

# Immigration Sites of Conscience Network

## Museums in the Immigration Sites of Conscience Network

The Immigration Sites of Conscience Network includes:

Angel Island State Park (Tiburon) & Angel Island  
Immigration Station Foundation (San Francisco)  
Arab American National Museum (Dearborn)  
Cambodian American Heritage Museum, Chicago Cultural  
Alliance, Environment, Culture, and Conservation (ECCo)  
at The Field Museum and Jane Addams Hull-House  
Museum (Chicago)  
Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles)  
Levine Museum of the New South (Charlotte)

Lowell National Historical Park & Tsongas Industrial  
History Center (Lowell)  
Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Statue of Liberty  
National Monument and Ellis Island (New York) & Save  
Ellis Island (New Jersey)  
New Americans Museum (San Diego)  
University of Texas El Paso's Paso al Norte Immigration  
History Museum (El Paso)  
Wing Luke Asian Museum (Seattle)

## New Programs of Immigration Sites of Conscience

- **Angel Island State Park (Tiburon, CA):** In the middle of San Francisco Bay sits Angel Island State Park, which includes a former U.S. Immigration Station. From 1910 to 1940, hundreds of thousands of immigrants, the majority from China, were processed there, many detained for long stretches of time. The Immigration Station's unique feature is the Chinese poetry etched into the walls of the barracks that speak of the immigrants' sadness and isolation while being detained at the station. During World War II, the U.S. military held Japanese and German POWs in the same buildings.

***Poetry and Policy:*** Immigrants converge in the Bay area. Post 9/11, detention has become a cause of concern among many immigrant populations. Angel Island Immigration Station uses poetry to explore the history and experience of immigrants on Angel Island and open dialogue around contemporary U.S. immigration policies and detention. Visitors begin with a tour of the historic Immigration Station site, witnessing the conditions the immigrants endured during their stays. Following the tour, visitors examine the feelings expressed by immigrants through the poems carved on the walls of the station's barracks building. Discussion facilitated using these poems spurs visitors to reflect and share their opinions and experiences of contemporary immigration issues. Visitors discuss their visions of a fair immigration policy for the United States today, and explore how they can be involved in ensuring fair treatment for all in their own communities.

- **Arab American National Museum (Dearborn, MI):** The first museum in the world devoted to Arab American history, the Arab American National Museum (AANM) brings the voices and faces of Arab Americans to mainstream audiences and dispels misconceptions about Arab Americans and other minorities. The Museum, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, brings to light the shared experiences of immigrants and ethnic groups, paying tribute to the diversity of our nation.

***Connecting Communities:*** As the immigrant population in Detroit has dramatically increased over the past 40 years, the prospect that new arrivals may compete with American natives for jobs, housing, perceived status in society, and political representation has become a source of conflict. In some Detroit communities, racial tensions run high in reaction to the presence of new immigrant groups. Developed with students from diverse backgrounds and neighborhoods, AANM's new multimedia exhibit *Connecting Communities* uses metro Detroit as a microcosm of American immigration, and lets immigrants tell their own stories, which often contradict broadly held stereotypes and misconceptions. Via cell phone, visitors can listen in on conversations with Arab, Latino, Southeast Asian and Eastern



European immigrants, while photos, personal objects and writings further illuminate these immigrants' experiences. Through facilitated discussions or individual opportunities, visitors are invited to reflect upon and share their thoughts about immigration and how it has impacted their own lives.

- **Chicago Cultural Alliance (Chicago, IL):** Incorporated as an independent 501(c)(3) organization in 2006, the Chicago Cultural Alliance is a consortium of Chicago-area ethnic museums and cultural centers whose mission is to effect social change and public understanding of cultural diversity through first voice perspective. The Alliance increases the visibility and impact of Chicago's ethnic assets by leveraging partnerships between member organizations and major institutions. The Alliance assures the long-term efficacy of its public education, marketing, preservation, and social service programs by providing organizational development assistance to its core members.
- **Environment, Culture, and Conservation at The Field Museum (Chicago, IL):** The division of Environment, Culture, and Conservation (ECCo) fulfills the museum's pledge to sustain wild landscapes and cultural vitality. ECCo translates biodiversity science into conservation action, while identifying and catalyzing intrinsic capacities of human communities for social change. ECCo has demonstrated concrete results by focusing on the assets — both cultural and biological — that work in diversity's favor.

