to articulate participatory endeavors as an institutional priority in the coming years.

### *An Institutional Context*

In seeking to situate the Philippine Co-Curation partnership within the context of the Field Museum as an institution, three major authors informed my analysis. Karp (1991)'s work describes and highlights the importance of internal collaboration to clarify, streamline, and make the most of institutional efforts to extend participatory outreach. His work with Corrine Kratz (2006) on the frictions that occur across the many often conflicting functions and roles of a museum and with Gustavo Buntinx (2006) on the tactical methods museums can employ to overcome them were also instructive. Simon's (2010) seminal work *The Participatory Museum*

offered important practical considerations for implementing such methods, with special emphasis on their need for scaffolding, structure, and clearly articulated goals and outcomes. And Shannon's (2014) look at collaborative practices at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) revealed important discussion of how institutionalized bureaucracy, power, territory, and personalities combine to create the contexts which participatory endeavors must navigate. These authors offered significant theoretical framing and language to discuss the observations I gathered at events and through interviews.

### *A Future of Volunteers*

While the roles and responsibilities co-curators undertake have significant and measurable benefits for those involved, including community engagement, increased access to the Museum, engagement with their heritage, and empowering new skills, one must acknowledge that the positions they hold are largely volunteer based. The Anthropology department has worked hard to create exceptions to this rule through relevant and exciting paid or credited internships and short term positions. Further, many co-curators hold formal volunteer positions with monitored hours and stated expectations, as well as certain benefits like free parking on site. Such opportunities have offered important value to co-curators, but many contributed most of their labor without receiving a paycheck in return. As funding is notoriously and increasingly tight in the non-profit and cultural sector, museums around the world rely heavily on volunteers to accomplish important and meaningful work. Even the paid positions that most museums can afford to fund are often low in salary and temporary in nature. Especially for pilot programs like this one, paid positions are often simply an institutional impossibility.

Volunteering can, of course, be rewarding in non-monetary ways—a sense of contribution, social engagement, building new skills, a sharing of knowledge, or civic pride are

just a few of these—but do not offer significant decision making power or museum authority. Rusty Russell, the Field Museum Director of Collections, who joined the Field Museum team in 2017 explained that across the many broad volunteer projects that the Museum supports, two loose categories begin to emerge. “We have those who just say ‘hey look, I want to help. I don't mind sitting down to a computer and going through all of these images of labels that you have and typing in all the data for you, I think that's fun’.” And then there are more specialized and knowledgeable volunteers who “are actually bringing expertise to the table that we don't have.” Simon (2010: 207) delineates similar categories in discussing volunteer contributions, noting key differences between contributions on which the success of a project depends (or “necessary contribution”), participation which enhances a project (“supplemental contribution”), and contribution which provides mission-relevant skills and experiences for volunteers (“educational contribution”). The Philippine co-curation partnership, along with several other collaborative ventures at the Museum, falls into this “necessary” category because, as Russell put it “we are seeking their information to enhance and inform what we're trying to do and vice versa”. Volunteers in this category contribute, in addition to labor, intellectual property to the Museum with the help of the staff who coordinate and facilitate their time there.

Further, as Russell explained, “In some instances an individual of co-curation is going to be a 60 year old or a 20 year old, man or a woman, with or without kids, with or without bills, in school, not in school”. While often older or more established volunteers are glad to work unpaid and “give back”, those just beginning their professional careers often have a higher barriers to participation in unpaid activities. As Ibach put it,

Being a volunteer, I think it's easier if you're in the older generation you know you have a little bit more time, as a college student I don't have a lot of time...I know it's great to volunteer but it's also hard when you're not there 9 to 5, in the office and getting paid for thinking about these things because it's a lot of research, like,

my friends and I stayed up really really late doing research and like practicing and like it was hard work and totally on top of so many other things and it sucks and it deserves so much more...So I feel I've had to fall off or had to go off into different opportunities because the world just is gonna keep going and I have to be paid and I'm sad that I'm not ...I'm in school full time and then I only have actually like three to four hours in the evening to do anything in my life and how much of that am I actually gonna go [spend at] the Field Museum.

As a long-time volunteer in the museum world—and at the Field Museum—I can attest that the volunteer experience is rewarding. I learned many of my professional skills and understandings of the museum world as a volunteer. Whenever I calculate my hours, however, it is always hard not to do the mental math of what my labor would be worth in a different industry. And this back-of-the-head math always gets louder when the rent is due, tuition goes up, or health problems arise. More than once, I have had to walk away from unpaid internships or volunteer work in order to pursue paid positions outside the museum world. Many of the co-curators, most of whom are in their twenties, face similar obstacles. Most are not seeking to build long-term museum careers, but their schedules are demanding and their time is precious. As they complete school and bills pile up, many will be forced to move on. As Domingo described, “I don't think volunteerships are sustainable... [most of us] will eventually have other commitments to commit to and because it is volunteer work I think this will be low priority versus like actual jobs that pay.” And we will never know how many potential experts in Filipinx culture, identity, and objects never had the financial liquidity to volunteer their time. In this way, volunteer positions are only accessible to those who can afford to work without pay, functionally elevating only the relatively more wealthy or financial stable voices.

Because of the highly valued expertise that co-curation volunteers contribute, and the access concerns that unpaid labor raises, continuing the Philippine co-curation partnership using largely unpaid labor seems unsustainable. In Domingo's words,

Overall I would say I've enjoyed the experience and I've really really learned a lot, I've gained so much experience organizing stuff and I also have a lot of new ideas for artmaking. But you know I also want to, in my thesis I was also very critical of how in this program, 'the white man,' you know using brown people to do what they're supposed to be paid for...to do for free, right? It's like a team of volunteers and a lot of the bulk of organizing has been done by free labor. And ... it isn't that, you know, accessible for a lot of people. The museum doesn't really like help out, expect for like Cassie and Neal which like, they do so much, but the museum itself hasn't really shown that much interest in sustaining us, you know, financially, or you know, supporting us or even like helping us advertise...And that's really disheartening

While volunteer opportunities are important and valuable, a wider variety of ways to participate with co-curation would increase access for more people. Even if funding multiple paid positions to support the partnership proved impossible for the Museum, other avenues of compensation could be explored. For example, a kind of incentive program could be devised in which volunteer hours could be applied to various benefits. After a set amount of volunteer time, benefits like a Family Membership, tickets to events and programs, discounts at the gift shop, dinner with various "VIPs", or even something like a guest spot on the Brain Scoop with Emily Graslie<sup>12</sup> could be earned. Similarly, the Filipinx community and the Field Museum could work together to fund an annual paid internship for a student selected with input from the community, or build an advisory committee with rotating positions that represent various diverse viewpoints from the community.

As Russell notes however "a volunteer by definition is not expecting anything in return... the quid pro quo is academic and intellectual more than it is financial. When you get into that aspect of it, when you're talking about stipends or salaries, it's a job...and that's fine but that's what it is." Other staff members have expressed concerns that creating paid positions would

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<sup>12</sup> The Brain Scoop is "an educational YouTube channel that explores behind-the-scenes of The Field Museum in order to share the work of scientists and the value of research collections with the world" (Field Museum n.d.) led By Emily Graslie, Chief Curiosity Correspondent at the Field Museum.

“lead to an over-professionalization of the activity - i.e. only those with anthro[pology] degrees from universities.” They note that such professionalization would “eliminate at least 11 people who are active and engaged (and don't have heritage/museum/anthro[pology] backgrounds) and some who, to put it plainly, wouldn't trust an academic (as they've told me many times)”.

Without a doubt, compensating this labor would represent a major structural shift in how the Philippine partnership is run. It would require much stronger and more comprehensive institutional support, consistent funding, and clearer scaffolding of goals and expectations. There can be no doubt, however, that failing to implement this kind of change, and continuing to rely on unpaid labor has its own set of complications.

As Simon (2010: 232) notes,

Particularly when institutions collaborate with communities with whom there is no previous relationship, providing reasonable compensation helps participants appreciate the value of their work. Payment of school credit also makes participation accessible to people who would like to get involved but cannot afford to volunteer their time. For the most part, these external motivators work well. They professionalize the relationship between participants and staff members, encouraging all partners to do their best and be accountable to each other.

