Decolonized/ing Natural History and Ethnographic Museums: An Oxymoron

by Frances L. Barranco

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Thesis directed by

Sarah Wagner
Professor of Anthropology

Jeffrey Blomster
Professor of Anthropology and International Affairs

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Abstract

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The thesis chronologizes and interrogates Western colonial epistemologies of anthropological and archaeological museum praxis and legacies in colonial, encyclopedic museums, and how the museums have shaped discourse and law, regarding race, sex and gender. It analyzes how natural history-ethnographic museums act as bridges between academia and the public due to their placement as institutions of knowledge production where politics, ethics and social perspectives are formulated, reified and reinforced. The paper argues that while natural history and ethnographic museums cannot be fully decolonized due to their inherent relationship to colonial histories, they are working towards confronting and revaluing these legacies under the frameworks of hope and historicity. It examines how decolonizing methodology shaped and continues to influence natural-ethnographic museum. Decolonization is oftentimes a fraught and incomplete process despite its intentions to increase diversity and confront its colonial legacies. The thesis also considers the impact of other current social movements, such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, on the decolonizing movement. The dialogic structure of the thesis offers a unique Smithsonian Institution focused perspective, based on a series of interviews with three Smithsonian Museum staffers. The interviews are supported by case studies of other natural-history and ethnographic museums and works from museum and science and technology scholars and museum reports.

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Part I Introduction

Section 1.01 Class

I was sitting in my anthropology class, "Decolonizing Museums," along with other young museum studies and anthropology students. Even though there were 20 students in this vast lecture hall on a cold autumn evening, there was an undercurrent of anticipation, each of us eager to express our thoughts on decoloniality and museums. Our professor posed the question: "what is decolonization?" to which my well-read peers' hands shot up. They mentioned themes of justice, addressing intergenerational trauma and healing, agency, stolen land, Euro-American colonialism, equity, diversity, academic and social hierarchies, prejudice and capitalism. All academic and eloquent reflections.

Satisfied with our responses, our professor posed her second question, "How have you encountered decolonization *outside* academia?" The undercurrent of vivacity quieted into a hush. I cautiously raised my hand and resolved the silence. "Well, I suppose, with Thanksgiving, there's talk on social media about decolonizing the holiday. Friends post about its colonial legacy, and how to change it. Making it more transparent about how Thanksgiving mythologizes English and Indigenous interactions. But, my friends are college-educated and around my age, so I'm unsure how the general public understands decolonization." Other students mentioned how they encountered decolonization through public movements for equity, and described seeing posters and stickers around the Washington, D.C. area. The class came to an agreement that the public is familiar with the term, but decolonization is without a standardized definition.

In this paper, I examine the intersection of memory, race, sex, gender, materiality and decolonization in encyclopedic/natural history-ethnographic museums because they are direct products of Euro-American colonialism.[1] Some well-known examples include the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. and the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. This paper is by no means a complete examination of these themes, but rather, presents the recognition that decolonization is becoming more widely known and embraced by the public. To guide my examination, I engage the framework of historicity and the hope affect.

The analytic cadres of historicity and hope consider the natural history-ethnographic museum's ever-negotiated temporalities of methodologies. "The mode of historicity" allows for the institution to "'…operate under the constraints of social ideologies [while making] sense of the past [and] anticipating the future'" (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 380). In other words, the museum contextualizes its historical, present and future developments against the larger societal forces which act upon it and vice versa. Historicity allows for institutional "selected memory" of colonial history, but it also grants leeway for the futurity of hope (Abraham (2021, 3). Similarly, "[h]ope as a phenomenon is characterized by simultaneous potentiality (in its broadest sense) and uncertainty of the future" (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 379). It underscores how decolonizing the natural-history-ethnographic museum is an optimistic and future-oriented endeavor in

[1] In the context of this paper, I will use "encyclopedic" and "natural history-ethnographic" interchangeably to describe these museums because they both stem from Western colonial histories and have similar praxis. They also share similar decolonizing goals. My choice is based off the Pitt River Museum's definition of encyclopedic museum. "Radical Hope," Pitt Rivers Museum (Pitt Rivers Museum, 2022), https://prm.web.ox.ac.uk/radical-hope.

an ever-changing environment. Through these frameworks, the process of decolonization can occur.

I define decolonization as the institutional course of action that confronts and reevaluates behaviors and practices associated with Euro-American colonialism, such as reifying and reinforcing social inequities through the use of science.[2] Flowing from this definition, encyclopedic museums aspire to achieve decolonizing praxis, which encourages multiplicity of narratives and epistemologies, and produce structural change. This change both fosters diversity in collections *and* museum administration. Analysis of these changes also allows further examination of natura history-ethnographic museum's position between academia and the public as places of knowledge production. They formulate, reify and reinforce ethics, politics and social perspectives of race, class and gender. I also explore the procedures and methodology encyclopedic museums implement as they come to terms with their colonial heritage and attempt to decolonize.

My critiques of the encyclopedic, natural-ethnographic museum derive from life-long appreciation and admiration. As a child, I spent many family-outings and school field trips visiting these types of museums, and I was always in awe of the collections. When I interviewed Smithsonian Institution staffers, as part of my research, they shared similar recollections. Our observations came from childhood wonder, curiosity and naïvety. Although naïve, we recognized museums' capacity to be centers of learning, community, cultural exchanges and celebration of all people—what encyclopedic museums hope to achieve. The encyclopedic museums accomplish some of these goals,

[2] I base my definition from Indigenous New Museum Theory. Patricia D. Baudino, "A Place of Memory and Possibility: Creating Sites of Power and Meaning with Indigenous Collections," *Museums &Amp; Social Issues* 8, no. 1-2 (2013): pp. 59-73, https://doi.org/10.1179/1559689313z.0000000007, 62.

but they are marred by colonialism. Even though natural history and ethnographic museums are complicit with Euro-American colonialism, many have already demonstrated their commitment to materializing and strengthening their decolonizing aspirations as the field enters a decolonizing renaissance.