***Talking About Im/migration: Community Dialogues:*** Based in communities with long histories and strong public memories of immigration, ethnically specific museums in Chicago face particular challenges in discussing contemporary immigration, such as friction among different generations and nationalities of immigrants. In addition, museums remembering ethnic histories report of tensions between more-established and newly-arrived communities of immigrants from the same country of origin. For example, there is often conflict about which groups of immigrants are represented in the missions and exhibits of ethnic museums. The Chicago Cultural Alliance together with The Field Museum developed immigration dialogue programs at four community-based ethnic museums and cultural centers in metropolitan Chicago: the Cambodian American Heritage Museum & Killing Fields Memorial (CAHM), the Polish Museum of America (PMA), the Swedish American Museum Center (SAMAC), and the Chicago Japanese American Historical Society (CJAHS). Each of the four institutions brought together community members with historical and contemporary experiences and different perspectives around immigration. Through facilitated dialogue programs, these museums engage their community members in discussions to gather a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple waves of immigration in their communities and explore how previous immigrants' experiences compare with immigration issues in Chicago today.

- **Jane Addams Hull-House Museum (Chicago, IL):** The Jane Addams Hull-House Museum serves as a dynamic memorial to social reformer and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Jane Addams (1860-1935) and other resident social reformers whose work influenced the lives of their immigrant neighbors as well as national and international public policy. As Hull-House Settlement was a place where immigrants, social reformers, writers and others could imagine, convene and argue about the issues of the time, the Museum continues to provide a place to discuss and debate the contemporary social issues of today. The Museum preserves and develops the original Hull-House site for the interpretation and continuation of the historic settlement house vision, linking research, education, and social engagement.

***Immigration in America and Creating Social Change:*** As new people are moving to Chicago communities, community members are challenged with how to get along with and serve these newcomers in their neighborhoods. Using exhibit tours in the historic Jane Addams home as a starting point, the Museum offers two programs to engage in facilitated dialogue on immigration, social change and how people can connect with issues in their communities: (1) *Immigration in America*, for middle and high school students and (2) *Creating Social Change*, for college students, targeted groups, and members of the general public. The programs are designed to create a safe environment where a range of emotions and opinions can be shared in conversation. Through discussion, participants consider their responsibilities to their communities and to each other, as seen through the lens of reformers at the Hull House Settlement. The programs conclude with the facilitator inviting participants to continue reflecting on current issues and to imagine both big and small ways they can participate in responding to the needs of people in their communities today.



- **Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, CA):** The Japanese American National Museum is the only museum in the United States dedicated to promoting understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity by preserving, interpreting and sharing the experiences of Japanese Americans. The Museum's latest addition, the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, is an educational institution that partners with educators and community-based mentors to inspire youth to become active, informed participants in shaping democracy in America. The National Center for the Preservation of Democracy is housed in the former Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. Built by Japanese immigrants in 1925, the Temple served a broad range of community needs as a house of worship and during World War II was an assembly point of departure for Internment Camps for the Los Angeles Japanese American community.

***Tour Reflection at the Museum's Historic Building:*** In many Los Angeles high schools, students experience racial and ethnic tension, often amongst immigrant groups and communities who are already living in the area. This fall, the Japanese American National Museum will launch a dialogue program for high school students to help dispel stereotypes, prejudice, fears and other motivators of potential hate crimes. Students are guided on a tour of the Museum's exhibition *Common Ground: The Heart of Community* followed by a discussion facilitated by an educator in the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, housed in the Museum's historic building. Students will discuss their experiences with the exhibition and consider the discrimination and stereotypes individuals faced in the past, the stereotypes that students see in their community today, and ways to combat stereotypes and discrimination in their schools and community.

- **Levine Museum of the New South (Charlotte, NC):** Levine Museum of the New South is an interactive history museum that provides the nation with the most comprehensive interpretation of post-Civil War southern society featuring men, women and children, black and white, rich and poor, long-time residents and newcomers who have shaped the South since the Civil War and who are making history today. Using history to build community, the Museum presents opportunities for life-long learning, provides historical context for contemporary issues and serves as a catalyst for thoughtful and relevant discussion. In response to the increasing cultural diversity of the region, including a 600% growth in Latino immigration over the last decade, the Museum created *Changing Places: From Black and White to Technicolor*, a major exhibit on Charlotte's changing demographics designed to create a learning space for all sectors of the city to come together and come to terms with their new social landscape and the issues it raises.