Lacking these external motivators (with the exception of some credited or paid internships), maintaining a regular schedule of work and dependable productivity, understanding expectations and roles, and communicating professional standards remained consistent challenges at each *Pamanang Pinoy* I attended. “No one responds to emails!” said one exasperated staff member. “Getting everyone to commit and follow through is a nightmare”. One frantic group email before a major event read “I'm seriously understaffed and swimming in work for this. If you can devote any time to working at the Field Museum, I could use your help”. When I asked about these communication concerns, one volunteer admitted “The last few months I've been pretty M.I.A....Essentially it's kind of like whenever I'll like try to fit it in like at the end of the day

like if I have like, I'm just like relaxing and I'm checking all my emails kind of thing." She mentioned having two jobs and a full course load at the time, and that her time was difficult to manage. Domingo expanded upon these ideas in saying

Because it's like volunteer run, we don't have a lot of commitment to it, we're not getting paid there so a lot of volunteers, you know, they don't have to show up it's not like a huge commitment to go in weekly. And, unless you have an internship, like, Lorén, Vi, Cheryl, and Tristan they all had an internship so they were getting school credit to go but with me I never like had any school credit but I still went in weekly. It takes a lot of time.

This kind of unpredictability makes it difficult to assign consistent roles, communicate clearly, or maintain consistent standards. Nearly every co-curator I interviewed mentioned these uncertainties as a frustration of participation. "We haven't had very clear roles" Salvador-Burris told me. "It needed a little bit more, probably discipline and more commitment from people," McKenna added. Others mentioned more debriefing after events or time critiquing missteps. "There's nothing worse than when you kind of like feel something about an event and it's not good and like you can't talk about it until later," Sadcopen said. While debriefing sessions were a regular part of event planning, with a shared document available for comments and regular meetings, as Ibach said "it's only like an hour and they have to have minutes because we get so off topic. We realize that there are a lot of things that as a group, collectively that we haven't talked about ...but really we're just here to talk about [snaps three times] what needs to get done".

While involved staff are dedicated, skilled, connected, and working impossibly hard to accomplish the partnership's goals, this kind of inconsistency limits their potential to facilitate the partnership. Moreover, the staff dedicated to this partnership have so far all been short term, contingent employees. With the end of their employment at the Museum ever-looming, and too many tasks for too-few hands, scaffolding consistent schedules, expectations, and roles often

slipped through the cracks in favor of putting out larger fires. Pontone's funding expired in 2016, and Matherne's in 2017 (although he has remained involved with the partnership and the Museum). Martin moved to California to be nearer to her family later in 2017. Several cycles of summer interns—including myself—have come and gone. And many of the volunteers are beginning to contemplate their next projects. As one staff member put it,

They're not around as often, the co-curators. No, they're not around as often and when it's time to you know, have the co-curators decide on something, or help with something, or this that and the other, they don't respond as quick. They're not as enthusiastic... Some of them have stepped up, some of them have just, you know ... we're sailing our boats elsewhere you know.

Volunteers and interns from the community have the power to speak and be heard, but these positions are unpaid and turnover is high. The staff positions funded by the Museum are term-limited and therefore ultimately unable to make the partnership permanent. In this way, to return again to Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969), the partnership is consultative, but lacks the muscle to negotiate or redistribute power by setting joint policy. To accomplish the lofty goals the partnership has set for itself, it will need to be recognized as an institutional priority by the Museum itself, beyond the Anthropology department and Terrell's staff. While those remaining have hopes as well as plans to sustain the partnership by expanding their digital presence and lessening their physical reliance on the Museum, it will soon face what Terrell has called a "cosmic shiver." "Have we turned our back on them?" he asked. "I think we're playing with dynamite".

#### *What Comes Next?*

Toward the end of 2017, facing a vacuum of paid staff members dedicated to the partnership, co-curation volunteers became largely responsible for maintaining their involvement. Several volunteers expressed that they hoped to expand the partnership's online

and digital presence as well as their offsite engagement opportunities, making it possible for community members to engage independently of the Field Museum's space. This plan has proven challenging, however, without staff members with time allocated to facilitate the partnership. As Pontone explained, "As long as there's someone who wants to do this and acts on that desire it'll keep going but there's no staff that will make sure it happens or bug people." Additionally, no new contacts, initiatives, or ideas can come to fruition to strengthen the partnership or help it to grow. "The things we were able to achieve and the connections we were able to make over the course of our work in this guise of co-curation was phenomenal," Pontone says. She continues, "But if everyone is busy then it's not hard to just look away from a dying light." Matherne remains at the Museum as an associate researcher with "a leg in Philippine co-curation" offering input, answering inquiries, and occasionally giving tours. Pontone, after completing an additional role in planning and executing the "Ancient Mediterranean: Cultures in Contact" exhibition which opened in October 2017, has now moved on to new opportunities. In this staff vacuum, any and all needs of the partnership will be laid on top of the Anthropology collections staff's already full plates. As Jamie Kelly, the Head of Anthropology collections notes, the activities of the partnership will necessarily be more limited in the coming months. "We'll still have a few volunteers helping us keep it kind of chugging along. We're going to have to keep expectations sort of at a minimum and not let it go away". Kelly and other staff members also continue to support co-curation activities and volunteers.

Whenever possible, existing staff hope to facilitate small events, collections tours, and volunteer projects like transcribing catalog cards, but lacking the resources of an institutional and strategic priority, as Kelly notes, "we just don't have the staff" to keep the partnership going at full steam. As staff funding expires, and volunteers move on, the future of the partnership the

Field Museum has built over several years stands in peril at my writing of this thesis. When I asked another staff member what they imagined the partnership would look like a year after our 2017 conversation, they replied “As it’s going right now? One of the Mad Max movies, a couple [of] weeds in the desert [laughter].” The staff member continued to discuss the future of Philippine co-curation while considering current resources, “No, I think they will continue with contingent employees and volunteers.” “So, stopgaps?” I asked. The staff member answered with frustration and concern for the future of the co-curation enterprise, saying, “If I would have known that’s what my job was going to be, I don’t know if I would’ve taken it...It’s not a good place to be.”

Unfortunately, this instability has already depressed volunteer activity from several who were comfortable working with existing staff, or those who do not see evidence of the long term commitment they hoped for. As Kelly describes “I think they're concerned about the museum's commitment now so, you know, it's not a good outward sign that they aren't keeping the staff on but it's the reality of the situation.” Many volunteers expressed frustration that the partnership they hoped would be long term and indefinite has turned out to have something of a shelf life. “We're definitely leaving a bad taste in people's mouths” Pontone said. “I don't know what the relationship will be between the Field Museum and [co-curators] is going to look like in the future and I don't know if that's going to be something like a point of contention or a point of access”. As Simon (2010) notes, the “litmus test” of a community engagement initiative’s lasting impact lies not in “who shows up” but instead in “what happens when it’s over...Are new institutional relationships created and sustained?”

The Philippine Co-Curation partnership began, and exists, as a pilot program, intended to operate on a limited basis to demonstrate that a different relationship between the Museum and

constituent communities is possible. Ultimately, the partnership was so effective in this demonstration, that it has become something of a victim of its own success. As Rusty Russell, the Museum's Director of Collections explained, "having grants for two or three years is going to work for two or three years...pilot projects are pilot projects, and if you don't have a sustainable plan or a graceful exit strategy, this is what happens". A clearer succession plan, a long-term funding solution, and structured goals and processes could offer the partnership the support and framework it needs to continue to build and thrive in a sustainable future.

### *Defining Co-Curation*

One major challenge the Philippine Co-Curation partnership has encountered lies in the very definition of the activity the Museum aims to facilitate. Multiple curators use the term "co-curation" to describe the community engagement initiatives they promote—a very broad range of activities. These efforts include the community digitization effort WeDigBio (Worldwide Engagement for Digitizing Biocollections), as well as the "Roots and Routes" initiative—a collaborative project aimed at creating and sustaining the longest stretch of lakefront natural area within the Chicago Park District system, the Burnham Wildlife Corridor (BWC), in order to maximize benefits for neighboring communities and nature—and several collaborative research endeavors around the world from the Amazon to the Congo. As several curators at the Field Museum are exploring collaborative efforts, and the goals of these projects are extremely broad, messaging remains a major challenge for the Philippine Co-Curation partnership. As Simon (2010: 275) notes "Conflicts are common in institutions that do not have a unified vision of their relationships with constituent communities. Institutions that are just beginning participatory projects of any type should expect to confront these kinds of challenges". Challenges like these

abound at the Field Museum, where so many different community engagement platforms exist that Rusty Russell refers to them as “31 flavors”.