Decolonization is a step towards self-realization, reflexivity and celebration of people and their cultures, yet it is an inescapable oxymoron. The natural history and ethnographic museum will never be truly decolonized due to its inherent entanglement with colonialism. Instead, the museum will forever be subject to realm of "decolonizing" because it is an ever-negotiated, imperfect process. The imperfection does not equate to insufficiency or inaccuracy. Decolonizing methodologies more accurately represent how perceptions of heritage, race, sex and gender are socially relevant and museum-specific.

Section 1.02 Methods

As the interpretation and manifestation of decolonization are unique to each institution, my research offers a unique Smithsonian Institution focused perspective, derived from series of interviews with three Smithsonian staffers. The interviews ascribe to a dialogic structure, centering the voices of the museum staffers. Their experiences provide insight to different phases of museum methodology, and how social movements have impacted their specific museum and encyclopedic museums in general. The *Decolonizing: Indigeneity, Education and Society* article "Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settler, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations" inspired my unorthodox thesis structure because the authors' dialogic format emphasizes scholars'

encounters with decolonization.[3] In comparison to the article, my interviews are also supported by work from museum and science and technology scholars, museum reports, and case studies of museums' colonial and decolonizing processes.

My first interviewee was Dr. Joshua Bell (JB), who is the Curator of Globalization at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and an adjunct anthropology professor at the George Washington University (GWU). My second interviewee was Dr. Gwyneira Isaac (GI), the Curator of North American Indigenous Culture at NMNH and an associated professor of anthropology at GWU. My last interviewee is a Smithsonian staffer (SS), who asked to remain anonymous. I interviewed Dr. Bell and Dr. Isaac through Zoom on separate occasions and recorded each session, so I could develop a transcript of their interview. The Smithsonian Staffer and I had an email-interview.

In preparation for this paper, I devised a set of interview questions to guide the conservations with my interlocuters. The first question asked about early and poignant memories at museums because they are spaces where, particularly, children first encounter and learn about the world. This question would also attempt to understand if childhood experiences inspired their futures in museums and illustrate museums as community-oriented education. The other questions asked about their reflections on decolonizing at museums, and how their position at the Smithsonian Institution influences participation in this pivotal movement in academic and social discourse.

[3] Corey Snelgrove, Rita Kaur Dhamoon, and Jeff Corntassel, "Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settler, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 3, no. 2 (2014): pp. 1-32.

As I drew to the end of my interview with Dr. Bell, I asked the final interview question: "For whom does the museum decolonize?"

JB: I would argue that it really can't be decolonized.

I was stumped. He was not wrong, so I paused for a moment to gather my thoughts. If decolonizing is impossible, then why are museums attempting to do the impossible? Museums must find purpose in this apparently Sisyphean task, or else they would not engage in it. There must be benefits because decolonization requires extensive reevaluation and restructuring of all most every aspect of museum pedagogy from collections to visitor relations to administrative organization. Decolonization is an academic, internal and public-centered investment. Academically, the conversation to decolonize is not new because, as I describe more in-depth later on in this paper, there are decades' worth of academic decolonization discourse. Museum staff and scholars, alike, have understood the necessity to reevaluate traditional natural-ethnographic museum praxis. Yet despite their awareness, there is hesitancy to decolonize.

I return to my opening vignette because on the public level, decolonization remains an unfamiliar term for most. For people who are more academically inclined and attuned to current social justice movements, they may understand the complexities of decolonization, but they do not represent the majority. The majority is either unaware of the term or misconceive decolonization as defamation of historical figures and historical erasure. Decolonizing methodology is not explicitly endorsed by any political party. Although in this highly politicized world, decolonizing has been taken up to counter to

Right-wing, conservative actions to sanitize histories and silence marginalized voices.[4] Due natural history-ethnographic museums' position as a bridge between academic and the public, they are tasked with devising decolonizing methodology for themselves while educating the public on the term. The museums must de-center their colonial heritage and adopt new inclusive praxis, so they and society can reach a more inclusive, decolonizing era.

[4] Ronald Brownstein, "Analysis: Book Bans Move to Center Stage in the Red-State Education Wars," CNN (Cable News Network, April 5, 2022), https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/05/politics/republican-states-book-ban-race-lgbtq/index.html.

Part II Memories and Introducing the Museum as a Neocolonial Structure

Section 2.01 Museums as the Intersection of Academia and Public Knowledge Production

Before examination of natural-ethnographic museum's coloniality, it must be stressed that critiques stem from the hope for reformation because decolonization pushes museums to "recognize their potentiality in an uncertain future" (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 379). The futurity of hope emerges from an environment of "disillusion and malaise" and fights against "fatalistic convictions" and "pessimistic diagnoses of the present" and works towards an "emancipatory intervention" (Ibid., 378). "Disillusion and malaise" and "fatalistic convictions" can be observed in the embodiment of neocolonial structures preventing "emancipatory interventions," in this case, decolonizing methodology, that would breathe new life into a seemingly tired and increasingly outdated system of knowledge production. Borrowing from economic rhetoric of pressure, the natural-ethnographic museum is under pressure from internal, staff, and external, the public, to transform. [5] It sits at the precipice of a new era. Without implementing "emancipatory interventions" of decolonizing methodology, the museum risks sliding into familiar colonial patterns for an aging audience, falling prey to "pessimistic diagnoses of the present:" self-made obsolesce (Ibid.). Similar to museums' need to reflect on their past as part of their self-realization and determination processes, I wanted to understand how my

[5] Arjun Appadurai. 2004, 'The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition.' Edited by Rao Vijayendra and Michael Walton. *Culture and Public Action*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, California. 59-84.

interviewees' interactions with museums influenced their attitudes towards their vocation and decolonizing efforts.

