Museums and Social Impact: Anacostia Community Museum's New Strategic Direction

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Museums and Social Impact:

Anacostia Community Museum's New Strategic Direction

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A Capstone in The Field of Museum Studies

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Author's Statement

I would like to express my gratitude to Lori Yarrish for her mentorship and unyielding support throughout the process of my capstone project and professional development. I would also like to thank the Anacostia Community Museum staff for their dedication to transforming the Museum into a vibrant and accessible social impact hub in the DC community; Marquette Folley for her leadership, mentorship and advocacy of me at the Smithsonian, and Bernard and Shirley Kinsey for their guidance and belief in me as a professional in the arts. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Rev. Dr. Hozell C. Francis, I. and Mrs. Lynda Francis, for their immeasurable love, and for the encouragement that has shaped me into a woman with boundless potential. My village of support includes beautiful friends, family, mentors and mentees, all whom I am privileged to share my life journey with. It truly takes a village…and I love my village.

Introduction

In 1967—a year of unrest and uprisings against inequities, the Smithsonian founded the Anacostia Community Museum (ACM) with a local focus on African American history and culture that is unique to the Anacostia neighborhood. The Smithsonian Institution was founded in 1846 and is the largest museum complex and research center in the world. ACM is one of the 19 museums (referred to internally as "units"), in addition to a zoological park, nine research centers, and 20 libraries that comprise the Smithsonian (Smithsonian, "About"). The founding director of ACM, John Kinard, was a local minister, civil rights educator, and community activist. His community organizing and engagement shaped the trajectory of the Museum (Anacostia Community Museum, "About"). The community's values were embedded in the core ideals of ACM. In *The Art of Relevance* museum director Nina Simon writes, "People will define for themselves what they value, and thus, what they deem relevant" (Simon 53). With a focal point on local African American experiences and community issues, the Museum evolved its exhibition programs to reflect broad national themes in African American culture in the 1980s (Anacostia Community Museum, "About).

Decades later, Camille Akeju became Director of the Anacostia Community Museum in 2005 as the National Museum of African American History and Culture's (NMAAHC) development was in its nascent stages. Akeju faced the challenge of repositioning the African American history and culture focus of ACM, in anticipation NMAAHC's behemoth presence with the exact same focus. Now that NMAAHC is a reality, ACM must look to new methodologies for keeping its community engaged and its relevance to the local community fresh. One way to achieve this is through the concept of "creative placemaking". In the report

Creative Placemaking by the National Endowment of the Arts, arts and cultural planning consultants Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa identify the concept this way: "In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities" (Markusen and Gadwa 3).

By leveraging the political clout of the nation's capital and the vast resources of the Smithsonian, ACM is well positioned to wield power with civic agencies that will impact the community in relevant, responsive and engaging ways. In *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities* Doris Sommer, a professor and Director of Cultural Agents Initiative at Harvard, makes this point by quoting Antanas Mockus, the former mayor of Bogota Columbia, "There are cracks and contradictions inside government too where wars of position can gain ground through cultural persuasion and alternative practices" (qtd. in Sommer 23). Sommer exemplifies how civic organizations can think outside the box to engage the community through meaningful dialogue when addressing contemporary social issues.

This capstone project seeks to activate the Anacostia Community Museum as a space that exudes soft power and practices creative placemaking, by working across multiple sectors to address contemporary social issues. This paper focuses on how ACM's exhibitions and public programs serve as a conduit for leveraging the Museum's community impact to achieve the Smithsonian's larger goal of catalyzing critical conversation on issues of national importance (Our Plan— Strategic Plan). Creative placemaking allows the Museum and its local partners to address local issues that touch the whole nation. The NEA report also notes: "At the state and federal levels, politicians, policy makes, and agency heads see the potential for arts and cultural activities to improve the effectiveness of their missions in transportation, housing, workforce

development, health care, environmental remediation, and education" (6). This is a tall charge and beyond the scope of what is being proposed for ACM. It shows, however, how dynamic a concept like creative placemaking can be, even on a micro level.

The approach suggested in the capstone project encourages outreach to the local community, the cycling of spending back to the community, and the invitation to local non-profits, artists, and the public to come together at the Museum. Markusen and Gadwa observe that, "Place has always been important for the emergence of new products, industries, and jobs" (5). As an active participant in daily community life, the Anacostia Community Museum has the ability to target the local Washington, D.C. community with programming and conversations that are timely relevant and impactful. The national reach of the Smithsonian does not offer the malleability for other Smithsonian museums to engage in depth in the way that ACM can. However, as a large institution with national and local engagement capabilities, the breadth and depth of the Smithsonian's reach relies upon ACM being well resourced and strategic in its efforts. This capstone will present findings on the ACM's strategic priorities and the role that Smithsonian leadership has played in supporting ACM's new strategic focus. Additionally, the paper will propose recommendations for how the Smithsonian can measure ACM's impact.

Background

From the time of its founding and through the work of its first director, John Kinard, the relevance of ACM has been inextricably linked to the community's values. Simon concludes that the first step to a "community first" process of program design is "identifying communities of interest and learn about their assets, needs and interests." Simon further explains that critical learning takes place when "People will define for themselves what they value, and thus, what

they deem relevant" (Simon 99). The incorporation of community voice permits members of the community to see themselves reflected in ACM.

Though the Smithsonian is inherently national in scope, the Anacostia Community Museum is the only Smithsonian museum that has a hyper-local focus. Hyper-local is the term that will be used to define the concerns of a well-defined community with a primary focus directed at the population in that community (Dictionary.com, "Hyper-local"). With a finite agenda based upon local African American identity and community issues, the Museum evolved its exhibitions and programs to reflect broad national themes in African American culture during the 1980s but eventually fell into a lull regarding engagement. Much time had passed before a new director was hired who had considered ACM's relevance to the broader community and its relation to the larger Smithsonian organization. Additionally, the core demographic served by ACM was the primary population that was continuously engaged with the Museum while Washington, D.C.'s demographical landscape began to shift (Yarrish). When the new Director, Camille Akeju, was hired in 2005 the potential for ACM being upended was imminent. Akeju had to immediately discern how to reorient ACM, upon learning that the Smithsonian had plans of introducing the National Museum of African American History and Culture with an African American History and Culture centric agenda also (Parker).

During an interview with the Washington Post in 2012, Akeju reflected on her time as Director of ACM, "My first day on the job, I was asked if I had decided on a new name." Though initially blindsided, Akeju saw this challenge as an opportunity to forge ahead in ways that other museums ignored. She decided to use the museum as a catalyst for social justice and environmental issues that directly impacted the community (Parker). In the *Journal of Museum Education* Stephen Long, Director of the Children's Museum of the East End, underscores the

importance of community engagement in his article, "Practicing Civic Engagement: Making your Museum into a Community Living Room" with this assertion:

> Engaging local communities to address their needs and concerns does come with cost, but it can be done with partnerships, leadership, and organizational commitment. The benefits far outweigh the expense. Civic or community engagement can help a museum become what the American Alliance of Museums describes as a center where people gather to meet and converse and an active visible player in civic life, a safe haven, and a trusted incubator of change (Long 141).

ACM has committed to a strategic approach towards building partnerships that has positioned it to be an exemplar of creative placemaking in the museum field.

With most of the Smithsonian museums located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., their auspicious physical locations lure millions of global visitors annually (Smithsonian Institution, "About"). However, ACM's diminutive presence can be largely attributed to the fact that it is off the beaten path. In fact, ACM is tucked away in one of the most historically impoverished, inaccessible communities in Washington, D.C. (Goldchain). Despite its location and smaller position in the Smithsonian universe, one of the fundamental strengths of the Anacostia Community Museum is that it has always had a well-defined community and targeted mission. In *The Art of Relevance* Nina Simon insists, "Communities are people. They are not rhetoric. They are human beings" (Simon 87). Simon also says, "In asset-based programs the institution focuses on cultivating and building on people's strengths instead of fixing needs or fixing weaknesses" (95). Historically ACM has approached community through an asset-based programmatic model that unapologetically basks the rich traditions of local African American history and culture (Anacostia Community Museum, "About"). Since its inception, the Anacostia

Community Museum has been the proverbial front door to the Smithsonian for its community of people who are not demographically considered to be traditional museum goers.