In [the Keller Science Action Center], we're talking about communities outside of the United States. Because of Co-Curation we're talking about cultural communities within the United States...as well as with the Collections Club and also the We Dig Bio efforts are engaging individuals all over the world to help us with digitization. So there's a lot, I call them 31 flavors for a reason. I'm sure if we sat down then we would realize that we haven't found them all yet. Even something as simple as volunteers...there's a long history of that yet we kind of forget that that is exactly what we're doing, we're engaging the community to assist in our mission.

Here, he highlights that a lack of definition of, clear boundaries between, and cohesion amongst these “31 flavors” leads to a sense of confusion about the Field Museum’s approach to collaborative enterprises, and the specific merits of funding each endeavor. He continued to say “I don't think that we have organized it very well, I think parts of it are, but it isn't well knit together in a way that you can sort of identify in sort of a broad brush comment”.

As Shannon (2014) notes, these “dueling departmental ideologies and perspectives on community curating” can lead to significant confusion, as well as competition, between differing collaborative endeavors within the institution. One example of these dueling ideologies is seen through the differences between Philippine co-curation and the participatory outreach endeavors of Dr. Alaka Wali, the curator of North American Anthropology and former director of the Chicago Cultural Alliance (see Chapter 2). While the work of Wali and Terrell is markedly different, they work toward similar goals, and use similar terminology to describe their efforts. As Wali explained in an interview with me, “I didn't feel [Philippine Co-Curation] was necessarily the only way to do it...So instead I started to work with contemporary artists in the Native American community, thinking that having artists bring their vision and point of view to the collection would be another way to co-curate the collection”. Much of her career has been

focused on what she describes as “participatory action research and programmatic activities that are sort of...the lingo we use is translating science into action”, that worked to involve community members in solving community-identified social problems. Within a participatory action strategy, “communities of inquiry and action evolve and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers” (Reason and Bradbury 2008: 1). Wali and Tudor (2015) highlight that this kind of work involves “research subjects in actual investigation, with the objective of contributing to change or betterment in the subjects’ social situation/context” (67) calling for highly transparent and problem-solving oriented practices.” In this way it seeks to make a shift from what Lassiter (2001) calls “reading over the shoulders” of subjects to “reading alongside” them (see Hall 2001; Heron and Reason 2001; Kindon, Pain, and Kesby 2007a, 2007b). Wali’s background in this kind of research now informs her recent work with contemporary Native American artists to re-contextualize and reinvigorate the Native North American exhibition spaces.

The unique viewpoint of these artists, including Bunky Echo-Hawk, Chris Pappan and Rhonda Holy Bear, and their work adds additional layers of interpretation to the galleries, which have not been updated in several decades (although they were recently approved for a drastic redesign), inviting visitors to engage with both historical and contemporary Native culture. In this way, Wali’s co-curative work features the combined and collaborative perspectives of both the contemporary artists featured in the exhibition, and Wali’s own curatorial voice. As Kelly describes, “[Wali] uses [co-curation] specifically more as verb, like how you would co-author a paper, you're working with a collaborator.” While these projects often lead to long term relationships between collaborators and the Museum, and breathe important new and exciting life into dated representations of Native Americans, they are not by definition performative

declarations about the stewardship of the collection, which is, as one staff member put it “specific to John [Terrell]’s thing.”

Terrell’s focus was on the stewardship of the collection because he views the process of curation as explicitly tied to the collection. And so, as Wali described, “his work, the Philippine co-curation project is all about creating pathways for access to the collections for the heritage, for the descendants of the community whose heritage that is.” This focus on the collection makes Terrell’s views and work on participatory action very different from Wali’s work or that of the Keller Science Action Center. Wali describes this work as “brilliant” but says “I don’t have the bandwidth to do that and this other thing.” Regarding the collection she curates, she was concerned that the geographic and cultural diversity of the Native American community, as well as political concerns of representing such a massive population, would make a similar project unfeasible. She told me,

I was a little bit daunted of like, even if I picked a group, like say I worked with the Pawnee, the Pawnee are not homogenous. Do I have to work only with the officially designated people in charge of repatriation, their cultural committee? If so, what happens to other people in that community? You know, I didn't like want to get into all of those kinds of dilemmas and I felt that artists bridge between community and individuals. And you can work with an artist and everyone knows that this is Bunky Echo-Hawk's perspective, there's no doubt about that but he talks about issues that are of concern to his community [but] I can get around the issue of who speaks for whom. So that's how come I landed on this approach of working with contemporary artists and so far that's worked really well for me personally, and as far as an exhibition strategy.

Moreover, while she believes that a focus on collections stewardship is important, Wali hopes to retire before a long term project could be established, and lacks the staffing and funding to sustainably support such a partnership. Importantly, however, she stipulates that neither approach is fundamentally superior, but both are important components of a spectrum of collaborative programming. Their differences, combined with those of other collaborative endeavors, allow the

Museum to expand its collaborative outreach through multiple avenues of activity with multiple and varied strengths. As Wali puts it “why can't there be different ways of doing collaborative curatorial work in the museum? The more there is of it the better because it opens up, you know it's a vast collection...and it does have this potential to be used in many many different ways.”

While these differences are, therefore, valuable, as the Field Museum currently lacks a unified vision for these collaborative endeavors, each have had difficulty explaining their unique value to Museum leadership as well as financial supporters. Terrell explained that this uncertainty has led to having “administrators with confusion about what the term means and are we doing it, or aren't we doing it. Then you have people saying ‘well I’m already doing that’, and it gets very difficult.... I don't know how you get a voice when you have so many people who claim they're already doing it”. In this way, the differing attitudes and orientations across departments of individuals with different interests and priorities causes what Karp (1991: 1) calls “difficulty developing an internal consensus and clearly defined objectives”. Throughout the funded duration of the partnership, Museum staff and volunteers both struggled to adequately communicate the goals and successes of their projects. As one staff member stated,

One of the biggest problems around here is that John says that people don't get his idea of co-curation. I believe that...But the word is not what's important, it's the idea behind it. ... in fact I'm like, one day I said ‘Can we think of another name, before we print this on too many things? Can we think of another name for this?’ Because the important thing is not this co-curation, it is the shared partnership

Pontone echoed these thoughts in explaining that after Matherne joined the Philippine Co-Curation team, they spent the better part of a year working out ways to communicate their mission and goals to the larger institution, creating handouts with descriptions of the project, presenting to board committees, meeting with other departments, and applying for dozens of grants. “A huge problem with why we didn't get that much support is that there's actually a lot of

activity happening around the museum that has to do with connecting with Chicagoland communities but there's not any sense of cohesion", she said. Building this sense of cohesion through increased internal dialogue, clearly defined terms, and collaboration across departments then, could offer a significant streamlining of effort and activity that allows the Museum to maintain various branches of engagement, involving multiple and various communities. As Simon (2010) notes, the best place to begin collaborative practices is internally. "By educating and including them in the development of participatory projects, you can help staff members feel comfortable and confident with these new endeavors," she says. "A participatory institution isn't just one that is responsive to and interested in visitors' contributions; it is also one that eagerly and effectively integrates contributions from the staff and stakeholders across the institution" (327). Such internal dialogue could therefore shape a unified and comprehensive institutional strategy to organize and promote community participation.

#### *Silos on Different Farms in Different States*

Part of the confusion surrounding terminology and definitions seems to stem from a lack of productive communication across departments, curators, and projects. While staff at smaller museums are well-known for wearing many hats as their job descriptions extend across the vast needs of running a successful museum, large and inflexible institutions like the Field Museum offer more segmented roles. As Shannon (2014: 68) put it, "you really do work in one department, and departments are territorial". This territorialism is exacerbated by what she terms "the silo mentality" in which individual departments look inward to solve problems, discuss ideas, and seek innovation often at the expense of the broader conversations made possible by the presence of many voices. While the Museum's 2012 reorganization and restructuring, which changed the organization of the Museum from discipline-based (Anthropology, Zoology,

Geology, and Botany) to activity based (Research, Collections, Action, and Learning) ostensibly aimed to shake people out of their silos and into communication with one another, staff report that it seems to have built new silos layered on top of the existing ones. Now, as Terrell noted, “we have not only silos, but the silos are on different farms, and the farms are in different states.” And as Pontone added, “the silos aren’t department to department, they’re project to project.”