My opening interview question for my research participants was about their earliest memory in museums. The museum staffers' memories reveal an enduring dedication to museums. For all their flaws, they are also places of wonder, education, cultural exchange, celebration of natural phenomena and often times, places where children first interact with the world outside of their immediate surroundings. Encyclopedic museums can also be places of contemplation and reflection. The staff's recollections reinforce how museums have the authority and power to shape people's perspectives as places of knowledge production. The memories allude to a lifelong commitment and passion to public education and reveal what museums can and should be for all visitors rather than a few.

> FB: What is one of the earliest memories you've had being in a museum, or something important that has really guided you and your work?
>
> JB: I grew up in Philadelphia, and…Two big museums that stood out to me, as a kid, were certainly was the Philadelphia Art Museum, and then the University of Penn's Museum of anthropology and archaeology…I have memories of those museums, [and] memories of going to New York and going to the Met…For me, there's this one room, or several rooms there were within the, in the museum [the Penn Museum]. There are these kinds of…diorama rooms, but they're full sized. And one of them is I believe, it's a Tibetan temple [room]… And it's been transported and reassembled in a museum…There's also a courtyard that is full of materials that I believe Moorish art from southern Spain, el Alhambra-esque, and there's a fountain. And then off of that is a room that is kind of a Japanese village, in their small houses…And in all those cases, those rooms to me as a kid stood out because of the way particularly the first the Tibetan temple and the Japanese [village] as kind of *spaces of wonder* and…*total transportation, as in transporting you into another place in time. And so really kind of awe inspiring*. And so, I think those as memory standout and the kind of possibilities (2022). [6]

[6] Author's italicization.

> SS: I grew up going on field trips and visiting various museums, but I really didn't become as interested in museums until I was about 12 years old or so…I found the museums and historical sites in my area satisfied my desire to learn more. Over time, my interest developed into a deeper academic interest in history and archaeology, and I began thinking more about careers where *I could continue to interact with the past*. Museums provided a lot of different hands-on ways to do that (2022). [7]

> GI: …I think probably I have two very different kinds of memories…It's fair play to share this with you that my parents worked in museums, but they were not museum curators. They were archaeologists, but some of my earliest memories are being behind the scenes with the sort of trays and boxes and various, mostly stone tools… and people sitting and labeling and drying…[F]or me, and always from the beginning, I think I see museums as these *research spaces*. Because I think I saw more of that, then maybe front of house [staff who interact regularly with visitors]. But certainly, growing up, we traveled, and I think in most places would have visited museums. And so, I almost feel as though *I know the world through museums*, those are the places that *I learn about that particular city, or culture or history* (2022). [8]

The responses from my participants illustrate how their interactions with the museum space have matured from childhood into teenage years. Dr. Bell's detailed recollections demonstrated how the diorama rooms have become engrained in his memory as "spaces of wonder" because they had the power of "transporting you into another place in time" (2022). Similarly, the Smithsonian staffer wrote how she could "…interact with the past" in the museum context (2022). Dr. Bell and the Smithsonian staffer expressed their awe with the ability to interact physically with different temporal and cultural contexts of their own – a feeling I, myself, experienced during my preschool trip to the American Museum of Natural History's Hall of Mammals. The museum exhibit forces the visitor to realize that the world is bigger than oneself. The audience is "transported" through the exhibit's ability to decontextualize the audience from the

[7] Author's italicization.
[8] Author's italicization.

museum space and recontextualizes into the subject of the exhibit, even for an instance (Bell 2022.). In a similar vein, Dr. Isaac's memory also revealed how the physical setting of a museum influences a visitors' interpretation of the museum subject. She explained how by visiting different museums, she "[knew] the world through museums" when she travelled because they teach her about "[a] particular city, or culture or history" (2022). Again, her comment illustrates how museums share their unique perspective of the world rather than presenting one monolithic objective, encyclopedic narrative. Each museum has its own "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988, 581). All the interviewees directly or indirectly referenced the relationship between urban spaces and museums when they expressed or suggested that trips to museums were a normal and somewhat routine activity. The frequency of museum trips illustrate that they had access to museums and leisure time. Themes of physical and temporal accessibility and urban space are directly connected to decolonizing efforts. Since physical and intangible barriers can prevent traditionally marginalized communities from museum frequency.

As a frequent museum visitor herself, Dr. Isaac shared a "second memory," explaining her maturing relationship with museums in adolescence.

> GI: …The second memory is when I'm a little bit older, and I'm a teenager, and I would sometimes travel by myself to new places…This could be either in America, or in Europe, or Australia…I would often be on cheap forms of public transport around places. And I often would be in a city for… a day or half a day between overnight buses, or overnight trains, or whatever…I would always go to a museum, and *just be able to feel*. And this is what I think, to me, is interesting about it, oddly, because I know when we talk about decolonizing, it doesn't always pan out this way. But I would feel as though they were a space that *I was safe in that I could actually just relax*…They're *very public, but they're very reflective spaces*…I could just kind of park myself somewhere and…enjoy whatever was on offer in the museum (2022).

Dr. Isaac's recollection further supports how transportation in the urbanscape plays a critical role in accessibility. Museums in addition to their educational purposes are seen as recreational activity because people visit them as tourist attractions, as Dr. Bell and the Smithsonian staffer also alluded to in their memories. Museums have an entertainment value in addition to their academic value. They are active, bustling spaces filled with visitors. Yet, Dr. Isaac's second memory also reveals how museums can support personal experience in people's lives.