***Speaking of Change and Turning the Tables:*** A 2001 study of 40 U.S. localities by Harvard's Robert Putnam ranked Charlotte second-to-last in interracial trust. The Putnam report sparked city-wide efforts to build bridges between old residents and new, blacks and whites, natives and immigrants. Playing a leading role in helping the community make sense of a changing city: Levine Museum of the New South's exhibit *Changing Places: From Black and White to Technicolor*. *Changing Places* explores the difficult process of cultural change through first-person stories of long-time residents and new arrivals from across the United States and around the globe. Levine Museum offers two dialogue programs: *Speaking of Change* for groups from corporate, education, county, not-for-profit and community-based organizations; and *Turning the Tables*, for groups of young people to grapple with stereotypes and cross-cultural understanding. Both programs begin with a tour of the *Changing Places* exhibit to explore the cultural change occurring in their city through first-person stories of long-time residents and new arrivals from across the United States and around the globe. Then groups participate in a facilitator-led conversation about their individual experiences and challenges, and the issues faced in their communities today.

- **Lowell National Historical Park (Lowell, MA):** The early story of America's Industrial Revolution is commemorated at Lowell National Historical Park in the midst of this lively city. Recognizing that Lowell is a city that was built by immigrants, and continues to be transformed by immigrants, the Park engages in creative programming with the Cambodian community as well as other new immigrant communities.
- **Tsongas Industrial History Center (Lowell, MA):** The Tsongas Center is a hands-on history center where students learn about the American Industrial Revolution through hands-on activities and by experiencing history where it happened. Students "do history" by weaving, creating canal systems and testing water wheels, working on an assembly line, role-playing immigrants, or becoming inventors. The Tsongas Center is a professional development provider, offering teachers exciting



workshops and primary-source-based teaching activities. The Tsongas Center is a partnership between the University of Massachusetts Lowell Graduate School of Education and Lowell National Historical Park, who each provide a portion of the funding and staff to operate the Center.

**Workers on the Line:** As of 2007, immigrants make up 26.7% of Lowell's population. Many of these immigrants face similar challenges as workers in the past - searching for a job, facing discrimination, a dearth of organizations that meet basic and social needs, and finding safe and affordable housing. Similar to during the time of textile factories, tension and misunderstandings between the older established groups and the newer groups to the area continue. The Tsongas Industrial History Center will be offering to high school youth an adaptation of an existing program called *Workers on the Line*. The program expands the *Workers on the Line*, currently offered to younger students, to include discussion on current labor issues in the U.S. and overseas. Students start with a tour of the historic buildings in Lowell National Historic Park seeing first-hand the noisy and crowded factory floor where the mill girls and immigrants worked. Students then participate in an interactive experience that simulates the conditions of working in a factory and being faced with options to organize. Finally, students use their experience at Lowell to think about and share ideas to address current immigration and labor practices. Through dialogue and discussion about challenges of workers in the past and today, students form their own opinions and possible involvement in current labor issues. The goal of the program is to honor and celebrate the immigrants that defined, built, and shaped the industrial and civic institutions of the city and to use those stories as a link to immigrant groups, issues and trends that students see today.

- **Lower East Side Tenement Museum (New York, NY):** Located in a neighborhood that is still home to many new immigrants, the Tenement Museum's mission is "to promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of the variety of immigrant/migrant experiences on Manhattan's Lower East Side, a gateway to America." Using its landmark tenement building at 97 Orchard Street, home to 7,000 people from over 20 nations from 1863 to 1935, the Tenement Museum roots its interpretation of the history of immigration in the lives of the building's late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century immigrant residents, and encourages visitors to connect with their stories on a deeply personal level. The Museum's public dialogue programs and ESOL programs engage new immigrants and longer-rooted Americans alike in discussions of contemporary immigration issues.

**Getting By: Past and Present:** Many of the challenges immigrant families confronted in the past are similar to those immigrants face today, such as finding a job, negotiating public assistance, surviving as a single mother, working in sweatshops, facing racial discrimination, and struggling for better housing. The Tenement Museum's new program *Getting By: Past and Present* is a two-hour program designed to encourage the general public to understand the multiple perspectives of housing reform and the role of government assistance during times of depression in both the past and present. Expanding on the Museum's tour, *Getting By: Immigrants Weathering Hard Times*, educators guide visitors through historical recreations of former resident's apartments, sharing family situations, and in discussion, encouraging visitors to make connections to their own ideas on immigration, the role of government, class issues, and the meaning of "Americanization." Educators also introduce primary sources, such as radio broadcasts, maps, newspapers, photographs, and oral histories, in the apartments as triggers for conversation, and return to them again later in facilitated discussion to draw connections to contemporary issues encouraging visitors to share their opinions and individual perspectives

- **New Americans Museum (San Diego, CA):** The New Americans Museum became a battleground for its community's debates and tensions around immigration, receiving threats of violence before it even opened in 2008, simply because of its name. With its focus on more recent waves of immigration, the New Americans Museum directly connects this recent history with past immigration through rotating exhibits and programs, and with contemporary issues through public dialogues. The museum also strives to promote understanding and interaction between newcomers and native-born Americans while helping our newest citizens connect with and prosper in their new homeland.