Simon further asserts, "If you're going to open new doors—especially doors to the heart—you have to start at the front door" (Simon 54). Simon is particularly poignant when she says, "White museums don't think of museums as a "white" place, because they don't experience whiteness overtly. They think of a museum as a place for art, history or science. Not for whiteness. But if you walk into a museum for the first time and everyone you see if white, but you're not white you will notice" (66). ACM's current Director, Lori Yarrish, explains, "ACM is a safe place and a trusted institution where voices are heard. We are a museum of, for and by the people. And I think we can't survive without the community's input" (Yarrish). The community voice is requisite to creative placemaking and is the critical to ACM's sustainability as a museum with a social impact focus. Yarrish's vision for ACM as an inclusive community hub that convenes greater Washington, D.C. around contemporary issues connotes the implicit power the Museum has in influencing public life through creative placemaking.

Determining ACM's Fate

Since the opening of NMAAHC in September 2016, many African American museums have shared in the glory and fanfare of this historic milestone. However, the presence of two African American museums in the Smithsonian family drew inquiries about the relevance of one and not the other: NMAAHC being the grandiose, well-funded, newly constructed darling on the National Mall compared to ACM being the obscurely located, small but culturally specific passé museum. This juxtaposition naturally prompted curiosity about the fate of Anacostia Community Museum. However, it is only fair to note that the Anacostia Community Museum played a distinctly integral role in forming NMAAHC and has long been a pillar of hope to Anacostia

residents. ACM has always curated exhibitions and public programs with their fingers on the pulse of the community. Simon validates this point by explaining her approach to developing successful community-based programming. "Instead of designing programming and then seeking out audiences for it, we identify communities and then develop or co-create programs that are relevant to their assets needs and values" (Simon 100).

To remain relevant, the Anacostia Community Museum had to make a clear distinction of purpose after NMAAHC opened. Prior to that opening, Akeju shifted Anacostia Community Museum's focus from African American history and culture to a local community focus (Parker). There had been talk about Anacostia Community Museum being absorbed into NMAAHC or even being dissolved. With NMAAHC's ability to captivate the attention and financial commitment of public and private donors, Anacostia Community Museum has had to rethink its mission, fundraising strategy and brand to maintain its independence, credibility and significance. Recently, internal and external forces have prompted the Anacostia Community Museum to nuance its definition of community within the context of Washington, D.C.'s rapidly changing socio-economic demographics. Upon Akeju's retirement, Lori Yarrish was appointed as the Director of Anacostia Community Museum and quickly devised a new strategic direction that broadens the Museum's geographic focus to the wider DC, Maryland and Virginia metropolitan region (DMV) and emphasizes social impact.

The strategic planning processes for both the Smithsonian and ACM unfolded in tandem with Washington, D.C.'s development of its first cultural plan for the city. The plan's overview says:

> The DC Cultural Plan is intended to strengthen arts, humanities, culture and heritage in neighborhoods across the city by increasing cultural participation, supporting artists and

talent development, stimulating cultural production and informing decision-making. The

Plan will lay out a vision and recommendations on how the government and its partners

can build upon, strengthen and invest in the people, places communities and ideas that

define culture within the nation's capital. (Overview—DC Cultural Plan)

The DC Cultural plan was drafted in collaboration between the DC Commission on the Arts and

Humanities, the DC Office of Planning, the DC Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and

Entertainment, and support from an interdisciplinary consulting team. According to a draft of the

DC Cultural plan completed in October 2017, "The Plan lays out a vision and recommendations

on how the government and its partners can build upon, strengthen and invest in the people,

places, communities and ideas that define culture within the nation's capital" (DC Office of

Planning 4). The DC Cultural Plan is currently in its second iteration and will continue to draw

from community input throughout the revision process. In an interview with the Washington, DC

City Paper, Arthur Espinoza, Director of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities

emphasizes community involvement with this statement:

It's still about engaging in a dialogue with the constituency we serve, with the artists

and arts organizations, with the D.C. residents. We need to understand what it is that

we're aiming toward, whether that's something that comes out of our cultural plan, or

our strategic plan, the dialogue in finding out what's important to us and how we

identify as a community is exactly what I'm after (Devine).

Washington DC's cultural planning process welcomes input from DC residents and is expecting

to propel the District into a position as leader in the global creative economy. With a plan like

this one in place it will be a strong reference point for ACM to ideate creative placemaking

practices.

Strategic Planning

In process of creating the *Anacostia Community Museum Renewal Plan* Yarrish collected data about the Museum from a series of interviews with stakeholders, community organizations, and directors that are administering community-based museums across the country (ACM Renewal Plan 1). In the Smithsonian's online newsletter, *The Torch*, Dr. David Skorton, the Smithsonian's 13th Secretary, says this about ACM's strategic planning process:

> Development of the plan began when a committee of museum directors, DC mayoral representatives, community stakeholders and constituents were charged with assessing the museum's current state. The committee collected data about operations, analyzed internal documents and conducted 18 in-depth interviews with other Smithsonian directors, arts and culture thought leaders and stakeholders of the museum. The process culminated with a retreat facilitated by the Office of Policy and Analysis and attended by 45 people who focused on the museum's future direction, impact and constituency (A Model for Engagement).

This extensive planning process resulted in the creation of a document that serves as a catalyst for the Museum's future. By involving community stakeholders and others in ACM's strategic planning process the stage was set for moving further with the concept of creative placemaking as a means to implement the plan.

In developing recommendations, however, it is important to see where the ACM fits within the larger Smithsonian Institution. In 2017 the Smithsonian Institution released *Smithsonian 2022,* the new five-year strategic plan. Here is the vision statement: "By 2022, the Smithsonian will build on its unique strengths to engage and to inspire more people, where they

are, with greater impact, while catalyzing critical conversations on issues affecting our nation and the world." The plan then outlines the following goals:

- "Be one Smithsonian

- Catalyze new conversations and address complex challenges

- Reach one billion people a year with a digital-first strategy

- Understand and impact 21st century audiences

- Drive large, visionary, interdisciplinary and scholarly projects

- Interdisciplinary research and scholarly projects

- Preserve natural and cultural heritage while optimizing our assets, provide a nimble, cost effective and responsive administrative infrastructure" (Smithsonian 2022, "Goals").

In the section "The Museums as Moderators of Sensitive Social Issues" of the Smithsonian report *21st Century Role of Museums,* an observation is made that "Intertwined with the roles of facilitating civic engagement and offering programs designed to effect social change is the role of a neutral moderator of sensitive and some things controversial, social issues" (21st Century Role of Museums 16). This statement summarizes what Anacostia Community Museum's understated core competency has always been as a convener of community voices.

      As the Smithsonian poises itself to be the type of organization that is more responsive and relevant in this evolving, hyper-connected world, it is imperative that the Institution harnesses internal strengths and remains pliable enough to adjust to changing times. One way to accomplish this balance is by utilizing ACM as a vehicle for incubating social impact focused community engagement initiatives through creative placemaking that can be replicated and scaled on a national level.