Dr. Isaac remembered the museums as reflective and safe public spaces, especially for a young person on her own in new surroundings. Science and technology scholar Haraway illustrates how visitors can have "intensely personal" experiences in large venues like the American Museum of Natural History in New York City (1984/5, 21). Haraway's description can be applied to Dr. Isaac because she also described almost religiously contemplative experiences as she ruminated in museum surroundings. She also referenced our previous conversations about museums as places of pain and trauma when she says "…when we talk about decolonizing, it doesn't always pan out this way," alluding to issues of discrimination and exploitation (2022). Dr. Isaac caveated that she felt safe in museums while traveling because "[she] might have imagined them also as 'loco parentis' in places where I was otherwise an outsider" due to her parents' professions (2022). I shared a similar experience at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met) as a teenager because many times after school, I would visit the Met with my friends. Some of the conversation would pertain to the art, but mostly, we reflected on school and what was happening in our lives while we drifted through the galleries.

In conclusion to her adolescent recollections, Dr. Isaac closes with:

> GI: I have a lot of respect for and affinity for museums, because as long as they really are welcoming to the public, they offer something that really is quite rare and that you don't find often in cities…not all educational environments are open to the public (Isaac, 2022).

She highlighted how she supports museums' commitment to education in the public sphere and suggests that they should strive to be "really welcoming," to all members of the public. This view imagines that museums want to engage with and teach visitors who have different levels of education and familiarity with a subject (2022) This experience is in contrast with archives, where an individual must have a basis of knowledge about the subject they wish to study, or a university where an individual must have qualifications to study. There is a theoretical egalitarian aspect to museum access. Even though "open to the public" does not necessarily mean free, museums are *and* can be social places where people can interact and learn (Isaac 2022). Museums are a social space for learning, community engagement and personal retrospection with in a public and regulated space.

The public nature of museums allows a person to walk both visibly and invisibly. This duality allows some people to relax because they believe in the knowledge that have enough privacy to engage in their own activities, but if a problem were to arise, someone is bound to notice and take action because museums are "very public" (Isaac 2022). The presence of security guards contributes to the feeling of safety because they maintain the museum as a highly regulated and well traversed space. To some visitors their gaze is reassuring and cordial, ensuring that the gallery's academic atmosphere is respected and conversations are kept to a deferential whisper. But, to others, the security guard's gaze is calculating and unfriendly, viewing visitors as potential "trouble" and intruders to the

museum space. An incident at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts examples the difference in treatment and perception. A security guard was understood to have made a racist remark while instructing a school group, and students and teachers also reported an uncomfortable number of guards following them through the gallery.[9] Natural history-ethnographic museums present themselves as utopias of culture and education, but at times, reality reveals that different visitors have different experiences of this ideal. Some visitors perceive museums simply as neocolonial institutions for the 21st century. The varied visitor experiences indicate that museums are not as "neutral" as they like to portray themselves. This unfortunate incident with the Bostonian school group indexes neocolonial attitudes of natural history-ethnographic museums.

Section 2.02 The Museum as a Colonial Institution in a Neocolonial World

The notion that natural historic and ethnographic museums are neutral and static entities in a postcolonial world is an illusion (Anderson 2020, 488; Tolia-Kelly 2018, 897). Post-coloniality suggests the museum's colonial legacies ended with the end of the era of "Empire" and the introduction of commonwealths and territories for indicators of nation states' relationships with one another. While the "age of Empire" has passed, its legacies remain in neocolonial structures. During the interview, when asked "how does decoloniality interact with your work?," Dr. Isaac elaborated that "postcolonialism" refers to the study of issues of violence and colonialism in the past (2022). Postcolonialism, however, cannot fully recognize current modes that fall under

[9] Claire Selvin, "MFA Boston Details Investigation into Racist Incident, Announces Response," ARTnews.com (ARTnews.com, November 18, 2019), https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/mfa-boston-racist-incident-investigation-12646/. Although the museum is called fine arts, the Boston MFA has a large collection of artifacts and objects which could be considered ethnographic material.

neocolonialism. Therefore, it has as a theoretical framework analyzed the history and problems, but has not been as forthright as decolonial frameworks in demanding for the system to change. Neocolonialism emphasizes that powers of colonialism have reinvented and masked themselves rather than disappeared as suggested with the use of "postcolonialism." Decolonizing methodology operates with the framework of neocolonialism, subsequently, decolonialization can and does demand for "infrastructural change" (2022).

Natural history-ethnographic museums entangle themselves in webs of global systems, consciousnesses and narrations of histories, produced from a fraught history of asymmetrical power relations (Haraway 1988, 588). They are spaces where upper classes of Euro-American explored the "Other" in a hierarchized set of power relations (Tolia-Kelly 2018, 897; Haraway 1984/5, 50; Baker 2007, 57-8). This illusion of neutrality is a result of the unmarked viewer (traditionally, the heterosexual white male) observing the marked, "Other" (including queer and/or non-binary, non-white individuals) which in turns reifies the legitimacy of the categorization of the "Other" while justifying a narrow definition of Euro-American modernity and culture (Tolia-Kelly 2018, 898). The natural-ethnographic history museum would commonly display non-white, non-Western bodies and cultures, such as Black and North American Indigenous bodies and cultures, in contrast to the white, Western heterosexual body and culture.

The encyclopedic museum serves as the "'social construction of knowledge'" because it acts as a conduit to obfuscate the "social relations" of science, history and knowledge production (Haraway 1984/5, 53). Such presented social relations can include "the entire complex of interactions among people, as individuals and in groups of various

sizes [and] objects" (Ibid.). In other words, the colonial encyclopedic museum presents social perspectives as unchanging if not biological fact through the mechanisms of western science's detached, omnipresent narration (Haraway 1984/5, 21; Haraway 1988, 587). Western science positions itself as the universal and natural method of knowledge production through systematically erasing and marginalizing non-western epistemologies (Haraway 1988, 587). Academic activities of museum founders, including the Smithsonian, encouraged research for "public education and scientific collecting," conservation and eugenics from this belief of Western epistemological superiority (Haraway 1984/5, 53; Baker 2007, 26-7). This sociobiological hierarchy was founded on racialized stereotypes and claims of racial inferiority, which through the legitimization of Western science's lens of authoritative objectivity, materialized such stereotypes into fact (Baker 2007, 59).