While the restructured model works to bring scholars of different disciplines into more contact, it remains hierarchical and linear. In reviewing the organizational chart of the Science and Education department as a limited example (See Figure 5.2), we see that the Vice President of the department sits at the head, with branches extending linearly below. Falk and Sheppard (2006: 21) call such organizational models “top-down” and described how they disperse

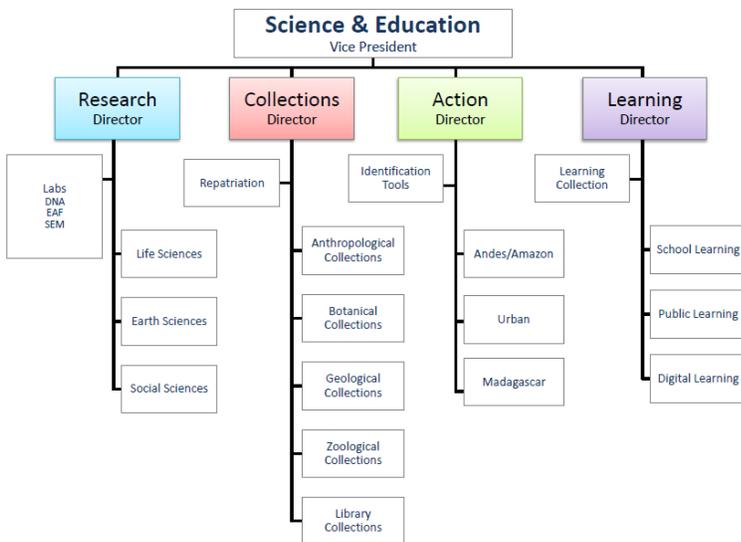


Figure 5.1: The organizational chart of the Science and Education department at the Field Museum (Photo from Field Museum website)

information from the authoritative “head” of the model through the staff and down to the “consumers”. This linear design limits the staff’s ability to influence and communicate with the executive staff, let alone the administration, on important issues. Conversely, staff can miss out on important connections and ideas beyond their own scope of

knowledge that others may be able to contribute. Importantly, this unidirectional flow fails to facilitate feedback loops that could improve performance, point out problems, or relay visitor concerns. Additionally, this structure limits staff members’ ability to innovate new ideas,

projects, or partnerships with other staff members as doing so requires moving through many levels of approval to even interact with members of other departments. Characteristic of museums in what Falk and Shepard (Ibid) call the “Industrial Age,” this model positions each branch in the department as separate and distinct from both one another and the community they serve rather than embedded in and engaged with it. Consequently, as Pontone described,

I have no idea what Burnham Wildlife Corridor is doing with their community I don't know what the Learning Center is doing with Chicago Public Schools, I don't know any of this...I have no idea what's going on with [the re-design of the Native North American hall] and it's really a shame because a lot of what they're trying to do ...is mirroring what we are trying to do but there's been no conversation or there's been no report to say what worked, what didn't work, how do we do this, how do we build upon this. And I think it's pretty systemic that people just sort of just rebuild the wheel all the time.

Because projects are isolated, staff members do not learn from one another’s mistakes or successes, and deeply entrenched differences in priorities and perspectives are never resolved or mediated. As Simon (2010: 274) cautions, this isolation can make even the most exciting programs “become participatory ghettos within larger, more traditional institutions.” With various participatory endeavors scattered and isolated in this way, the staff members who promote, nurture, facilitate, and support them lack a clearly defined and institutionally stable set of objectives, mission, or common vocabulary to frame and structure their efforts.

As Shannon (2014: 67) encountered while studying the practices and processes of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), these bureaucratic barriers are often subsumed by discussions of “personality” and “turf”—“tugs of war” between “territorial” departments. When I spoke with staff members about siloed departments and broken communication patterns, few pointed to structural concerns, while more cited territorialism or personality clashes. As Terrell explained “[Field Museum] has historically always, instead of looking at a problem, it personalizes it ...it’s always just, ‘oh that's John’, or ‘that's so and so’.

So rather than just, okay so even if it is that [person], what's really going on here?" In this way he highlights Shannon's argument that the specific personalities to whom problems tend to be attributed represent more than "a combination of bureaucratic power and idiosyncratic creative judgment" but represent dueling ideologies and perspectives. When thrown into competition with one another for recognition and resources, these battles for turf and territory often become debates over "boundaries of professional expertise" (Ibid: 90). With more productive communication, however, as well as structured feedback loops and shared innovation, however, this "factional warfare" can be turned into "magic"—the "engine of creativity" to drive new ideas (Ibid: 260).

### *Structural Clarity and Sustainability*

To build the kind of clarity and transparency needed to communicate about and advocate for community partnerships, then, clearly defined missions, goals, expectations, and evaluative processes—what Simon (2010) calls "scaffolding" are necessary. As a pilot project, and an emerging methodology, the Philippine Co-Curation partnership often valued flexibility and the ability to adapt to new concerns over rigidly defined courses of action. As the partnership moves forward, however, and as the Museum considers new and expanding arenas of community participation, clearly articulated scaffolding could offer much needed structure, stability, and clarity to their efforts, while also lowering barriers to participation for more people. Additional scaffolding may also help to streamline volunteer labor by clearly identifying individual responsibilities, expectations, and roles. While the friendship and familiarity between staff and community co-curators allowed important opportunities for engagement, and detailed and thorough conversations, it sometimes caused what Shannon (2014: 94) called a kind of blindness

“to the fact that that more introductory information is actually necessary” for newer or uninitiated participants.

Collaboration is not, as Simon notes, easier, cheaper, or less labor intensive than projects completed by staff alone. Clearly defining the merits of collaboration and meaningfully demonstrating that value are key to showing that they are worthwhile investments. For example, when the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS) in Colorado sought to reimagine their role in and relationship with their local community, Anthropology curators and staff crafted an ambitious vision statement to structure their activities and priorities. It read, “We aspire to curate the best-understood and most ethically held anthropology collection in North America” (Nash, Colwell-Chantaphonh, and Holen 2011: 136). They defined four key principles—dialogue, reciprocity, justice, and respect—to inform how to embody these goals (Ibid). Eventually this clearly articulated policy helped DMNS to form a new and more integrative approach to collections management, community engagement, and departmental communication (Ibid). Crafting clear and concise policy was key to accomplishing the change they have built.

While the Philippine Co-Curation team did develop and distribute surveys requesting feedback about events, and an additional online survey was distributed among co-curators in December 2017, a lack of early articulation of goals and means of accomplishing them made meaningful evaluation of their activities difficult to gather. As Pontone noted, a lack of meticulous record-keeping led to some repeated mistakes, particularly as activities changed and volunteers and staff cycled through the partnership. By defining their expected outcomes, building a common vocabulary for their goals, and structuring ways of demonstrating outcomes moving forward, they could develop more meaningful tools for recognizing and communicating their own value (Simon 2010). Simon (2010: 306) offers, as an example, that deeper and more

meaningful relationships among staff can be indicated by knowing each other's first names, an increase in volume or change in type of correspondence, or an increase in how many remain in touch at fixed intervals in the future.

Several volunteers, and a few staff members, recommended building an advisory committee with rotating positions—perhaps including an annual paid internship—and structured position descriptions. Such a committee would require, however, significant commitment and organization from within the Filipinx-American community which, as McKenna noted, is difficult to organize. “It needs just like, for me, Field presence, but I think John [Terrell]’s idea is the community should do it... I think he is trying to pattern after the Maori or Indian [communities] when it’s totally different vibe, it’s totally different because those guys, they have a leader.” In this way, they are, she says, different from Chicago’s Filipinx-American community because “Filipinxs are different. We are so scattered. There’s no such thing as a leader.”