Aligning with Smithsonian's Strategic Plan

In April 2017 the Smithsonian Institution commenced implementation of the new *Smithsonian 2022* strategic plan per the directive of Dr. Skorton. Upon her arrival in as Acting Director of ACM in 2016, Yarrish worked diligently towards developing a strategic plan for the Anacostia Community Museum, that was constructed in consideration of the broader Smithsonian strategic planning process. Input from internal and external stakeholders was equally as important as the ability to synchronize ACM's strategic planning process with the overall Smithsonian strategic planning process. In doing so, Yarrish was able to cement ACM's plans for moving forward with institutional buy-in of actionable goals with foreseeable timelines (Yarrish). In a spirited announcement that Dr. Skorton made about Yarrish's appointment as Director of ACM, he lauded her works in the statement, "As Acting Director, Yarrish led the museum's renewal and revitalization efforts. These efforts resulted in a refreshed mission statement and social-impact statement for the museum, as well as an improved model for operations that aligns with two of the Strategic Plan's goals—catalyzing new conversations and understanding and impacting 21st-century audiences" (Skorton, "Message from the Secretary"). The Anacostia Community Museum's strategic initiatives include a rebranding strategy, an emphasis on social impact, and a broader geographic focus on the Washington DC metropolitan area.

As the Smithsonian, the ACM, and the city of Washington, D.C. are all implementing new strategic initiatives at the same time; now is an opportune time to interrogate how the local cultural sector can work collaboratively across disciplines, while leveraging resources within the public and private sectors and within the federal and local governments. The Anacostia Community Museum's role within a semi federal museum and a newly expanded geographical focus serves the broader institutional goals as it works across sectors to incubate scalable

community and civic engagement ideas through creative placemaking. The idea of ACM as a vehicle for creating impact through creative placemaking is grounded in ACM's core sense of place as an anchor institution and the keeper of historical knowledge that can inform contemporary community life as demographics change. In the section "Economics of Museums and Cities" of *Cities, Museums and Soft Power* the noteworthy economist Javier Jimenez asserts, "Beyond architecture and public space, museums also interact with their immediate environment by supporting a social fabric that enhances local identity and sense of place." ACM's ability to provide a safe space in the public sphere for multiple actors from different sectors and diverse members of the community is significant in building citizenship (Jimenez 44). Ultimately, the ideas and innovation that emerge from the Anacostia Community Museum can potentially be scaled through Smithsonian's forthcoming nationally focused initiatives and can serve as a model for collaboration between museums and civic agencies in other cities. In reference to the Smithsonian Strategic plan, Dr. Skorton encourages the Institution to "…Embrace the need for change and supports innovative concepts under development throughout the Institution" (Skorton "A Model for Engagement"). He also insists that "Some of the most dynamic ideas are those being proposed by the Anacostia Community Museum" (Skorton, "A Model for Engagement"). Recognition of ACM's impressive role in the Smithsonian's lofty goals is important to being able to achieve them.

Twenty First Century Museum Roles

In October 2012 the Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis published a white paper entitled, "21st Century Roles of National Museums: A Conversation in Progress." In the section "Museums as Agents of Social Change" the author states, "A Museum role related to one of creating an environment where bridging social capital can occur is the role of offering

exhibitions and programs designed to effect social change. This role is couched in the understanding that the social change being addressed is one that is for the "common good" (21st Century Roles of National Museums 14). The strategic planning process of the Anacostia Community Museum came at a critical time for the Museum and for the community overall.

Our nation is in a constant state of turmoil, politically and racially. There is no shortage of news coverage of chilling gun violence, political discord and overall melee. In Washington, D.C., there is a particular political morose hovering over the city landscape, contrasted with the tingling sensation of a new economic and creative vibrancy. This tension is charged by a rambunctious political climate on a national level, but locally the tension is largely fueled by urban renewal and the social outcomes of gentrification. With new developments that drive economic heft come the downside of long-time residents fighting for their place in the only city they have ever known and loved.

A contemporary example of museums and civic engagement is the Philadelphia Assembled project at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Philadelphia Museum of Art states, "In spring 2017, *Philadelphia Assembled* manifested as a series of actions, conversations, meals, installations, and other events throughout the city. What we built together is now a communal presentation at the Museum's Perelman Building, becoming a civic stage where the city is performed." Much like Washington, D.C. Philadelphia is a rapidly changing major metropolitan city that is faced with the dichotomies of poverty and inequity vs. gentrification and revitalization." This expansive program was initiated by artist Jeanne van Heeswijk in collaboration with artists, makers, storytellers, gardeners, healers, museum staff, and community members. Philadelphia Museum of Art concludes:

Within this project, these urgent concerns are organized around five principles, or what van Heeswijk terms "atmospheres": Reconstructions, Sovereignty, Futures, Sanctuary, and Movement. The subject of each atmosphere was derived from the artist's preliminary conversations with people throughout Philadelphia about the city and its character. In the midst of Philadelphia's changing infrastructure, demographics, and economy, *Philadelphia Assembled* asks questions about what histories can be rewritten (Reconstructions), what resources can be shared (Sovereignty), what futures can be imagined (Futures), what asylum can be offered (Sanctuary), and how can we disseminate our collective learning (Movement). (Phlassmbled.net)

Soft Power

ACM's political and community ties and its status as a Smithsonian museum give it the inherent ability to wield power in a myriad of ways. The Museum's ability to wield power, however, is not through overt or forceful means, but instead through a subtle, yet influential fashion called "soft power". In *Cities Museums and Soft Power* Gail Dexter Lord, one of the world's foremost museum and cultural planners, defines soft power this way, "Soft power is a concept that emerged a quarter of a century ago to describe international relations based not on military nor economic might, but on influence. Soft Power is the ability to influence behavior using persuasion, attraction or agenda setting. Where the resources of "hard power" are tangible-force and finance-soft power recourses are intangibles, such as ideas knowledge, value and culture" (Lord 9). Additionally, Lord says, "Museums have become major sources of generating positive reputations for countries and cities. Contributing heavily to their influence and attraction around the world" (10). With its new social impact focus, Anacostia Community Museum is emerging

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from relative inconspicuousness in recent years to the anchor institution it once was in its heyday.

Lord defines a city's anchor institution as "…those that have proven to be sites of community sustainability, such as hospitals, universities, libraries, community centers, places of worship and museums (Dexter 23). Across the museum field, museums at the center of civic life has become a widely accepted ideal. In the section "Coming to the Center of Community Life" of *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* Maria-Rosario Jackson advances this idea with the proclamation:

> Through its Museums & Community Initiative (M&C) AAM has given the museum field a noble challenge—to stretch its boundaries, step away from the sidelines, come to the center of civic life, and become a more active participant and even a leader in social-capital and community-building processes (Jackson 29).

As ACM executes against its newly devised strategic plan, it will set an example for other museums to replicate as they strive to achieve civic and community engagement goals.

Cities are vital agents of economic growth and Washington, D.C.'s population and economic growth are expanding rapidly. In the section "Economics of Museums and Cities*"* of *Cities, Museums and Soft Power*, Jimenez confirms this by stating that "Global economic growth is driven by cities not countries" (30). He furthers explains that:

> Urban centers are becoming larger and denser. Cities generate more than 80 percent of the global GDP. Many cities have a larger economy than entire regions and countries. . . Some cities have larger economies than the state in which they are contained. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., sometimes referred to as the National Capital Region,

has a larger economy than the neighboring states of Maryland and Virginia, which are

part of the metro region (30).

New development in Anacostia's neighborhood is one of the key signifiers of Washington D.C.'s

economic growth. Jimenez also shares that "Museums are increasingly transversal in urban life,

intersecting and influencing social and economic trends" (31). ACM is a long-standing pillar in

its now dilapidated, drug infested community well known for being a food desert with minimal

access to transportation. However, transformative process of rapid urban renewal is molding the

Anacostia neighborhood into a real estate hot spot with new business and housing offerings–the

promising qualities of a bustling community.