This juxtaposition would validate the white Western heterosexual body and culture as the apex of scientific objectivity to which all others were measured.[10] These "inferior" groups displayed in these museums were never supposed to interpret the museum as a "neutral" space. Instead, it scientifically proved their inferiority. The placement of certain groups' human remains and culture alongside specimens of the biological world, again, reinforces associations that non-Western cultures and people are closer to Nature, consequently primitive (Haraway 1984/5, 39).

[10] Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007). and David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000).

The need to collect, preserve and display cultures also indexed the violence of salvage paradigm of Euro-American ethnography and anthropology, "collecting" to document "dying" Indigenous cultures (Brown 2003, 26; Thomas 2000, 46). The practice of collecting objects from colonies and other subjugated groups was an "inherent part of colonialism" because the removal of indigeneity and reclassification through Western classification systems context was essential to centering Western epistemology as objective and therefore superior (Giblin et al. 2019, 471). The display of objects obtained from a nation's colonies demonstrated the range and power of Empire (Ibid.). In museums, visitors observe the "social relations of domination" because Euro-American museums evidence and glorify the inherent violence and subjugation of colonized communities (Haraway 1984, 52; Tolia-Kelly 2018, 897). The physical placement of "important heritage sites such as large metropolitan museums and art galleries" that often receive local or national resources reinforce the connection between the intersection of the state narratives (Kølvraa and Knudsen 2021, 2). An example of the normalization of scientific racism and colonial legacies though is the display of statues of white nationalist figures, such as 26th President and conservationist Theodore Roosevelt at the American Museum of Natural History. (This statue has recently relocated from its prominent spot.) (Small 2022). Therefore, rather than encyclopedic museums serving as centers of community and celebrations of a collective nation's heritage, they are "theatre[s] of pain," normalized reminders of settler-colonial violence and oppression (Tolia-Kelly 2019, 897).

The natural-ethnographic museum was a gem of Empire because it demonstrated an "encyclopedic" or "universal" knowledge of the mother country's dominions.[11] Through this belief of entitlement to cultures' knowledge and heritage, the colonial museum presented its "collections" in encyclopedic museum displayed as the evidence of objectivity and dominance over its colonies ("Radical Hope" 2022). The natural-ethnographic museum became the embodiment of racialized knowledge as it was the White man's burden to collect, interpret and educate the masses of the so-called inferior races and their placement within the Euro-American society and imperialism (Baker 2007, 69; Haraway 1984, 52-3). Encyclopedic museums have and sometimes continue to celebrate and normalize both physical and symbolic violence by exhibiting the exercise of power of one group over another. Through proud displays of "artifacts" and "art" looted from Indigenous communities during European and American explorations, colonial wars, scientific and religious missions (Giblin et al. 2019, 474). Culturally sensitive objects, such as Benin Bronzes, looted human remains and sacred orations were displaced from their context and recontextualized in the colonial natural-ethnographic museum (Baker 2007, 59, 67; Chazan 2020; Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 293). The use of physical violence of the Euro-American act of collecting was validated and inextricably intertwined by the symbolic violence of colonial dominance. Symbolic violence is also demonstrated through symbolic annihilation of Indigenous knowledge where Euro-American knowledge production systems presented themselves as the ultimate source of authority (Tolia-Kelly 2019, 880, 902).

[11] "Radical Hope," Pitt Rivers Museum (Pitt Rivers Museum, 2022), https://prm.web.ox.ac.uk/radical-hope. The Pitt Rivers Museum acknowledges the colonial implications of its existence and collection, and it hopes to educate the public on the subjectivity of encyclopedic museums. It is a similar example to the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.

These encyclopedic collections have been interpreted as and in some legal instances are considered cultural property of the former colonial state; therefore, these objects adopt new layers of significance (Cuno 2009, 1). Some people may not realize the some of the more sinister history behind Western collecting because they view them as part of their nation's heritage, national-identity and self-esteem (Ibid., 3). These colonial collections of culture and art became "'nationalised'" in sociopolitical transformations and came to be regarded as cultural symbols of modern nation-states and even as the political symbols of legitimate sovereignty" (Wang 2018, 725). The language of "encyclopedic" and "universal" museums reinforces the Western epistemological and nationalized appropriation of non-western cultures and knowledge productions. Such examples of nationalized symbols of political sovereignty include Parthenon friezes at the British Museum and in the American context, indigenous bodies and iconography, such as the 1970s "Weeping Indian" anti-litter campaign (Wang 2018, 731; Smith and Timke 2020). Even with exhibitions that attempt to balance and correct the colonial narrative by presenting examples of the exploitation and abuse, many still believe in the power of the settler-colonial state. Furthermore, these people often believe they are still entitled to historical colonies' and/or subjugated people's cultures and histories because the former colonial state appropriated them.

In 2015 and 2017, the British Museum confronted British colonial history through special exhibitions. "Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisation" (April 23- August 2, 2015) examined Indigenous Australians' diversity, resilience and culture and the historical and current ramifications of British occupation and eventual colonization on

Indigenous Australians.[12] The 2017 special exhibit, "South Africa: Art of a Nation" (October 27-Feburary 26, 2017), presented the consequences of the colonial period, apartheid, the creation of the "rainbow nation" and current South Africa (Frost 2019, 493). While the exhibitions received positive feedback for dismantling the romanticization of the British Empire and decontextualizing it as part of the distant past, some visitors continued to positively view the British Empire and believed that the "'politically correct' agenda" does not belong in the museum (Ibid.). Frost's research demonstrates how these special exhibitions, regardless of people's understandings of Empire, forces visitors to reflect on colonialism and its present-day iterations (2019, 495).