When I spoke to Pontone about the potential to build an advisory committee, she offered that involving these organizations in the co-curative process could help to structure it. “I think it'd be interesting if you made an advisory board and you had like someone from AFIRE [the Alliance of Filipinxs for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment], someone from historical society, someone from, I don't know, Seafood City even, somebody that was you know already at some sort of hub were already dedicated to the FilAm community.” In this way, rather than, as she puts it “cherry-picking people” the partnership could build upon existing networks and organizations. For Terrell, however, an advisory committee for the Filipinx community alone is too narrow to embody his vision. “I don't see the institutional need for a Filipinx-only advisory board,” he told me. “I think it would be not only too narrow it would be against the idea of the gathering place. And it wouldn't be energizing in an institutional way as would the [Marae] Encounter.” Instead,

he hopes that as co-curation partnerships will expand to include other communities—perhaps the Indonesian-American or Indian-American communities—they could together build a plural Communities Advisory Board that could be structurally integrated into the Museum’s action based efforts. He hopes that such a Board could offer opportunities for “each self-identified community might also be using, and might be welcoming different sectors of their own community on the marae”.

Here, he highlights the ambitious goals he envisions for the idea of shared stewardship, and the broad potential of its impact. Given the Philippine partnership’s pilot status, however, and lack of committed resources and support, additional scaffolding may be key to helping the Museum realize those goals. As Pontone reflected on the lessons she learned as the partnership’s facilitator, she wondered if she might have had more success in starting smaller. “We should have started with Indonesia” she said. “Indonesia is a couple thousand pieces. I think we maybe should have reconsidered with maybe a smaller community and a smaller collection.” If she had to do it over again, I asked, what she would do differently. “I think I would have tried to hone it in a little bit more. I remember Jamie Kelly always used to tell me to temper my expectations and I used to think that that was like the worst thing you could say to a person but I think now in retrospect he was right,” she said. “We were like ‘Oh, cool! What if we did this? And what if we were able to do this, what if we were able to connect the web portal to this over there and we could make it look like this!’, and while that excitement and passion is great it just, man, when we got hit we got hit.” Reigning in some of this enthusiasm for the partnership’s potential to develop realistic roles, objectives, and practices may help to streamline the partnership and maximize its ability to expand and grow.

*Permanent Partnership, Permanent Staff*

Reshaping, expanding, or even maintaining the Philippine Co-Curation partnership remains however, on indefinite hiatus until a staffing solution can be identified. As Buntinx and Karp (2006) cautioned, such endeavors are “as precious as they are precarious” and “could fragment and vanish with a single death, or even just a divorce”. In this case, the expiration of term-limited salaries and funding represents a similar threat. Staff members played a fundamentally key role in facilitating community engagement through the partnership. They were responsible for organizing collections based activities such as digitization projects and tours, executing events, advocating for community needs, speaking for the Field Museum’s priorities, mediating community disputes, nurturing trusting and respectful relationship, and a myriad of other duties. As Kelly described,

Co-curation is very time intensive, you really do have to have resources devoted to it. If you don’t have the staff to manage those relationships it’s a very hard thing to do, it’s a very admirable thing to do, but without sort of institutional support to do it, it’s a full time job just maintaining those relationships and then you’re not maintaining the collections either so you have to kind of invest.

Recognizing this necessity, nearly every co-curator—staff and volunteer alike—noted the desperate need for a sustained staff presence to guide the partnership. As one staff member put it “if that was a secure position...then they could do those things that we wanted to do but had to say whoa, stop, can’t, we can’t devote our resources to this, or this or this or that, because we’re not going to be here in a year... I could think of billions of things that that person could do to make this better.” As Russell highlights, however, dedicating staff to any specific museum role requires a strategic deployment of scarce museum resources.

From a collections management standpoint, I believe very strongly that we will never, ever, ever have enough permanent staff to do everything we need to do... But, I know that if we leverage our resources a certain way, we can ...invest some percentage of our time in sort of multiplying our loaves and fishes, as it were, to

bring greater mental resource to collections management. And if I can make that case, then we can start identifying the different parts of this [project] need that kind of funding.

As staff members changed several times throughout the process, there was a lot of re-learning, uncertainty of roles, and missing checklists that more consistent support also could have addressed. Permanent staff would have the resources, time, support, and ability to pursue new contacts, seek allies and support, and maintain or expand the partnership's activities. Many staff who have worked with the partnership are working to advocate for a Director of Co-Curation position; someone who could spearhead the facilitation of participatory programming like the Philippine partnership.

Hiring for such a position would require carefully weighing the specific skills necessary to organize and facilitate relationships—a “fundamentally different skill set: (Simon 2010: 332) than those required for the physical care or preservation of collections alone, or for most traditional forms of museum research. For this reason authors like Silverman (2010: 37) have advocated for the expansion of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics to include a deeper discussion of the concerns associated with addressing the needs of people, including managing relationships, solving problems, and mitigating conflict. Silverman describes ten main categories of labor required to support such relationships, including:

- 1) Education, or fostering knowledge, understanding and skills;
- 2) Facilitating, or catalyzing beneficial experience;
- 3) Networking, or linking people for interaction;
- 4) Brokerage, or linking clients to essential resources and organizations;
- 5) Psychotherapy, or assisting clients in problem solving and planned change;
- 6) Values demonstration, or exemplifying particular norms and standards;
- 7) Mobilization, or motivating people toward a cause or activity;
- 8) Advocacy, or speaking out on behalf of people and their rights;
- 9) Social action, or coordinated effort to foster change in social institutions; and
- 10) Activism, or planned behavior toward social or political objectives toward social change (Ibid: 144-145).

Good community managers must be skilled in both motivating participation and in building relationships with diverse participants (Simon 2010). As Kelly notes “the challenge is how you work when conflicts arise. You can’t really take sides, you can just be there to listen...keeping an open dialogue about outreach...maintaining those relationships, staying on top of it, making sure people are still being listened to and their interests are still being heard and expectations are being met.” Experience in community management, the ability to build internal coalitions, familiarity with community concerns (and languages), and a proven track record in project management will also be key. For this reason, the Museum might consider broadening its hiring criteria, and structuring positions descriptions to recognize broader forms of expertise. As Silverman (2010: 150) notes, “In order for the relationship of museums and social work to develop further, professionals ... must address the pressing need for a shared values and ethics base.” Here she highlights that the social work museums seek to accomplish often call for skills often accumulated outside the singular path through graduate education.

Rethinking the skills needed to be effective in museums positions further offers the potential to improve museum practices by engaging more diverse perspectives and voices in day-to-day processes and decision making. According to the Mellon Foundation’s 2015 report on the demographics of museum employment, “professional” staff in museums (e.g., directors, curators, registrars) are much less diverse than the US population as a whole (Merritt 2015). Museum positions are generally low-paying and extremely competitive, often requiring Master’s degrees or even Ph.Ds. in highly specialized fields. Obtaining such a credential requires tens—if not hundreds—of thousands of dollars, often a significant debt load, and the flexibility to single-mindedly dedicate oneself to academic study for years at a time—often an impossibility for job seekers who do not come from wealthy backgrounds or those negotiating lifetimes of the

systematic disadvantages that American society has yet to address or eradicate. And, as Merritt (2015) notes,

The barriers to graduate degrees are not just economic: they are deeply social and cultural as well. From helping diverse students to see graduate degrees as possible or desirable to begin with, to rarity of a cohort of supportive (diverse) peers, to bias on the part of major professors and thesis committees, the current system of higher ed[ucation] can seem like an endless system of obstructions.

While many of these concerns must necessarily be addressed at the local or regional level, the museum field has more self-reflexive and critical work to do in dismantling barriers to diversifying staff. Merritt (Ibid) goes on to remind us that “As long as museums require traditional graduate degrees for certain positions (whether an MA in museum studies or a PhD in art history) we are hostage to the graduate pipeline, over which museums have little if any influence.” For these reasons, museums hiring for positions focused on community engagement, visitor engagement, or collaborative partnerships should deeply and thoroughly reflect upon the skills necessary to do these jobs well, and the diverse methods by which job seekers could obtain such competencies.