As the "keeper of place" steeped in the community, ACM's keen awareness of these

urban renewal changes can leverage the Museum strengths by embracing changing

demographics while still being mindful of its historic focus on African American community

life. In *Mastering Civic Engagement* philanthropic art advisor Daniel Kertzner authored the

section "*M*astering Civic Engagement*"* and observes, "To be at the center of community life,

museums must be welcoming places for all of the community. For many institutions this means

repositioning their relationship with the community" (43). The astute museum planner, Ngaire

Blankenberg, authored the section "When Soft Powers Collide" in *Cities Museums and Soft

Power* in which she observes, "As the Knight Foundation's Soul of the Community study has

shown, "soft" aspects like social offerings, openness and aesthetics are key to creating an

attachment to place that leads to community cohesion and economic development" (Blankenberg

112). The timing of ACM's new vision coincides with drastic changes in urban development

within Washington, D.C.'s metropolitan region and presents an opportunity for ACM to exert

power as a key civic influencer. The timing is also perfect for the Museum to assume a leadership position in creative placemaking within the city.

A Right to the City

Washington, D.C. has a strong history of participatory planning that ACM explores from a historical and contemporary lens through the exhibition, *A Right to the City.* The exhibition epitomizes how the museum implements creative placemaking through its exhibitions and public programs. The exhibition is inspired by the 50th anniversary of the 1968 Washington, D.C. riots. The nation's capital was one of many cities across the United States that erupted in civil unrest following the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Vehement social discord ran rampant as communities of color endured grief in the aftermath of the beloved Civil Rights figurehead's demise. The perpetual struggle in the fight to secure civil rights and equity in society reached a pivotal moment. Samir Meghelli, curator of *A Right to the City,* examines this moment in the District.

In April 1967 Dr. King came to Washington, D.C. to meet with Reverend Walter Fauntroy, the DC representative for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Rev. Fauntroy was a native Washingtonian and the pastor of New Bethel Church in the Shaw neighborhood he grew up in. Fauntroy worked as community organizer and civil rights activist addressing urban renewal. The brute force of urban renewal had essentially demolished much of Southwest DC - leaving twenty thousand people and fifteen hundred businesses displaced. Rev. Fauntroy founded the Model Inner City Community Organization (MICCO) with the idea that urban renewal could be carried out with residents and small business owners guiding plans for

redevelopment—for the people, by the people. Dr. King joined Rev. Fauntroy and DC residents in a parade through Shaw which culminated at Cordozo High School (see fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Reverend Walter Fauntroy (left), Martin Luther King, III (center), and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (right) lead a parade through Shaw in support of the Model Inner City Community Organization (MICCO) in what was the largest local demonstration since the 1963 March on Washington, 1967 DC Public Library, Star Collection © Washington Post.

Dr. King then delivered a speech in which he endorsed the efforts of Rev. Fauntroy and MICCO as the most important urban redevelopment work happening in the country (Meghelli). Henri Lefebvre, a French Marxist, coined the term "A Right to the City" through his study of cities and everyday life. In the Journal of Urban Affairs article, *Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City,* Mark Purcell observes, "Lefebvre presents a radical vision for a city in which users manage urban space for themselves, beyond the control of both the state and capitalism. In Meghelli's, reflection on the exhibition's ability to catalyze conversations about contemporary urban renewal issues in Washington, D.C. he shares:

The immediate context for the exhibition is rapid transformation of DC neighborhoods in the past ten to fifteen years. More than half the population lives in cities on both national and global scales—unprecedented urban growth. The exhibition is an opportunity to use

it as a starting point to explore more deeply how neighborhoods change and are

transformed, but it's also an effort to uncover and even celebrate histories of

neighborhood organizing and activism. The aim is to try to connect that history of

neighborhood change/activism to contemporary moments and to raise the questions about

what a more just future for our cities might look like (Meghelli).

A Right to the City opens with a sobering statement that culminates in a striking interrogative for

the audience to contemplate:

Your city, your neighborhood, and even your block—in short, your zip code—can

dictate your ease of access (or lack thereof) to such vital human necessities as affordable

housing, quality healthcare, education, transportation, clean air and waterways, and parks.

The shape of neighborhoods and cities are the result of everyday decisions each of us

makes, individually and collectively. What will you do to ensure a more just future for

your city (Meghelli).

Framework for Public Programming

A Right to the City has a dynamic curatorial voice that impels visitors and members of the

community to consider how their active citizenry can be utilized towards designing a more just

future for our neighborhoods and cities (Meghelli). As a complement to the exhibition; panel

discussions, walking tours and community forums with wide ranging programming, both in the

museum and in neighborhoods, are planned (see fig. 2). Meghelli states:

One of the themes of the exhibition, particularly ending thoughts, draw from a speech

MLK gave in Shaw in 1967 where he's really pushing and encouraging people to prepare

to participate. The idea that encouraging participation in the process can create change

and transform our neighborhoods is an important part of exhibition programming
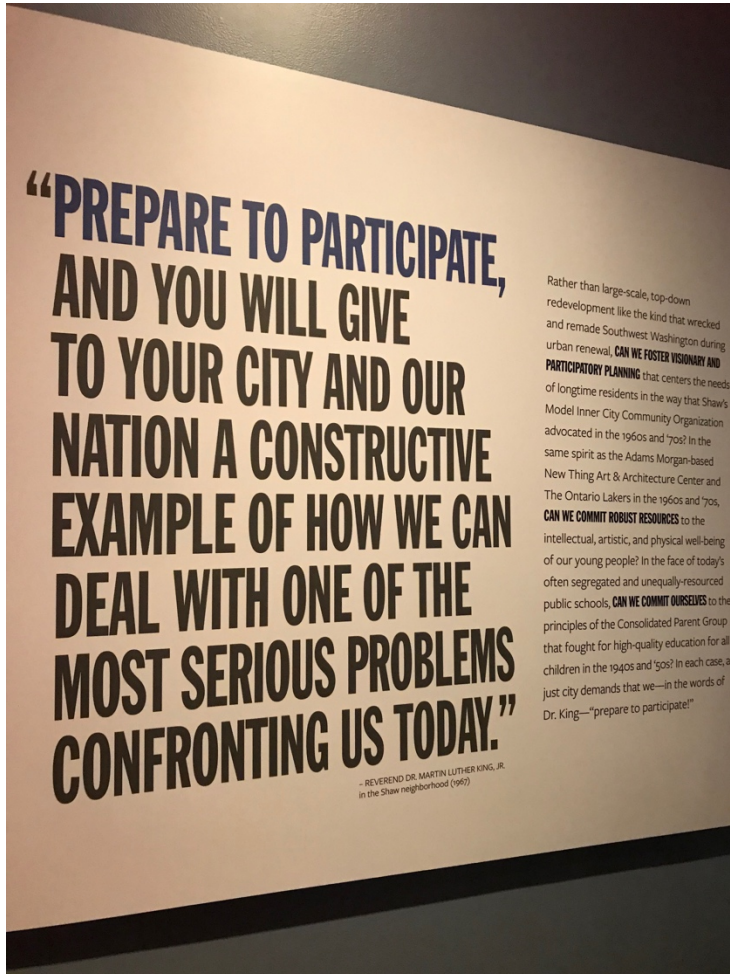
(Meghelli).

Fig. 2: Installation image

Intergenerational Conversations

Intergenerational conversations are a critical component of the exhibition's public programming

and discourse around participatory planning in Washington, D.C. "Prepare to Participate" is the

coda inspired by Dr. King's emphatic speech at the 1967 Shaw parade and will stimulate

intergenerational discourse throughout the public programming for *A Right to the City*. Through

actively engaging panel discussions between veteran and contemporary activists, residents and

visitors will gain an understanding of Washingtonians' origins in participatory planning in the midst of urban renewal. By reflecting on the precedent set by previous generations, citizens will have a framework by which they can be civically engaged in a similar way. *In Deliberate Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes* John Forester, Associate Professor of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University, says, "Because planning is the guidance of future action, planning with others calls for astute deliberative practice: learning about others as well as about issues, learning about what we should do as well as about what we can do" (Forester 1). The exhibition will provide historical context for how DC neighborhoods mobilized in the face of daunting odds and found success when they persevered. For example, Topper Carew, an architecture student at Howard dropped out and founded "The New Thing Arts and Architecture Center" in 1967. At the Center he could use his architectural skills driven by the philosophy of equity and excellence to design for individual families and neighborhoods in DC. He realized the importance of Black architects being community architects and was successful in saving the homes of many elderly black residents when the city wanted to demolish their homes. By 1968, the center had filmmaking, photography, art and dance classes for young people and provided service opportunities for young men who resisted Vietnam War (McQuirter). Meghelli offers his curatorial perspective by proposing:

> The idea of encouraging participation to transform our neighborhoods is an important part of exhibition programming, so I think through some of the programming like panel discussions or origins and evolutions of Advisory Neighborhood Councils, there is an opportunity to engross people in what it means to be civically engaged around local issues (Meghelli). Placing Topper Carew and his contemporaries in conversation with

local contemporary activists such as Sheldon Scott, a former ANC member and artist activist, would be an eloquent example of intergenerational discourse.

