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overhaul of the Northwest Coast Hall. But, at the current rate of progress, it will take

perspectives of the Museum today. “Accordingly, the AMNH has finally begun its

curators and officials seem to have run their course. Those we meet with are

usually always in agreement with us about the need for a decolonization process

(will full attention to demands for reparations and repatriation of human remains

and sacred objects) but we feel the oppressive weight of institutional inertia in the

room, and the responses are tepid and painfully slow in coming. In a recent correspondence

with us, the AMNH acknowledged the problem: “We recognize that the Museum’s 150-year history and that of its collections are embedded within the larger history…of western colonization.” We also recognize that some aspects of the Museum’s cultural halls are out of date and include presentations and treatments that do not accurately represent either the cultures presented or the values and perspectives of the Museum today.” Accordingly, the AMNH has finally begun its overhaul of the Northwest Coast Hall. But, at the current rate of progress, it will take another fifty years to re-do all of the cultural halls. In the meantime, the cultural violence will continue, and generations of young people will be exposed to the harms generated by degrading representations as they pass through the museum.

As part of our children’s education, they have a right to know the full story

behind the collecting and the exhibiting of the museum’s contents. They should

be told how and why the AMNH was the center of the eugenics movement in

the early part of the twentieth century. They should learn about the real Teddy Roosevelt, strenuously driven, as he was, by the ideals of male chauvinism and white supremacy, and how those socially destructive values were, and still are, embedded in the museum’s classification and framing of materials. They should be informed about the ongoing contribution of these misbeliefs to present-day

racism, sexism, and homophobia. They should be prompted to ask why the museum only exhibits the culture of non-Euro/settler peoples i.e. the colonized

populations of the world. And, ultimately, they should be encouraged to consider

why such cultural halls belong in a museum of natural history at all.

The AMNH likes to describe itself as an educational institution, but there is nothing in the museum that would inspire schoolchildren to ask such questions, even though hundreds of thousands are required to visit annually as part of the New York public school curriculum. As for higher education in the AMNH’s would-be peer institutions, the museum tends to feature only in college curricula as a case-study in colonial nostalgia. In our universities, course syllabi are constantly being amended to reflect new schools of thought and breakthroughs in historical knowledge. By contrast, most

of the museum’s dioramas and exhibits have not been altered in many decades, and

many are untouched since they were installed a hundred years ago.

Nor has the museum lent its influential voice to the two other cases we

have brought to its doors.

1. It has been silent on the issue of removing Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples Day, and it has yet to move forward on the acknowledgement that its

building sits on occupied Lenape land—a decision wholly under its own control. We have condemned this position of non-advocacy and this reluctance to adopt

a Acknowledgement as aggressive actions against Indigenous peoples. We have demanded that the museum take immediate steps to remedy the harms.

2. In the course of the debate generated by the Mayor’s commission to review “symbols of hate” in New York City, the AMNH made no public comment on the fate of the equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt which

prevents visitors to the museum on Central Park West. The commission was split over the decision to remove the monument—a fall half of its members voted for its relocation. Given how integral the statuary and hagiography of Roosevelt is to the AMNH, the museum should have taken on its share of responsibility for addressing the Monument’s future rather than punting the decision wholly to the City. Its officials have privately described to us their shame at having to pass by the monument every day, and the time is now long overdue for them to address their “Roosevelt problem.” We have demanded that the AMNH leadership publicly state its resolve to rethink this deeply flawed adoration of Roosevelt, which

confronts visitors at the entrance and which is further imposed on them inside the museum itself, in the lavish homage on display in the Theodore Roosevelt Rotunda and the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall.

The museum is not a private institution, it relies heavily on public funding

(upwards of $17 million annually), and so we all have a right to insist

on accountability. As people gather on October 8th, we will ask them

to help reclaim the space of the halls through self-organized tours and

to imagine a different kind of institution. The assembly to follow will

feature reports and testimony from these tours. We will acknowledge the
decolonial proposals presented over the last two years, and consider the
museum’s responses, as outlined above. With these in mind, the assembly
will formulate new demands, for adoption by those present. Participants
will pledge to pursue these demands with the AMNH’s senior officials and
board members, and with elected city officials who are as official trustees.

Decolonize This Place

NYC Stands with Standing Rock

Signatories: American Indian Community House, Black Youth Project 100, South Asia Solidarity Initiative, Chinatown Art Brigade, Take Back the Bronx, The People’s Cultural Plan, Working Artists and the Greater Economy
We begin today by acknowledging that we are standing on the homeland of the Lenape, which is, and always has been, a place of Indigenous movement. Our action today, at its most fundamental level, stands in solidarity with the Lenape and all Indigenous peoples, here and beyond, whose land was stolen to create settler states, and who continue to live under siege, surveillance, and colonial structural violence on their own occupied land. We stand with all those advancing Indigenous resurgence and decolonization in the face of colonial oppression. We stand in support of the return of their lands. This acknowledgement is a call to commit, and to take on the responsibility, to dismantle the ongoing effects of settler colonialism. This is where, together, we must begin and persist.