Further, the staff roles necessary to facilitate community relationships should be decentralized to avoid consolidating activity and knowledge around a single individual. Concentrating the various roles and responsibilities of facilitation into a single role often leads to issues integrating these efforts into the larger institution, often causing conflicts between the needs of the institution and those of the community. Further, communities may become centered on managers’ personalities and abilities, causing problems when those community managers choose to leave the institution. As Simon (2010: 333) put it, “Healthy communities are not fiefdoms, they are networks.” Additionally, this kind of concentration forces a single staff member into juggling multiple, often conflicting and contradictory, roles. Partnership managers

must simultaneously serve as project directors who manage collaborations and keep projects on track, community managers who advocate for the needs of participants, instructors who provide training for participants, and client representatives or enforcers who speak for their institution's interests, requirements and standards (Ibid: 243). These roles often contradict each other, forcing the individual responsible for them into an impossible balancing act.

As Pontone noted “the [digitization] grant was initially written for two [positions] and it should have been kept at two...It was boiled down into one to cut costs and that's just not really realistic because they basically wanted someone to be a community outreach officer, a collections manager, and a photographer.” While these roles are often blended or blurred, they are more effective when they are clearly defined and separate. In this way, the needs of the institution and the needs of the community can meet through dialogue and compromise rather than the sublimation of one at the expense of the other. Further, stronger relationships can be built if the person responsible for supporting and cajoling them must not also maintain stringent standards as an enforcer. If all these roles must be compressed into the duties of a single individual, the institution must carefully and thoughtfully plan for negotiating these various contradictions, as well as for this individual's succession, with the knowledge that transferring leadership of social networks is very difficult (Ibid: 335)

### *The Department of Co-Curation*

To address these concerns about staffing, and to structure the institution's strategy toward participatory action, some anthropology and collections staff members advocate for the creation and support of a new department. This Department of Co-Curation or Collaboration or Participatory Action should be capable of building coalitions across the various projects and strategies currently at play in the Field Museum, as well as the new ones waiting to be

developed. In this way such a department could function as the manifestation of a more definitively structured and clearly articulated institutional strategy for managing the collections, managing relationships with the community, and considering connections between local communities and objects related to their heritage. As one staff member described, “somebody in Education...Adult Programming...the Keller Science [Action] Center...and an interested curator or two...you go find those folks in every department, like maybe you have somebody in exhibits...an internal group that’s the group that’s for communities, led by the Director of Co-curation.” In this way, such a department could help to clarify the Museum’s position, approach, and mission in working with communities while establishing both a flow of resources and an institutional home for collaborative efforts. Staff could then collaborate more effectively across departments to build a more unified model across the spectrum of approaches currently in use. As Kelly says, “there's certainly an attempt to make it less sort of little one-off things and to try to have slightly more standardization to how we talk about what we're doing in terms of, co-curation, or heritage management, or citizen science or whatever term you want to apply for the model that you're using.”

Building this kind of internal support and collaboration would require structuring regular meetings, interdisciplinary committees, and consistent and open communication. When discussing the potential of a department that seeks to address these needs, Russell offered an important question

If there was going to be an individual whose responsibility is was to oversee this kind of activity, our engagement with the public in the way that we do in the Amazon/Andes, the way that we see in Kankakee, the way that we do with co-curation, the way that we do in We Dig Bio and Collections Club and general volunteering, where would that person be? In collections? In Action? In IRC? Reporting to the Vice President for Science and Education? You know it's a good question. And then, how are they, do they have effective oversight or resources to get the job done, or are they just making suggestions and other people are needing

to be the trigger pullers? It's, I've thought about that for a while and I don't have an answer.

Because collaborative efforts currently exist in each of the four branches of the Museum (Research, Collections, Action, and Learning), placing a new department within any of the others leaves at least some of the ongoing efforts at the Museum at least partly left out. Elevating such a department to its own branch feels redundant, as the Action branch already exists, but placing the department there—where projects are more focused on communities than on collections—might jeopardize collections based projects like the Philippine Co-Curation partnership. If such a department became a reality, then, cross-discipline and cross-department coalition (or “team”) building would be absolutely key to ensuring its success, no matter which department ultimately absorbed it, or if alternatively, it remained an interdepartmental structure. Since the current organizational structure does not dictate structured communication procedures, the staff involved in participatory outreach would need to engineer these methods of increasing contact. And, as Russell noted, “Maybe you come to the conclusion that you don't [synthesize]. I've been saying that it would be great if we could organize ourselves in a more efficient way to more effectively leverage this kind of resource but maybe in the final analysis there are, it's not one store with 31 flavors, maybe it's three stores” (or three teams).

### *Institutional Investment*

Because collaborative partnerships require such high levels of labor, resources, and commitment, they should not be undertaken lightly. Embarking upon such projects successfully and sustainably, then calls for a significant investment from the host institution. While they can be extremely effective under specific circumstances, as Buntinx and Karp (2006: 216) highlight, “there are serious issues related to the museums’ long-term funding and conditions of existence. Special attention should thus be paid to the endearing frailty of many of these efforts, sometimes

all too dependent on individual economies and wills.” Without this investment, collaborations are left scrambling for necessities, limited in scope and potential. As one staff member said, “we have no budget to fundraise. We have no budget to pay for supplies. We have to no budget to advertise. You're kind of just doing everything on word of mouth and connections with people and that takes a lot of time and a lot of brain power to like keep it interesting which we were doing on top of our jobs.” As funding throughout the museum world is notoriously tight, however, such an investment requires clear and deliberate prioritization.

While the Field Museum is a large institution, with a larger operating budget than most museums in the country and around the world, its financial responsibilities are massive and budgetary flexibility is limited. As Pontone put it “you're looking at the Field Museum, everyone thinks we have boatloads of money, we're a historic institution that is part of the defining features of Chicago, or one of them, but like that's not our everyday reality”. Following a period of investment and expansion in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Museum found itself deeply in debt and in a precarious financial situation. Aiming to correct this imbalance, and steer the Museum back toward financial health, Museum administrators made some difficult choices. Staff cuts<sup>13</sup>, a newly emphasized focus on the sciences, and what Russell calls “a very

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<sup>13</sup> In merging the academic departments and seeking to bring activity closer in line with its financial realities, the Field Museum reduced its \$60 million dollar operating budget by \$5 million, with cuts falling heavily on the research departments. Once operating on a combined budget of \$18.9 million, the Museum reduced research spending by \$3 million (16 percent), and eliminated 18 positions through combination of early retirement packages, voluntary departures, nonrenewal of contracts and leaving open spots unfilled (Gillers 2013). While these departments employed 37 curators in 2000 with 27 remaining before the restructuring, six curators left the Museum in 2013, sparking fears among many, including Gonzalo Giribet, a Harvard University biology professor and a curator at the school's Museum of Comparative Zoology, that the Museum would go “from being a major research institution to being a local museum where people go to see things” (Ibid). Museum leaders, however remained “confident that restructuring and reimagining the museum will prove to be a turning point, viewed in time as the right course for sustaining and enhancing our leadership in scientific discovery” (Ibid). President Richard Lariviere echoed these thoughts in saying that “Even universities are reorganizing those departments...We need to use these financial constraints as a motivator to rethink what we do” (Kapos 2012).

conservative approach” helped to address some of this debt and make the Museum’s operations more sustainable. This approach fundamentally limits where the Museum can invest in new initiatives, especially untested or non-revenue generating ones. As Wali put it, “We’re still in debt, we’re doing much better, but we’re still somewhat in debt, that’s what [the] focus has been. Now, you can be critical of that, and there’s a critique to be leveled, but also it is what it is.”

Such financial concerns were exacerbated, if not in part triggered, by a decided decrease in the availability of public funding to support cultural institutions like museums. As Goodman and Loveman (1991) of the Harvard Business Review noted, with the advent of the era of neo-liberal fiscal policy in the 1980s, came a wave of privatization of government assets and services. As Harvey (2005: 2) defines, neoliberalism is “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private a rights, free markets and free trade”. Neoliberal policies sought to unfetter markets from the bonds of governmental regulation through mandates including, “cutting public expenditure for social services, including the funding of public higher education, deregulating to increase profits, encouraging privatization for efficiency, and emphasizing individual responsibility to ensure consumer choice and entrepreneurial initiatives” (Kundu and Kalin 2015: 40). As Toepler (2006:58) argues, this tactic has “allowed the growth of government programs without actually increasing the size of the public sector since the 1960s”. For the arts and culture sector, as well as that of public education, which relies on high levels of public investments, this policy trend has presented an increasing set of challenges, leading Leachman (et al 2017) to call the 2010s a “punishing decade”.