Meghelli also expressed, "What I want visitors to walk away with after this experience is to prepare to participate. With this idea that in order for the kind of change happening in our neighborhoods to reflect the interests and needs of the people means we all need to participate and be actively engaged" (Meghelli). The extensive research conducted by curators gets edited down during the processes of developing exhibitions, thus providing opportunities to delve deeper into the content through public programming. As a complement to the exhibition, the intergenerational conversations endeavor to explore the history of neighborhood change in the nation's capital, and its rich history of neighborhood organizing and civic engagement that transformed the city in the face of tremendous odds. With a focus on a diverse range of neighborhoods across the city, the exhibition tells the story of how ordinary Washingtonians have helped shape and reshape their neighborhoods in extraordinary ways: through the fight for quality public education, for healthy and green communities, for equitable transit and equitable development, and for a genuinely democratic approach to city planning (Anacostia.Si.edu).

Like most major metropolitan cities, Washington D.C. is experiencing an affordable housing crisis in conjunction with the duplicitous outcomes of gentrification. Community redevelopment has its positive and negative results. Though urban renewal can be very righteous for a city, it also has a daunting downside for residents who live under the median income and cannot afford the rising cost of living. By engaging the public through *A Right to the City* ACM has plans on activating its own space as well as spaces throughout the city to facilitate these conversations, in hopes that the call to action will inspire active participation.

Participatory Planning

In *Cities Museums and Soft Power* Javier Jimenez makes the argument that "Citizenship and economic power are becoming more and more concentrated in key urban areas that have an increased capacity to influence people's lives more decisively than many national and supranational governments" (30). Washington, D.C. has a unique and robust history of participatory planning. With its distinctive makeup as a District, as opposed to a state, representation in Congress and within District government calls for different type of governance. For example, Washington, D.C. has a Mayor, but no governor, nor official senatorial representation in United States Congress. Eleanor Holmes Norton is the Washington, D.C. elected delegate to the United States House of Representatives. Though she can draft legislation, she has no voting power (New Columbia Statehood Commission). On a more granular level, the Advisory Neighborhood Council (ANC) was founded in 1976 and is a nonpartisan organization that has significant weight in advising the District government and federal agencies on issues such as zoning, streets, recreation, education, social services, sanitation, planning, safety, budget, and health services for Washington, D.C. residents (Office of Neighborhood Advisory Commissions).

As multiple actors work towards reimagining the world we live in to the benefit of broader society, there is a necessity for people to communicate ideas within their constituencies to build cohesion among various groups. In *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities* Sommer expands upon this idea through defining the role of "cultural amphibians," a term Mayor Mockus originated. Sommer explains, "The same ability to interpret elements of one code in terms of another allows the concept cultural amphibians to participate in legal, moral, and cultural expressions without violating their personal integrity" (Sommer 28). In

addition to this idea of cultural amphibians, Forester shares a similar thought about how policy analysts can work collaboratively: "Unlike many other professionals, planners and policy analysts have to be astute bridge builders, negotiators, and mediators at the same time" (Forester 3). The ability to maneuver between multiple factions of society is a skillset that is inherent to the success of participatory planning.

Strategic Partnerships

The 50th anniversary celebration of Anacostia Community Museum's founding launched in 2017 and has been accompanied by a yearlong series of events and public programming under the theme "Your Community, Your Story." Google hosted a private event for ACM's 50th anniversary in its DC office. The venue teemed with energetic guests. Mayor Muriel Bowser of Washington, D.C. delivered spirited remarks before heading out to pitch at the Washington Nationals baseball game, but not before presenting a resolution to Yarrish solidifying Anacostia Community Museum Day in DC. Immediately after, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-Washington, D.C.) shared heartfelt sentiments about her familial ties, as the descendant of enslaved African Americans who walked off a plantation in Virginia when nobody was looking, eventually settling in Washington, D.C. Finally, the Congresswoman expressed gratitude for the historical role that ACM has played in preserving local cultural heritage while enhancing community pride.

In a room filled with Smithsonian leadership, including David Rubenstein who is on the Smithsonian Board of Regents, it had become vividly clear that ACM has developed strong civic ties and has gained institutional buy-in. *In Cities Museums and Soft Power* Blankenberg observes that "The capacity for museums to convert power is demonstrated in the ways they engage with

and promote women in professional networks and forms of influence. These women in turn, use their networks to influence and grow cultural, social and political sectors" (Blankenberg 24). Subsequent to the VIP fête at Google, Yarrish was featured in the *Washingtonian Magazine* as one of the top 20 most influential women in Washington, D.C. Blankenberg further explains that "While there are still disparities between the genders in museums, notably among the most senior positions in major museums, on the whole, women are more powerful in museums than in other cultural industries where they represent less than half the workforce" (19). Quite frankly, ACM's brand has been lacquered with a shiny varnish of political cache and burgeoning power after being hidden in the shadows of irrelevancy for over a decade.

ACM's yearlong celebration included a block party, community gardening, the formation of a teen task force and much more (Anacostia Community Museum, "Events"). Dr. Skorton underscores Yarrish's ongoing commitment to community partnerships with this statement, "Under Lori's leadership, the museum is focused on transitioning to a community-driven model and establishing innovative new ways to reach audiences, form collaborative partnerships, and expand connectivity" (Skorton "Email"). In the *Journal of Museum Education* Long supports this declaration with the quote, "Learning about the needs of the community isn't solely the work of the director, exhibit designer, or senior leadership. Everyone on staff should spend time meeting with the community members and listening to their needs" (Long 142). In the section "Coming to the Center of Community Life" of *Mastering Civic Engagement*: *A Challenge to Museums* Rosario Jackson offers, "AAM's challenge to museums to engage in civic processes and play an important role in community building is no small request. It requires museums and other organizations to stretch their boundaries, take on new themes, and work with individuals and organizations that may be alien to them" (Jackson 37). Anacostia neighborhood's changing

demographics, due to gentrification, coupled with ACM's broader geographic scope require thoughtful engagement of new constituents.

However, all of the strategic partnerships are not external. According to Whitney Watriss, Director of the Smithsonian Organization and Audience Research department and an instrumental actor in devising both the Smithsonian and ACM strategic plans, "I think that 'One Smithsonian' will be very important to them because they can't accomplish what they want to do if they can't partner with the rest of the Smithsonian" (Watriss). To a large extent the Smithsonian strategic plan has a symbiotic relationship with each unit. Furthermore, ACM's viability as a much smaller, less prominent unit relies upon the internal partnerships with other Smithsonian museums and departments.

Museums and Civic Engagement

The museum field has reached a critical juncture in which it has been disrupted by the realities that culture can be produced and shared in nontraditional spaces and by the realization that communities are hungry for representation beyond traditional monolithic westernized ideologies. In *Cities Museums and Soft Power* Lord candidly bolsters this point by stating, "Even though a museum's origins may be steeped in racism, colonialism and elitism, there is still value in the artifacts it holds and the opportunities it presents for reinterpretation—starting with whom it employs and how it operates. Without public museums, this institutional cultural memory is privatized and in danger of being forgotten" (Lord 23). The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Art Museum Staff Demographic Study revealed:

> Non-Hispanic White staff continue to dominate the job categories most closely associated
> with the intellectual and educational mission of museums, including those of curators,

conservators, educators, and leadership (from director and chief curator to head of

education or conservation) (Schonfeld and Westerman 4).