Although the British Museum does not explicitly describe the special exhibitions as part of their decolonizing methodology, a visit to the museum website reveals that it is consciously addressing some of its fraught collections, colonial involvement and discussions of repatriation on its "Collecting histories" page.[13] The special exhibitions and the website information about the British Museum's complicity serve as examples of "emancipatory interventions" (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 378). These efforts should be recognized as how a national museum is implementing change and looking forwards its place in a decolonizing future. Through decolonizing praxis, the encyclopedic museum can support and reflect upon societal reevaluations of empire, imperialism and

[12] The following special exhibitions summary is from Stuart Frost, "'A Bastion of Colonialism,'" *Third Text* 33, no. 4-5 (March 2019): pp. 487-499, https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1653075.

[13] "Collecting Histories," The British Museum (The British Museum, 2022), https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/collecting-histories.

colonialism because it has already established its ability to shape constructions of national identities.

Decolonizing the collections and museum methodology also confronts the systemic rot of colonialism in museum administration. Physical and symbolic colonial violence also manifests itself through museums gatekeeping specific groups, notably historically marginalized communities, and making marginalized communities feel uneasy within the institutional surroundings. From a British Museum survey taken from October 2016-February 2017 "South Africa: the Art of a Nation" exhibition, of the 442 surveyed visitors, three percent identified as South African and eleven percent identified as Black, Asian or other ethnic minorities (British or from aboard) compared to the rest of the visitors who were presumably "white and British" (Giblin et al. 2019, 477). Eleven percent is a low number of "diversity" as London is one of the most ethnically diverse capitals in Europe. Although the British Museum survey did not provide a concrete response for low non-white visitor counts, the numbers could reflect wider trends of low attendance by non-white visitors. Similarly, the 2017 Report from the American Association of Museums (AAM) revealed comparable results.[14]

The 2017 AAM Report explains how "historically-grounded cultural barriers to participation that make museums feel intimidating and exclusionary to many people" and "the lack of specialized knowledge and 'cultural capital'" as some of the reasons for low attendance from non-white communities (2017, 13). A more specific explanation of "historically-grounded cultural barriers" could be that individuals of non-white

[14] Betty Farrell et al., "Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums" (American Associations of Museums, 2010), 5, 13.

communities are less inclined to visit museums because of "double-consciousness"—an internal struggle of a marginalized group living in an oppressed society (Tolia-Kelly et al. 2016, 901; Pittman 2016). The display of their cultural objects in museums through the lens of double-consciousness creates an inauthentic interpretation of their culture and evidences that the colonial gaze remains part of museum praxis (Tolia-Kelly et al. 2016, 905).

Decolonizing efforts hope to transform these "theatres of pain" and elitist spaces through recognition and redefining intentionality for museum visitors (Tolia-Kelly et al. 2016, 897). Semantically, museums and coloniality cannot be completely separated because the foundations of the encyclopedic museum derive from colonial epistemological systems. They will not disappear due to a practicality of semantics. Natural history- ethnographical museums are too ingrained in our society as resources of knowledge, despite their fraught histories. Herein lies the oxymoron of a decolonized/ing museum.

Section 2.03 What does Decolonization Mean for a Colonial Institution?

The natural-ethnographic museum is a remnant of the colonial era, although having made some adjustments to distance from its colonial past. Its success in the neocolonial present reinforces its efficacy as an institution of knowledge production despite on-going conversations for structural change. The concept of decolonization is not capriciousness; decolonization or some iteration of it has been part of academic parlance for at least 40 years.

In 1980, Bruce Trigger published a landmark paper, "Archaeology and the American Indian," [15] and serves as what could be interpreted as an early "emancipatory intervention" for decolonizing archaeological and museological methodologies (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 378). Although Trigger specially critiques archaeology's bias for treating "[American] Indian cultures as static entities which exist in a timeless historic present" and American archaeology's manipulation of Indigenous heritage to support racist ideology of race superiority, his critiques also apply to natural-ethnographic museum praxis due to their pedagogical overlap (1980, 665-6, 672). Trigger previews the necessity for collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and a "historical" rather than more traditional ahistorical framework. With these directives, archaeology along with interdisciplinary work from "social anthropology or ethnography and history," archaeology (and by extension natural-ethnographic museology) can better accomplish its mission of educating and serving the public (1980, 673). Although Trigger does not formally call for the decolonizing of archaeology, his proposals align with current decolonizing debates and methodology.

Some museums have started to implement some of the above-mentioned decolonizing changes, but the full extent of the transformation is yet to be realized. Decolonization can have different associations and embodiments at different institutions.

> GI: …The term decolonizing, has been around for a long time, but I felt I didn't feel the need to use it until the last two years, because I realized it was asking something different than a lot of the terminology that I had been using up until then…I'm much more comfortable with it. But there's interesting things like the National Museum of the American Indian has decided not to use it. Instead, they're going to use 'reconciliation.' So oftentimes, people choose not to use it [decolonizing], because it's a

[15] Bruce Trigger, "Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian." American Antiquity 45, no. 4 (1980): 662–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/280140: 671.

> *lightning rod term*. But I think that many of the people who use it use it correctly, and who use it knowing what it means, and therefore, you *don't want to disempower the term for the movement behind it*…I don't want heads to roll… I don't want there to be a continuation of violence and hurt and trauma because of using the term. But I also needed a level of honesty that sometimes *people can hide behind other terms* (2022). [16]
>
> SS: Institutionally, the definition of decolonizing and decolonizing movements has been less established. Many around my institution are attempting to tackle what decolonizing means by reaching out to communities and experts that may better understand the movement(s) and how it applies to our institution. Within my work, decolonizing can mean many different things (2022).