**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**THEODORE ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL HALL**

Theodore Roosevelt viewed land, territories, animals and people as objects to be tamed, controlled and, at times, destroyed. As a “frontiersman” he proclaimed “I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indian is the dead Indian, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn’t like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth.” His devotion to conservation is celebrated in this hall, but his ethnically cleansed wilderness parks were conceived as places of refuge and recreation for elite White Anglo Saxon Protestants. His conception of what constitutes the natural world was profoundly imperialist, with the land informed by human embodiment, we will also call attention to the record of Missing Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). Noting how violence inflicted by fracking and other extractive processes.

**DIORAMA OF CHIEF ORATAM & PETER STUYVESANT**

As a result of two years of pressure from Decolonize This Place and its allies, museum officials have begun to recontextualize select dioramas in the AMNH cultural halls. In the plagues around this diorama you will read a critique of colonial representation as it applies to the depiction of Lenape people in this purported meeting between the Chief Oratam and Dutch Governor Peter Stuyvesant in 1660. These are baby steps, but consider how easy they are to undertake—no more than the work of mutual relief and collective rebuilding in the wake of Hurricane Maria, and after the colonial government left them to fend for themselves. The resistance continues. Viva Puerto Rico Libre!

**THEME AND VISION**

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**PROGRAM**

3:30  Welcome and Orientation / Meet in Theodore Roosevelt Hall

4:00  Self-Guided Walks / Follow the Pink on the Maps

5:00  Decolonial Gathering / Meet by The Grand Canoe

**FIRST FLOOR**

**Hall of Biodiversity**

People’s Cultural Plan

The People’s Cultural Plan will dissect the rol-call of major AMNH funders (and 1910 Trustees) and show how connected these donors are, historically and in the present day, to slavery, imperialism, genocide, theft, worker exploitation, and fraud.

**VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!**

Roosevelt ascended politically as a General in the Spanish-American war. He was crucial in establishing the United States as a colonial overlord of Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii and Guam. We acknowledge the people of Puerto Rico, a colonial territory of the United States annexed by Roosevelt. And, let us honor their work of mutual relief and collective rebuilding in the wake of Hurricane Maria, and after the colonial government left them to fend for themselves. The resistance continues. Viva Puerto Rico Libre!

**PLAQUE FOR HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN**

Osborn, the most formative of the museum’s presidents, was central to the community of eugenicists who met regularly within these walls to plot how to “save” the national gene pool from dilution by lesser breeds of men and women. A close associate of Roosevelt, Osborn’s belief in the racial superiority of Nordic peoples helped to close the immigration “door” in 1924, and it has shaped the arrangement walls and display of the museum’s collections down to this day.

**READ THE STATUE • RENAME THE DAY • RESPECT THE ANCESTORS**

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**DISTRIBUTION OF ‘GUIDE TO INDIGENOUS LAND AND TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS’**

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**THEMATIC EXHIBITIONS**

**Hall of Biodiversity**

**People’s Cultural Plan**

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SECOND FLOOR

**Hall of African Peoples & Akeley Hall of African Mammals**

**Black Youth Project 100**

BYP100 NYC will engage in a holistic turn up on the Hall of African Peoples and Hall of African Mammals. We will highlight the continuity between the halls’ racialized and ahistorical displays and the oppression faced by Black peoples today. Calling attention to the violence perpetrated against Ota Benga by the AMNH we will create a space for healing and truth telling.

**Hall of Asian Peoples**

Chinatown Art Brigade & South Asia Solidarity Initiative

In an intervention that will transform the Hall of Asian Peoples, Chinatown Art Brigade and South Asia Solidarity Initiative will highlight the history of colonial occupation and violence in our homelands.

**All Your Genocides Are Connected**

All Your Genocides Are Connected will haunt the museum and its archive of stolen human remains with ghosts, skulls and other creatures. They will lead you on the Genocide Trail from the Jews of Asia exhibit in the Hall of Asian Peoples around the Hall of Africa and the Americas.

THIRD FLOOR

**Hall of Mexico and Central America**

The Semillas Collective

The Semillas Collective will host a collective action of healing through movement and sound. They will honor ancestors by invoking bone and blood memory through motion, and decolonize body and language through song and trauma release.

**Hall of South America**

Condor Canta Ceremony by NYC Andinx Community

Sudacx and Shuar Community of NYC will be holding a ceremony dedicated to Andinx Womxn who led and continue to lead the struggle to protect and decolonize the land and the people. We call upon others to join us in remembering the spirit of our Ancestors on Indigenous People’s Day through cleanse, song, a people’s history, sharing of our current struggles, and ritual.

**Hall of Eastern Woodlands Indians**

Nishnaabekwewag Negamonid

Members of the Anishinaabe women’s hand drumming group, Nishnaabekwewag Negamonid, will be joined by native and non-native women-identified accomplices in the Hall of Eastern Woodland Indians. Together they will use movement, language, and sound to disrupt the colonial space of the museum and speak to prior, persisting Indigenous presences.
Justice for Ota Benga

Our ancestors are watching

They tried to bury us
They didn’t know we were seeds

Gentrification
Cutting down communities like sequoia trees

Reparations and repatriation

Oz stores jazz stores jazz stores bodies