Though the study focuses on American art museums, this information is emblematic of the

broader museum field as well. This matters because as communities continue to shift in

demographics, it means that many museums lack staff members who reflect the ethnic diversity

of our broader society. It is likely that these museums also lack cultural ties to members of the

community who are essential to achieving deepened engagement.

In *The Art of Relevance* Simon speaks about the entry point into a museum for

nontraditional goers by using "keys" and "doors" metaphors. She states "You have to show that

you are inviting people in on their terms, with generosity, humility, and a nod to what speaks for

them. Effective front doors have greeters who look like your community welcoming them at the

door. Speaking their language. Providing entry points that match the keys they use every day"

(Simon 54). In support of that, Lord states, "Museums exercise soft power based on community

participation" (Lord 22). However, forward thinking museums that have enough vision and

plasticity to adjust to changing times are more likely to thrive off of the symbiotic power of

community.

Blankenberg observes, "Top down museums with little local participation or relevance

may be successful initially at attracting attention but ultimately will fail in exerting lasting

influence and impact" (Blankenberg 105). Obsolescence and low visitation are imminent

prospects for museums that are avoidant of community. By engaging in discourse around social

concerns that are typically polarizing in other spaces, museums can position themselves as

invaluable hubs in the community. Yarrish is absolute in her belief of ACM's community centric

coda and explains: "Whether we are addressing an issue, developing programs, doing research,

or collecting—we are definitely tapped into the community in order to authenticate stories we are telling" (Yarrish). The community centric mentality that emerges from the Director's level sets the precedent for organizational priorities at ACM.

Though many museums struggle to make the pivot to a community focus, it is a necessary skill to master for long term sustainability. In the section "Mastering Civic Engagement: A Report from the American Association of Museums" of *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums;* Ellen Hirzy, former Director of Publications at American Alliance of Museums, codifies this notion with the following assertion, "The logical next step for museums is to learn and master the process of civic engagement. The task is critical to their evolution, their relevance and their survival" (Hirzy 11). ACM's revitalization efforts have garnered the attention and accolades of native Washingtonian, Congresswoman Norton, who is shown delivering remarks at the opening reception for *A Right to the City* (see fig. 3).

Fig. 3: Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton delivering remarks at the opening reception of A Right to the City on April 20, 2018.

ACM as a Catalyst

Though the Smithsonian is national in scope and is highly competent in attracting millions of visitors annually, their ability to deepen engagement with residents across all eight wards of DC has never been a core competency. However, there are three Smithsonian strategic goals that Anacostia Community Museum is uniquely positioned to help actualize:

- Catalyze new conversations and address complex challenges

- Understand and impact twenty first21st century audiences

- Preserve natural and cultural heritage while optimizing our assets, provide a nimble, cost effective and responsive administrative infrastructure (Our Plan—Strategic Plan).

The Smithsonian vision statement says, "By 2022, the Smithsonian will build on its unique strengths to engage and to inspire more people, where they are, with greater impact, while catalyzing critical conversations on issues affecting our nation and the world." (Vision Statement) It is therefore integral to the success of the Smithsonian's ability to fulfill its goals that they use Anacostia Community Museum as vehicle for catalyzing new conversations and addressing complex challenges. Dr. Skorton stated this about ACM, "Through the museum's exhibitions, programs, and scholarship, Lori is redefining how we talk about its role in catalyzing change, creating new knowledge, and convening conversations of social importance (Skorton). This is especially the case because many issues that Washington, D.C. grapples with, as a major metropolitan city, is illustrative of issues that other cities around the nation face as well.

In *Practicing Civic Engagement: Making your Museum into a Community Living Room* Long asserts that "America's changing demographics mean that it's no longer a question of whether a museum should engage in addressing social issues, but a matter of how and for whom" (Long 145). One of the most complex challenges America has grappled with is race. As a matter

of fact, in 2017 a noose was found on the National Mall near the National Museum of Natural History. A few short weeks after, a second noose was found inside of NMAAHC. The founding director of NMAAHC, Lonnie Bunch, responded to this incident in an op-ed for the *New York Times* saying, "The person who recently left a noose at the National Museum of African American History and Culture clearly intended to intimidate, by deploying one of the most feared symbols in American racial history" (Bunch). Though the Smithsonian has not historically been a vocal powerhouse on America's race relations, visible acts of hatred on site makes it impossible to ignore and forcibly invites difficult conversations the Smithsonian claims to want to be a convener of.

Furthermore, Nina Simon says, "Museums have a civic role beyond that of cultural symbol, economic engine, and provider of educational experiences. Other organizations and people in communities are confident that museums can fill this role. They could learn from their colleagues at ethnic and community-based museums, which have set the standard by establishing deep meaningful civic involvement as their founding principle (Simon 89). Maximizing impact within the context of a social impact focused museum can be achieved through partnerships with local civic agencies. In a city like Washington, D.C. there is no shortage of civic agencies and community focused organizations. Claudia Watts, Manager of Strategic Partnerships for ACM asserts that "One of the most fruitful partnerships for the Anacostia Community Museum has been with the Mayor's Office. This has allowed the museum to broaden their reach, as intended in the newly formed mission and has also added to the legitimacy of the museum" (Watts).

When museums create fruitful partnerships each actor benefits from it in meaningful ways. Watts says, "Lots of people will connect us with other people because they have personal connection. Cultivating those relationships and keeping them at the forefront has been very

fruitful." The Anacostia Community Museum Renewal plan affirms that statement by stating that "Mutually beneficial partnerships will strategically expand the museum's sphere of influence both locally and nationally" (ACM Renewal Plan). Washington, D.C. is a dynamic global city that offers ample opportunity for ACM to forge meaningful partnerships internally at the Smithsonian and externally with local and national organizations.

Measuring Impact

In *Making Museums Matter* Stephen Weil, a museum official and legal expert in the arts, extracts an idea from renowned management consultant, Peter Drucker's, insight on the potential magnitude of museums by confirming that "There has been a growing acceptance of the argument of the highly regarded management expert Peter Drucker that it is socially irresponsible for any organization to exercise control over always-limited resources unless it is able to utilize those resources to produce some outcomes commensurate with their magnitude" (Weil loc. 1572). With this point in mind museums must consider how the magnitude of their impact can be measured. *In Counting New Beans: Intrinsic Impact and the Value of Art* Rebecca Novick, Director of Triangle Lab Theatre, highlights financial outcomes for the cultural field as a whole: "Per the NEA research note Time and Money, the cultural industries contribute $70.9 billion to the U.S. annual GDP —an impressive sum, but the total U.S. annual GDP is $14 trillion, which basically means the entire cultural sector contributes .51% of the entire GDP in any given year" (Ratzkin et.al loc. 311 of 7403). Though very impressive, these financial returns are not indicative of intangible community impact that are difficult to quantify.

The nonprofit sector, which most museums are contained in, has implemented metrics into their reporting practices to demonstrate measurable results. Capturing the value of social

impact work is necessary yet difficult work for museums. Many museums are not savvy in fining

metrics that accurately capture their value. According to Weil, "All too frequently, museums are

characterized—sometimes even by themselves—as being important principally as sites for

informal education and/or self-directed learning. They are certainly important for that, but they

are also important for a very great deal more than that" (Weil loc.1174). Custom metrics must be

designed to measure impact at ACM for both the Smithsonian and the city of Washington to

comprehend the importance of the work it does.

There are few very obvious areas that museums can easily measure success.