Dr. Isaac and the Smithsonian staffer reveal how despite "decolonialization's" longevity, people are unsure of its exact meaning, even within the same institution and a on project basis- discrepancies between definitions and applications can and do arise. Dr. Isaac alluded to some of the misconceptions of the term and reactivity to "decolonization" when she described it as a "lighting rod term" (2022). She suggested that decolonization has become *wrongly* equated to to making "heads roll." Rather, "decolonization" is a term that encourages diversity, reconciliation and a new "level of honesty" (Ibid.). Overuse of the term will "disempower the term for the movement behind it" (Ibid.). The Smithsonian staffer explained the complexity of the term. She described how different communities can have unique interpretations, expectations and applications of decolonization, which her institution must negotiate in addition to its own understanding of the term (Ibid.). The inclusion of communities and experts demonstrate how her museum is looking beyond itself for guidance and is including presumably marginalized voices to the decolonizing conversation. The new "level of honesty" urges institutions to make good on their promises to "decolonize" or "reconcile" or whatever

[16] Author's italicization

chosen phrase they adopt, they must carry through and make structural changes. Decolonizing is not a synonym for social justice. Dr. Isaac explained how "people can hide behind other terms, nor is decolonizing a term that an institution can use lightly because of the hope of positive change it inspires" (Ibid.). She illustrates hope as a power motivator for decolonizing processes. Hope necessitates that natural-ethnographic museums reflect on "questions of subjectivity and [its] capacities for 'self-making' methodologies, ethics and epistemologies" (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 379). If the encyclopedic museum does not actually adopt decolonizing praxis, then this inaction could be interpreted as a betrayal of hope and generate distrust in future promises. Decolonization and its implications must be used judiciously.

Although there are components of social justice in decolonization, it is necessary to examine this misconception in order to truly understand the complexities of this goal. Tuck and Yang illustrate how "decolonization" has incorrectly become an umbrella term or synonym for social justice.[17] "Decolonization as a metaphor allows people to equivocate these contradictory decolonial desires because it turns decolonization into an *empty signifier to be filled by any track towards liberation*" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 7).[18] Dr. Isaac referenced their argument when she cautioned:

> GI: …That was the sort of the Tuck and Yang argument…If you [a museum] start throwing these words [decolonization, decolonizing] around, and you don't actually restructure, and you don't change, how power is administrated really truly how its administered, then nothing's been rectified (2022).

[17] Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): pp. 1-40.
[18] Author's italicization.

Dr. Isaac's call for "honesty" in museum administration suggests that without restructuring how power is administrated, visitors and museum staff will lose their trust and grow distrustful of museum promises. She noted how some museums believe they are decolonizing by hiring people from "minoritized, or disempowered or colonized" backgrounds without restructuring the museum administration. Dr. Isaac described the problem "where you [museums] have these "trends" [such as decolonization], and then everyone feels like they ticked those boxes, and then move on, and then nothing's changed" (2022). Hiring diverse staff members is only part of decolonizing because if the system does not change, all staff would continue to operate within a neocolonial system. In this case, museums will reinforce their positions as neocolonial structures while implementing superficial and insufficient "changes" without rectifying historical inequities. This inaction will, again, confirm suspicions that the natural-ethnographic museums are elitist and predominantly white institutions that only implement cosmetic changes when they perceive that their friendly, public image as a "learning institution for all" is threatened.

The absence of communication between public and museum also highlights how some museums' desire for change may be interpreted as a façade because it suggests that the encyclopedic museum may not actually want to hear from its community and is more content to act on its own volition. Dr. Isaac elaborated by explaining how many museums' basic contact information is absent or difficult to find on their websites because "[museums] Don't let you get near anybody" (Isaac 2022). Similarly, this lack of communication problematizes the image of a welcoming and interested community orientated institution.

> GI: You [museums] can talk the talk, walk the talk. You can even rehire and have all these amazing people that are much more representative of the world than the colonial and [historically] privileged and then people [potential hires] can't get to find anyone…

Museums do not follow through on their promises to institutionally reform because while they may want to onboard new and diverse staff, they do not take the necessary steps to advertise this desire; therefore, their efforts to restructure are lost. The lost efforts initiate a negative bias that restructuring is a lost cause because no one is interested to apply for a museum position when in fact, potential applicants were unable to find the necessary application information. This lack of information could signify a half-hearted attempt to decolonize with the objective to ultimately fail. This negative feedback loop stresses the necessity of engaging with the community rather than inwardly retreating.

Ultimately, Dr. Isaac, Tuck and Yang, agree that decolonization and other "decolonial desires" are not interchangeable terms. Tuck and Yang extend their argument of decolonization to issues of land disenfranchisement, occupation, and land returns in the Indigenous American and Euro-American settler context (2012, 28).

In response to "Decolonization is not a metaphor" essay, I argue that the dichotomy of the Euro-American and Indigenous American setter-colonialism limits the breath of colonialization because other groups, such as Black enslaved people, were also affected by white settler-colonialism (Garba and Sorentino 2020, 2). The focus on land, consequently, limits decolonizing participants to "land owners," centering on Euro-American concepts of land ownership, use and property laws (Ibid., 8, 13). Issues of land occupation are only one way of experiencing colonization and decolonization. This disagreement is not to say that land is not important because the physical space,

especially large global cityscapes, is a crucial actor for museums and Fallist movements—namely the toppling of public monuments. It is beyond the scope of the paper to adequately examine the interconnections of land with Indigeneity, settler-colonialism, slavery and decolonization. The scope of decolonization is defined differently by scholars, but what is clear is that decolonization analyses are losing their persuasive power. It is time to practice what has been preached. Garba and Sorentino call attention to academia's decolonization research when they suggest that scholars reiterate concerns and pedagogies (2020, 14). Likewise, Tuck and Yang also demand for action and lasting change instead of reiterating previous works (2012, 19). In the collections context, the Smithsonian staffer explained how she and her team interpret decolonizing:

> SS: Currently, myself and colleagues have been attempting to think of how, even at a granular level, decolonizing theory and practice can be applied to our work. This has manifested in a project that is attempting to enhance our collections records to be more inclusive of the deeper context of the histories and provenance of the collections, namely by researching the creators, collectors, and contributors of the collections to my institution and recontextualizing them to include more information about those who may have been hidden, obscured, or forgotten over time (2022).