At the same time, rising costs of conservation and display “both of which – like salaries – were rising faster than the funding received by the museums” (Macdonald 2002: 31), and higher expectations of public accountability combined with funding cuts to produce a “financial squeeze” and “a troubling state of affairs” (Ibid). A report of the national museums by the Museums and Galleries Commission in 1988 noted that

The funding gap is serious, and has had adverse consequences in all the national museums, which have had to leave unfilled varying numbers of posts in their complements (though these were determined after Government staff inspections). The effects are lamentably to be seen in terms of closed galleries, reduced security, curtailed opening hours...backlogs of work (e.g. on conservation and the production of catalogues and other scholarly publications), less ability to help schools inefficient use of staff time (word-processor can hardly be afforded), and less good service to the public. Most serious is the danger of a cumulative long-term decline in curatorial standards, as reduced staff are increasingly stretched and often unable to maintain contact with other international scholars, find time to attend international gatherings, take necessary study leave or publish accumulated experience. (cited in Macdonald 2002: 32)

While Macdonald’s research was focused on museums in the United Kingdom as it reacted to the neoliberal policies of the Margaret Thatcher administration, such policies were in many ways paralleled by the Ronald Reagan administration in the United States, leading to similar outcomes for museums.

To justify museums spending what government rhetoric saw as “taxpayers’ money” (Ibid: 32), museums were called on to find, record, and report quantifiable indicators of improved output from reduced input—a tall order for institutions with often intangible or ineffable value. Thus, these policy initiatives encourage an emphasis on income generation and measurable outcomes like “strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures, and academic audits” and well as numbers of visitors and visitor evaluations intended to “redefine” these institutions “in neoliberal terms” (Kundu and Kalin 2015: 40). These practices created enormous pressures for museums, “for if museums were to be judged by the

number of visitors they received, they had to create displays and other facilities which would attract visitors; in the vicious circles of the time, this entailed spending money” (Macdonald 2002: 32). Often, the same neoliberal ideas and emphasis on performative outcomes further depressed private philanthropy. According to annual audits publicly available on the Field Museum website, between 2011 and 2016, government grants awarded to the Field Museum decreased by 51% while campaign contributions and major gifts increased by only 13% (Graham Thornton 2011-2012; 2015-2016). In the same period, Museum attendance increased by 86%, and operating expenses remained roughly equivalent (+6%), but overcoming this funding gap was—and is—a challenge. Museums must be strategic and creative to both keep their institutions functional and maintain their missions effectively, which makes community engagement and participatory action endeavors all the more challenging, and all the more commendable.

As several staff members noted, no one at the Museum seems to be against the idea of community engagement, collaborative programming, or reimagining their relationship with constituent groups. Realizing this amenability through tangible support in this challenging climate, however, has remained elusive. As Wali explained,

On the one hand, the Museum has been very welcoming and sort of said yes to doing these kinds of efforts, experiments within its space and has given me and John [Terrell] space to do this stuff, so on the one hand, I think at least their intention or their...they're not hostile. They're not stopping it. They appreciate it, which is more than I would say other museums might. On the other hand, it doesn't, it has not risen to the level of a priority.

In some ways, the Museum has done significant work in expanding their participatory reach. The Keller Science Action Center, following tireless efforts to secure grant funding and build an endowment, has been institutionalized as a major department supported by the Museum. Further, the Museum recently approved a massively scaled redesign of the Native North American galleries using largely participatory and community focused interpretations. These efforts,

however, do not accomplish the major goals that Terrell argues are necessary for redefining the Museum's relationship with its communities, and further, does not offer consistent support for the existing initiatives—including the Philippine partnership—that have been built over several years and will continue to struggle or even fade away if a solution is not found. While financing is always tight, as Russell sees it,

In terms of money, I have a philosophy that there's no lack of money, it's how much time and effort you want to put into obtaining it, number one. Number two is, have you prioritized what you want to spend money on. And the third element or the other part of prioritization is having effective advocates ... You can't be everything to everybody and you can't get everything done and one of the things that we're recognizing now is we really need to focus on the things that we do well and on the resources for which we are the most productive or well-known museum in the world. I think that this kind of public engagement is one of those things

As experimental pilot programs, the participatory action endeavors that curators envisioned do important “institutional capacity-building” (Simon 2010: 279), and conversation-starting work in showing that these kinds of community relationships are both possible and valuable. As such partnerships look to the future, however, their challenge becomes organizing these endeavors into a clear institutional strategy for managing the collections, relationships, and knowledge.

#### *A Strategic Priority*

If the Field Museum is to build such an institutional strategy, however, such efforts will need to be recognized as institutional priorities in which to invest. As Simon (2010: 322) cautions, projects like these are often discontinued not due to a lack of interest, desire, or attention to visitor needs but “because they are part of an institutional culture that was not effectively set up to integrate and sustain a project that introduced new logistical challenges...lacked the abilities-and possibly the agency-to make the system work reasonably within their standard practices and so the project became untenable.” These efforts can only truly be successful, or sustainable, when they are carefully aligned with institutional culture, values,

mission, and goals. Ensuring that this is possible requires some major shifts in institutional approaches to staffing, budgeting, and operating projects (Ibid: 322). This kind of grounding in institutional mission could help staff to feel supported by the administration, encouraging creative and confident exploration of the boundaries of participatory action, thereby benefitting the institution, staff members, and visitors alike. Recognizing participatory action as an institutional priority then, and investing in it accordingly, offers sustenance and endurance to these projects as well as a visible and continuing commitment to local communities (Buntinx and Karp 2006: 217).

As I completed my fieldwork, the Field Museum was engaged in its Strategic Planning process for the coming years. Staff were excited and hopeful about the prospect of elevating participatory projects, including the Philippine Co-Curation partnership, to a level of institutional priority, but awaiting the results of their discussions with administrators, placing it in an interesting moment as what Shannon called a “museum in transition” (2014:70). New staff have entered the Museum, including a new director of the Keller Science Action Center, a new Director of the Integrative Research Center, and many new team members in various other departments. The Museum has also recently hired a postdoctoral researcher who is “dedicated to ensuring Museum communications and engagement efforts reflect the diversity of Chicago's people by establishing strategies for enriching the relationship between the Museum and local communities and partner organizations (“Michelle Rivera F’17” 2017). She is charged with reviewing the existing “31 flavors” as well as the best practices of diversity and inclusion to form a strategic report, before working across departments to implement her recommendations. Additionally, the Museum’s forthcoming overhaul of the Native North American hall will aim to engage Native American voices and perspectives through collaboration to highlight the diverse

cultural and historical experiences of Native American communities. In this way, the redesign seeks provide a broad socio-historical context that highlights the unique cultural traditions, practices, and histories of the first peoples of North America, while providing access to contemporary concerns of Native American communities. The Museum is already seeking new staff to help manifest these goals using the methods of participatory action. In these ways, combined with the relatively recent institutionalization and support of the Keller Science Action Center, the Field Museum is moving toward a more thorough and comprehensive strategy of community collaboration and engagement.

Dedicated funding that includes the Philippine Co-Curation partnership under its umbrella, however, remains elusive. As Kelly explained, the timing of the Strategic Planning process and the end date of the grants supporting the partnership, did not align to the partnership's advantage. "We don't have any control over [the timing], that's directed by the Board and that's the reality and so we have to kind of let that process play out and try to inject ourselves into that process when the time is right to try to let it be known that this is something that the institution should value and plan for." The team had some success with small grants, but found no funding significant enough to keep Pontone and Matherne dedicated to the partnership full time, so it is currently operating on a limited and scaled down basis. As Russell explained, while "I just came into the process a little on the late side here to be able to do anything to stem the tide of its closing, or its shutting down to a fairly minimal operation. I have made part of our long range plan the rebooting of co-curation and a method of engagement as well as a collections management tool." In this way, as a "proof of concept" Philippine Co-Curation proved important ideas, and taught valuable lessons about the import and benefit of such projects, helping to build the institutional capacity to expand these efforts. It also created real and lasting value for the

participants who helped build it. Its future, however, depends on its inclusion in the Museum's transition toward becoming a more participatory and community focused institution. In the meantime, however—until such decisions are made, until a strategy is articulated, until a staffing solution is found—its future is uncertain. “Hindsight is 20/20” said Kelly, but building the partnership was an evolving experiment, requiring uncertainty to flourish. This uncertainty, the institutional tensions it highlights, and the transitions it hopes to hallmark may yet prove to serve as an engine of creativity to strengthen these efforts in the future.