Archetypically, the quantifiable metrics most frequently employed are visitation numbers and

fundraising results. However, the metrics employed to assess indicators of success across

Smithsonian museums are not conducive to measuring the impact at the Anacostia Community

Museum. Watriss observes that:

> The two major measures right now are audience numbers and fundraising and right now
>
> ACM has very little capacity to raise money. Instead, what should be measured is what
>
> has changed as a result of what you are doing, is the world a better place? Have you
>
> inspired people? When they leave do they continue to research the exhibition or follow
>
> up on things they want to know about? Do they have a different perspective on how they
>
> see the world? It is always easier to fall back on qualitative measures (Watriss).

Javier Jimenez furthers this assertion by stating, "Not all museum impacts are as evident as

dollars and visitor figures" (32). With deep communities being the differentiator between ACM

and other Smithsonian museums, it is important to be able to understand how the broader

Washington, D.C. metropolitan region experiences ACM's impact. To this point Lord states,

"City dwellers feel that they are connected to a community that they can speak to, see and impact" (Lord 112). There are intangible signifiers of impact that ACM can consider as well.

In the "Museums in Public Diplomacy" section of *Cities, Museums, and Soft Power* Frederica Olivares expands upon the global role of museums by stating, "Because much of the content of global communications is cultural, museums are becoming an influential cultural relations player, no less than broadcasting, educational institutions, business, artists, performers and sports stars" (Olivares 53). One type of a quantitative metrics for measuring global impact by can be done by digital analytics across various platforms such as Facebook, Google, Twitter and Instagram to understand ACM's reach digital reach. These analytics built into these platforms are cost effective and are able to capture visitor data, impressions, and geographic reach. Quantitative metrics can be informative, but often fail to fully encapsulate the breadth of value social impact creates in communities. For example, capturing visitor numbers can be indicative of their desire to visit a particular city because of a museum, but cannot definitively conclude that without a survey (Watriss). Watriss claims, "Furthermore, capturing tourist vs. resident in the visitor count holds the same problem." Qualitative data derived from comments and feedback from can be very helpful in developing a fuller narrative around impact as opposed to counting visitor numbers and including length of time they stay inside an exhibition.

Conclusion

With the newly constructed social impact mission, the Anacostia Community Museum has proven to be an innovative community hub that has risen to the challenge of regaining relevance and legitimizing its existence alongside NMAAHC. Under its new leadership, ACM has transitioned from relative obscurity to a magnetic fixture in the community that centers around

daily civic and social life in ways that other Smithsonian Museums do not. As the Smithsonian moves forward with implementation of the *Smithsonian 2022* strategic plan, it can incubate ideas at the Anacostia Community Museum that can be scaled to a national level to help achieve broader impact and engagement initiatives. *A Right to the City* is a befitting example of how an ACM exhibition can draw visitors into civic focused experiences and leave with a call to action that compels them to play an active role in designing a more just future. With measurable results, Anacostia Community Museum can help the Smithsonian forecast impact on larger scale. As the Smithsonian enters the new space of convening people around issues of national importance, it is imperative that they do so with tact and astuteness. Unlike other Smithsonian museums have been able to do on a local level, the Anacostia Community Museum possesses the tools for convening members of the community around difficult issues. Watriss concludes this about ACM's potential to achieve these goals:

> I think they can play a role in playing convening conversations on sensitive topics that other museums may shy away from because of their relationship to the community. They have to be responsive to what the community wants and needs. They are very committed to having social impact. Goal One of the Smithsonian Strategic plan does not have as much presence in museums that don't have a true connection with local community (Watriss).

Institutional Buy-In

Internal Smithsonian stakeholder engagement is a vital element of streamlining the larger institutional priorities with each museum's strategic goals. Weil provides context for such actions in this statement: "Within its governance and its own senior staff, the good museum requires a leadership fiercely determined to see that the achievement of its purpose is established

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and unblinkingly maintained as the institutions highest priority" (Weil 1295 of 5044). Though ACM is capable of helping the Smithsonian execute against the strategic plan, it is required that senior leadership and other Smithsonian museums share financial and other resources to partner with ACM. The outcomes of partnering across the Smithsonian would provide institutional collaborations among the museums in areas they are not adept in already. This is a practice consistent with the Institutions "One Smithsonian" aspirations. In reference to this, Watriss shares her candor in the remark, "Racism exists, gentrification divides between rich and poor…those are contemporary social issues according to the strategic plan that is what we are supposed to be dealing with more than we do." These type of acknowledgements from a senior Smithsonian leader suggest that there may be concerted efforts in forging internal collaborations to address weighty issues that impact our nation.

Moreover, institutional support of collaboration is easier to achieve when it comes as a directive from senior leadership. The *Anacostia Community Museum Renewal Plan* confirms Smithsonian leadership's endorsement of a newly shaped trajectory in this statement, "ACM's new direction has been endorsed by the Office of the Provost and Secretary. This case will guide the remainder of the renewal process; market research, strategic planning and implementation" (ACM Renewal Plan). Dr. Skorton's vocal support of ACM is a positive indicator that there is potential for collaborations and allocation of resources to bolster ACM's efforts.

Recommendations

The sustainability of the twenty first century museum relies upon its ability to engage community and create impact. Measuring impact must be done in a way that is specific a museums' mission and core competencies but must not fail to keep a human centered approach. In the section "Sowing New Beans: The Making of Memory and the Measuring of Impact" of the chapter

"Changing the Conversation" in *Counting New Beans: Intrinsic Impact and the Value of Art,* Vice President of Americans for the Arts, Clayton Lord, observes, "We talk about economic impact on our communities, about percentage of tickets sold and number of people served. We are asked to focus on building the largest most inclusive tent possible for our work, and to ensure a diversity of audience almost without regard for those for whom the work was actually created" (Lord Loc. 312 of 7403). In measuring ACM's success, the criticality of implementing the community voice is a fundamental qualitative informant the Smithsonian cannot afford to overlook.

Currently Anacostia Community Museum employs metrics for measuring the success of their exhibitions through surveys that do not fully encapsulate the breadth of their work, nor have they been utilized in the Smithsonian's metric's for success in the past, which is partly why ACM would have possibly been eradicated upon NMAAHC's opening. In an effort to provide Smithsonian leadership with more comprehensive data to capture the worth of Anacostia in relation to the larger Institutional impact, new ways of measuring success must be designed and implemented. According to Sonal Shah, inaugural Director of the White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, and founding Executive Director of Georgetown University's Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation, "The key is collecting the data. First collect baseline data as a way to measure impact. Impact of culture is very long term, not short term. It matters that Anacostia Community Museum pushes conversations and are also educating people, but you are collecting baseline data to understand where culture is going and how to impact culture" (Shah). Thinking of ACM as a catalyst prompts one to think differently about how to measure value, which is a major paradigm shift from the typical visitor headcount as the ultimate metric of success.

The following recommendations for metrics demonstrate how ACM can measure impact for *A Right to the City* and its complementary public programming. The chart below provides templates that can also be adjusted as needed for future exhibitions and public programs:

Objective: The Anacostia Community museum explores social issues impacting diverse populations of the DC metropolitan area to promote mutual understanding and strengthen community bonds.

Metric 1: Did *A Right to the City* and/or its corresponding programming encourage you to be civically engaged?

On a Likert Scale: Strongly agree or Strongly disagree (see fig. 4).

| Survey/Interview Questions:	African Americans	Hispanics	Asians
I exercised my right to vote prior to visiting *A Right to the City* exhibition and/public program(s). I registered to vote before visiting *A Right to the City*.	Gather data for percentage%	Gather data for percentage%	Gather data for percentage%
I consider myself to be civically engaged.	Gather data for percentage%	Gather data for percentage%	Gather data for percentage%
A Right to the City encouraged me to make an impact on my community.	Gather data for percentage%	Gather data for percentage%	Gather data for percentage%
I enjoy discussing community issues in a museum setting.	Gather data for percentage%	Gather data for percentage%	Gather data for percentage%

Figure 4: Quantitative Metric

**Metric 2:** What is the benefit of attending Anacostia Community Museum?

Respondents can answer freely with questions that prompt them to share the ways in which Anacostia Community Museum has made an impact on them, no matter how small.