**Stereotypes and Immigration:** The Museum recently hosted two exhibitions: *Immigration and Caricature: Ethnic Images from the Appel Collection* from Michigan State University Museum and *A Community between Two Worlds: Arab Americans in Greater*



*Detroit* from the Arab American National Museum. In conjunction with these exhibits, New Americans Museum hosted dialogue programs for high school students to address misconceptions of immigration and combat negative stereotypes and anti-immigrant propaganda in San Diego. Using the exhibition on historic images of stereotypes, students discussed images and caricatures of immigrants in the past as well as images of Arab American immigrants today. During the programs, students explored their own assumptions and stereotypes of immigrants today. Working with schools in areas known for their diverse student populations, the program reached out to different ethnic and racial groups in order to build dialogue across difference and provide participants with a more comprehensive picture of immigration in San Diego informed by individuals' experiences and encounters with each other.

- **Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island (New York, NY & Jersey City, NJ):** Opened on January 1, 1892, Ellis Island became the nation's premier federal immigration station. In operation until 1954, the station processed some 12 million immigrant steamship passengers. The island's Main Building was restored after 30 years of abandonment and opened as a museum in 1990, operated by the National Park Service. Today, more than 40 percent of America's population can trace their ancestry through Ellis Island.
- **Save Ellis Island (Mt. Olive, NJ):** The mission of Save Ellis Island, Inc., the official fundraising partner of the National Park Service, is to raise the private funding necessary to rehabilitate, restore, and put to beneficial reuse the currently deteriorated and unused buildings of Ellis Island. In cooperation with the National Park Service, Save Ellis Island will develop the un-restored buildings on the island's south side as the Ellis Island Institute and Conference Center.

***Speaking of Immigration:*** Competing values and assumptions about immigrants are framing today's immigration debate in the United States, often based on emotional rhetoric and misinformation, serving to undermine reform efforts and reinforce stereotypes. Ellis Island's dialogue program *Speaking of Immigration* explores how federal officials implemented immigration policy a century ago and invites participants to consider how values and assumptions shape U.S. immigration policy today. Visitors take part in special interactive tours of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum to learn about the immigration process during the island's heyday. The tour's historical narrative provides a starting point for facilitated dialogue to thoughtfully consider participants' own views about immigrants in their communities and about today's immigration policy issues. Visitors are encouraged to formulate their own ideas on how they can help their friends, colleagues, or community have a more informed and thoughtful discussion about U.S. immigration policy and the values that shape it.

- **Wing Luke Asian Museum (Seattle, WA):** The Wing Luke Asian Museum is the only pan-Asian Pacific American museum in the country, and the first Smithsonian Institution affiliate in the Pacific Northwest. It has redefined the role of museums by pioneering a model of community-based service that embraces the stories of immigration populations that have enriched and strengthened the American experience. The Museum's New Dialogue Initiative is an ongoing multi-strategy program that addresses concerns and urgent needs about contemporary social issues and news events affecting the Asian Pacific American community.

***Deporting Cambodians: How Immigration Policy Shapes Our Communities:*** The recent deportations of Cambodian refugees are just one point in a long line of immigration policies that have shaped the lives of immigrants to the U.S. Decades after fleeing the brutal Khmer Rouge regime, many Cambodians that settled in the U.S. never became naturalized citizens believing that they were "permanent" residents and unaware of the implications for them and their children. Now due to changes in immigration policy after 9/11, Cambodian nationals convicted of crimes in the U.S. are being deported and forced to return to Cambodia, a country that many hardly remember. Home to one of the largest Cambodian populations in the U.S., the impact of these policies on families and the community in Seattle, forms the basis for Wing Luke Asian Museum's poignant exhibit *Deporting Cambodians: How Immigration Policy Shapes Our Communities*. The exhibit explores how immigration and refugee policies have affected communities by impacting where people live and work, causing long-lasting effects on families, and influencing sense of identity. School groups and visitors to the Museum engage with contemporary immigration challenges through questions posed throughout the exhibition and by learning about direct actions that they can participate in to bring about social change for refugee communities.