### *Conclusions*

“I saw the New York stage production of Camelot years ago” Terrell told me, before singing a few bars of the show. “In Camelot! That’s how conditions are!’ Was this just a Camelot? I have no idea. Should it be? No, it definitely shouldn’t be”. The ambitious partnership that the Anthropology collection staff facilitated built new and thriving relationships that had not previously existed, benefitting the Museum, involved community members, and the collection itself. While no one knows right now what the Philippine Co-Curation partnership will look like in a few years, it signals and participates in a major shift and an historic moment in the museum field. With public support and funding scarce, the Philippine Co-Curation partnership combines with other efforts to test and expand the boundaries of participatory action and community engagement at the Field Museum, and at other museums around the country and the world.

As the Museum continues to learn of the benefit and value, as well as the pitfalls, of these projects, their institutional capacity to perpetuate and support them will continue to grow. As Wali said, “I think a lot of what we've learned about collaboration and community engagement and what I've learned kind of vicariously from the Philippine project is going to inform how we redo this [Native North American] hall. So in that hall you'll see some of the ways in which these

experimental strategies can come together.” The Philippine Co-Curation partnership’s emphasis on collections, and on collections governance and interpretation pushes these boundaries even further. As Kelly put it, “It’s like steering a cruise ship. They can’t turn on a dime...we have geological departments so we work on the geological time scale sometimes it feels like, you really have to take the long view of things and I’m optimistic in that sense that we’ll get there, we just have to keep pushing.”

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

My time at the Field Museum, as a visitor, an intern, and as a student researcher, has made clear to me that the Museum cares about its community and is interested in making that community feel welcome and valued within its halls. A titan of the museum world, producing cutting edge research and world-class exhibits, caring for impressive and exciting collections, the Field Museum and its staff have been innovating and exploring how to achieve these goals through a number of experimental projects and partnerships aiming to involve local communities, represent and discuss diverse perspectives, and make the Museum relevant and exciting for the people it serves. The Philippine Co-Curation partnership, spearheaded by Dr. John Terrell of the Anthropology department and staffed by the Anthropology collections management team, works to extend these goals to the interpretation and governance of the collection, connecting the objects within it to the heritage and lived experiences of current local community members. In this way, it aims to redefine the relationship between the Museum and the community descended from the objects' makers.

The conditions and goals of the Museum's founding and early years of collecting make these goals especially important to address. Established in the late 1800s, a time of American imperialism abroad hallmarked by a salvage paradigm in ethnology and marked racial tensions, the Field Museum—like all museums established in this time—was inherently shaped by the conditions and attitudes that inspired its creation. Museums are always and necessarily entangled in both local and global political and historical contexts that structure their goals and activities. In this way, colonialism and colonial thinking permeated many of the early goals of the Museum, the collections it gathered, and the ways in which it represented groups of people. For the Philippines collection, this kind of thinking shaped what objects were collected, what

information about them was recorded, and how they were interpreted for the public. Such decisions had lasting implications for how Filipinx and Filipinx-Americans interacted with the Museum. While the Field has worked to mitigate and address many of these colonial representations, unspoken hierarchies, and bigoted thinking, they remain embedded in the architecture of the Museum, the objects in the collection, and the information known about them. This history, and its lasting effects on the present, forms the context in which today's Field Museum engages with local communities. In this way the Museum's past creates the moral and ethical duty to innovate projects, like the Philippine Co-Curation partnership, that seek to redefine the relationship between the Museum and constituent communities.

Such endeavors build upon an ongoing and decades-long shift across the museum field, seeking to place communities and audiences at the center of museum activities by focusing visitor and community needs and desires, sharing the authority of interpretation with diverse voices, and seeking to make museums relevant and relied-upon community resources. This shift affected how museums set goals, conduct business, interpret collections, and connect with audiences. As these changes manifested at the Field Museum, they inspired new experimentation in community engagement and participatory action. As Terrell considered these participatory experiments, he recognized the potential for a new kind of partnership that focused on collections, shared ownership, and interpretation. As Keene (2005) has documented, such collections based endeavors to engage museum visitors with their objects have, and are, taking many forms and the programs Dr. John Terrell has spearheaded at the Field Museum push this kind of work in new and exciting directions. Building upon his experience building a collaborative partnership with the Maori of Tokumaru Bay in New Zealand, Terrell imagined a new kind of relationship between the Museum and its constituent communities. As these ideas

solidified, they found shape during the early days of the Philippine Co-Curation partnership known as 10,000 Kwentos. Staff hired to facilitate the partnership attended community events to build relationships, hosted “pizza meetings” and collections tours that encouraged discussion, and sought funding to digitize and rehouse the Philippines collection. Over time, as volunteer presence and priorities shifted, the Philippine Co-Curation partnership focused its efforts in another direction, toward public programming.

The monthly object and discussion based programming that the team worked to develop brought collections into the Marae space to promote conversation and discussion about them. These conversations brought the stories of the collections into conversation with the lived experiences of community members, their needs, their desires, and their concerns. In this way they formed an important gathering space that allowed local Filipinx-Americans to engage with stories and the teachings of their heritage while discussing how that heritage continues to shape and affect their daily lives in the modern United States. Co-curators build important relationships that bridged gaps across generation, immigration experience, age, gender, language, and levels of education. They offered a sense of community and belonging for many, filling a void of cultural and identity expression. Further, they worked to build a space of acceptance, belonging, and empowerment for Filipinx-Americans, many of whom did not feel welcomed or at home in the Museum before their involvement with the partnership. Increasing access in this way changed the Museum space from one where knowledge is consumed to one where it is actively produced and recorded as community expertise is activated and engaged. This engagement further worked to confront and discuss the lasting impacts of the colonial relationship between the United States and the Philippines and the ways in which these racial politics persist today. By highlighting and giving name to this struggle, events offered a chance to reclaim the power to interpret and

understand these heritage objects, forming connections to modern experiences. Planning the events, articulating these topics, and structuring the engagement of community members further offered important skills and experience for the largely college-aged volunteers who help staff events. In these ways, the events, and the processes that produce them offer a new kind of relationship between the Field Museum and the Filipinx-American community, hinting at the potential impacts of developing this pilot partnership to meet the lofty goals of its theoretical inception.

The potential benefits of the Philippine Co-Curation partnership, or its expansion to additional community groups or a more comprehensive manifestation of its goals, however, are limited by the institutional context involved staff and volunteers must navigate. While staff at all levels in the Museum express interest in and excitement for invigorating and strengthening the institution's relationship with its communities, they have yet to formulate a coherent strategy for realizing this enthusiasm through sustainable practice. They lack the unified mission, goals, and vocabulary to effectively explore how the different approaches support, augment, and improve one another. Further, a sustainable and long term staffing solution that recognizes the intricacy and difficulty of facilitating community relationships will be essential to ensuring the longevity and success of such programs. Building community partnerships offers a tangible benefit to the Museum by increasing its community presence, expanding its audience base, and improving its collections. Such a partnership must also benefit the community members who run it. Co-curation takes significant labor from both the Museum and the community and both must be valued if the partnership is to be successful. Leadership and internal collaboration will be key to strengthening these efforts as the Field Museum, and the museum field, forge a new museology for the future. As funding and resources are perennially scarce in the non-profit world, this kind

of institutional support is only possible if the administration and leadership of the Museum recognize such efforts as a clearly defined institutional priority. The Philippine Co-Curation partnership has demonstrated that communities in Chicago are interested in contributing, and that their contribution is valuable—especially when considering colonial collections. The partnership has empowered its actors, built important new relationships both within the community and between the community and the Museum, and expanded access to a new constituency. By intentionally and strategically investing in it, the Museum can build upon this progress to further its mission and modernize its relationship with its communities.

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