The Smithsonian's ambitious endeavor to achieve profound impact is happening in real time and on a micro level at the Anacostia Community Museum. By using these metrics as future indicators of success, the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum sets a precedent for what is possible in civic minded museums and for the Smithsonian institution as a whole. Though it is delightful to have well attended public programs, the actions that result from them are demonstrative of true impact over time. Regarding the projected outcomes of measuring impact of public programming on visitors, Shah states, "It's going to be more about catalyzing instead of depth of programming" (Shah). Additionally, Javier Jimenez states, "There are many effects that cannot be measured in quantitative terms, but nevertheless make enormous contributions to the long-term vitality of a community and society, generally" (Jimenez 43). As DC continues to evolve in the face of urban renewal, the once blighted Anacostia community will undeniably transform into a desirable hotspot (Goldchain). As a malleable anchor institution, ACM has proven it has staying power. As a placemaking landmark in Washington, D.C., ACM emits soft power that affirms DC's local identity, promotes social impact and encourages good citizenship.

Appendix A

Exhibition installation images from *A Right to the City.*
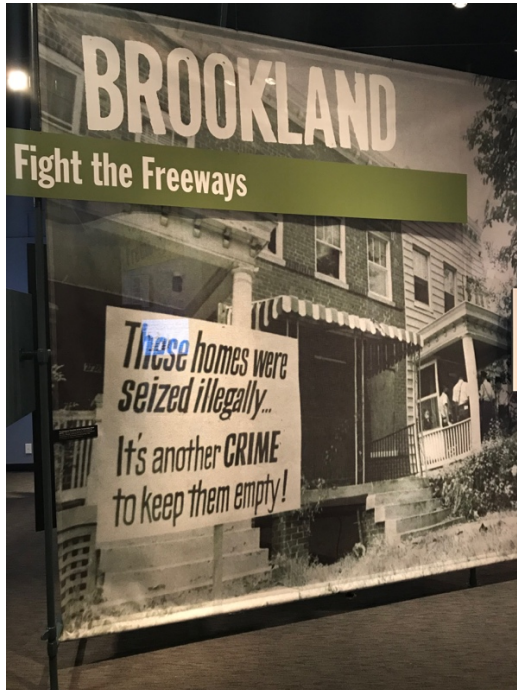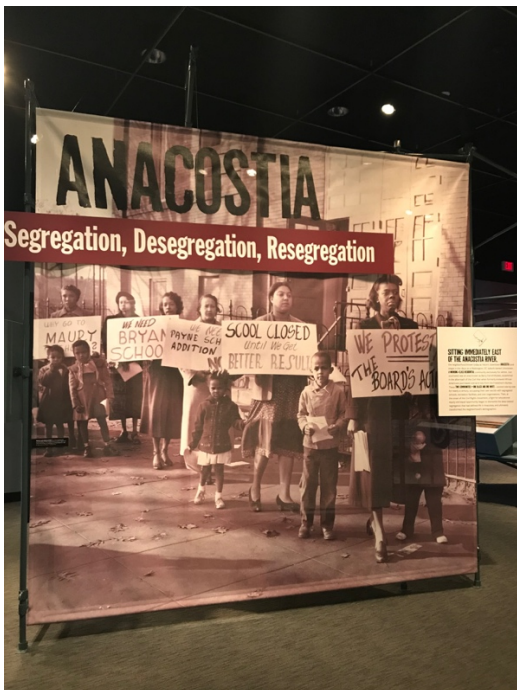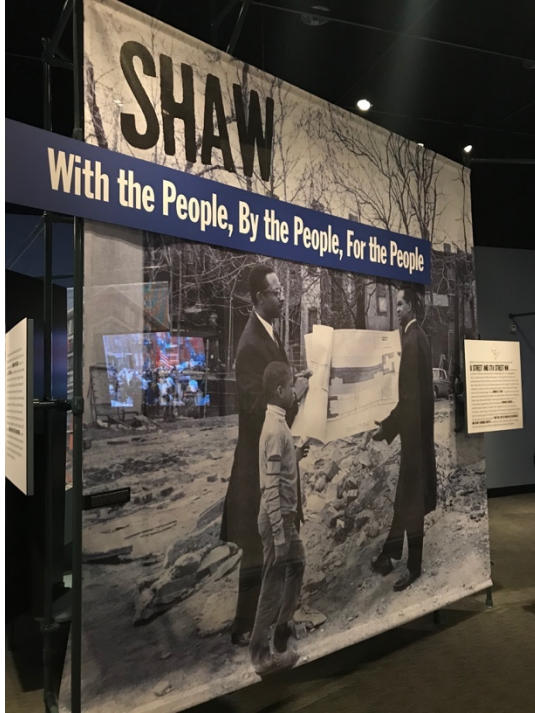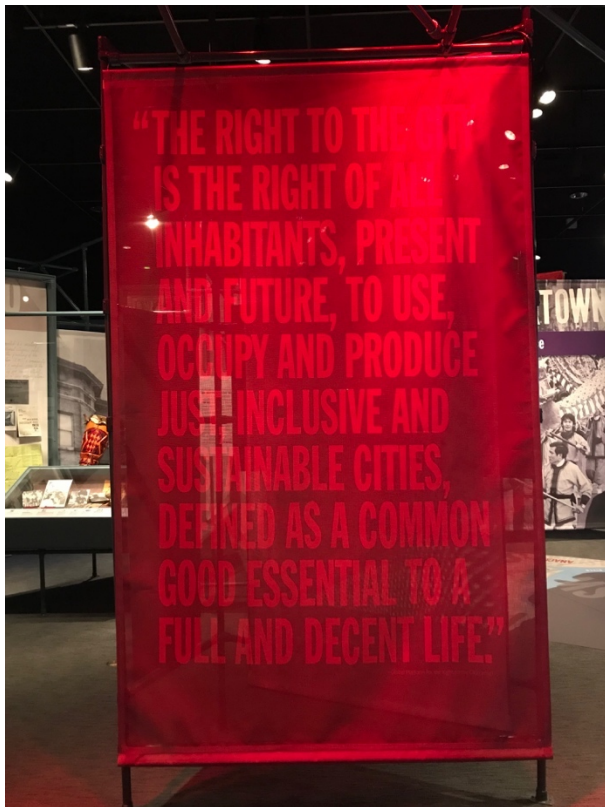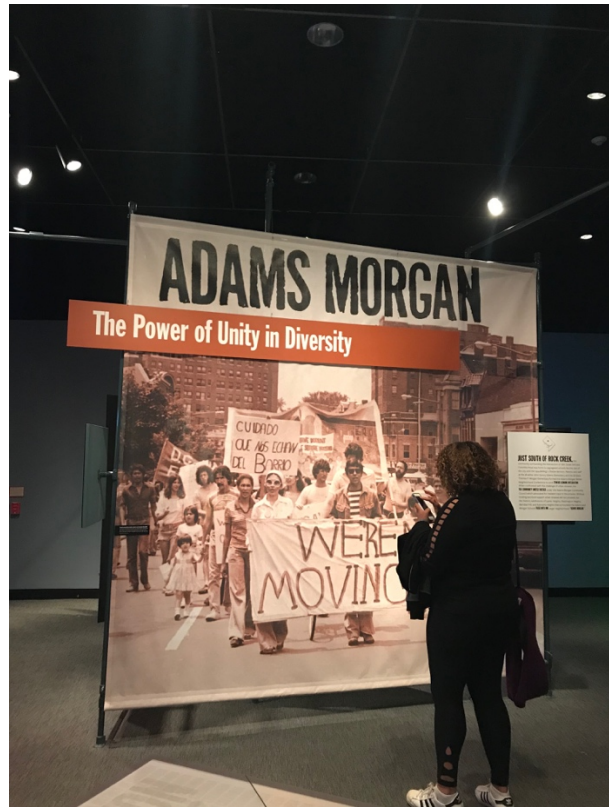
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