The Smithsonian staffer's response demonstrated how her branch of the Smithsonian is conscious of the need to decolonize, and understands that to do so, the museum must evaluate and reform its praxis by negotiating its relationships with the communities represented in its collections. Per the Smithsonian staffer, the method she described above suits her department's needs. It is also important to note that not every artifact is fraught, but each artifact has the potential ability to engage with people (Krmpotich et al. 2010, 373, 375). Therefore, a deep restructuring of methodology could emphasize an object's agency and its ability to index its creators and heritage, regardless of its connections to colonial trauma.

Dr. Isaac details how decolonizing in a museum is neither only a bottom-up nor top-down approach because decolonization calls for systemic change from her experience in administration and collections. In the administrative application of decolonizing, she explicated the different levels of decolonizing at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH).

> GI: In terms of our museum, [NMNH] our museum is interested at different levels in this idea of decolonizing…[I]t means the most to people who are in either curatorial positions, or in collections. There is a movement of people in collections who would like to see it go right across the board, from mineral sciences, to…invertebrate zoology to anthropology… There is actually a group called I think they refer to themselves as kind of a decolonizing collections group. They are, in fact, part and parcel of this discussion. And I think that's really important because they see things right across the board that curators can't because they're stuck in their disciplinary silos…They will be asking questions about power, structure and use of terminology and gender…and how collections are recorded and how they're used and who has access. So I think that's great…There are people at the collections management level, that are working on this. There are curators, like myself, that are working on this. And in terms of directors and executive, I think that our head of science is interested and has mentioned this as something she would like to explore (2022).

Dr. Isaac illustrated the interconnected decolonization processes underway at NMNH, (a topic that I elaborate further in this paper.). Across museum departments, staffers are interrogating the *status quo* and want to make lasting change (Isaac 2022). The self-proclaimed "decolonizing collections group" examples a grassroots movement to decolonize archives within academia and the museum field for a decolonized/ing future. Dr. Isaac's comments also demonstrated how museum staff at different levels are interacting with decolonizing as a paradigm for museum praxis, though limited to their "disciplinary silo." She also noted that the executive level staff of the Smithsonian are also engaging in conversation and attending programs about decolonization.

> GI: In terms of executive and the larger level, I think that they don't yet know whether they're going to engage with it [decolonization] as a call concept…[I]t's not clear to me how they view it. …They are very discreet in sharing their opinions, and I'm assuming that's because it's got a lot of *political weight*. If a director says, 'I'm ready to decolonize,' or director says, and 'I don't know how I feel about it'…If you're [the Smithsonian] going to be public about it, you can't be lukewarm. You're going to have to have a stance and then have something to back it up. And I feel like they [the executive levels of the Smithsonian] have not decided what the stance is yet…But they do attend conferences about it. They are getting informed… [A]s things play out, they will have a stance on it…[I]nternally, we do talk about it. And then it's just not always clear how people feel about it. But I know the groups that would like to see it happen (2022).[19]

Dr. Isaac reiterated how "decolonization" is a "lighting rod term," and its exact significance for the Smithsonian and the institutions of the Smithsonian and is under examination. The Smithsonian does not have as much flexibility for decolonization trial and error compared to a smaller, private museum, although one long term "decolonizing" program is Recovering Voices. (Recovering Voices and Dr. Bell and Dr. Isaac's involvement with be discussed further on in the paper.) She also alluded to the NMNH's position as a national museum because unlike a private institution, the NMNH cannot be seen to ascribe to a "political" stance because of its commitment to nonpartisanship.

> FB: Do you think some of the hesitancy is because of the Smithsonian's position as a national museum?
>
> GI: Yeah. I'm sure that they want to [decolonize]…[T]o give you an example. I think that there's people who, rather than having a blanket statement about decolonizing, they're going into quite specific methodologies for structural change, that could come under this concept of decolonizing. But that they do not refer to it [as decolonizing/decolonization] because, again, it's like this lighting rod. And they don't want to get caught up in the debate, but they want change. Lonnie Bunch, who is our Secretary of the Smithsonian, has a group that he has set up…Lonnie Bunch is also very much part of this [decolonizing conversation]. And I think it's around the history of enslaved people…His

[19] Author's itacalization.

> or their group is called the sort of committee on ethical return. This idea is that there are things [artifacts, cultural objects, etc.] that don't fall under NAGPRA and don't fall under the current Smithsonian guidance…Our museum [NMNH] has a couple people on that committee, I'm not on it. So I don't know what their discussions are…I hear what they're doing. I send them emails and share sort of thoughts with them and stuff like that…That's the current sort of answer I would have about the Smithsonian in general, is that they have these really specific projects where they're trying to address power imbalances…I know they want change, but I don't know, at what level and to what extent (Isaac, 2022).

Dr. Isaac situated the NMNH and the larger Smithsonian Institution's positionalities as national museums. The Smithsonian Institution cannot endorse a highly politicized movement despite its academic foundations. This effort to decolonize does not mean that other natural-ethnographic museums are not engaging in decolonizing methodology. As previously discussed, the Pitt Rivers Museum in England is a prime example of a natural-ethnographic museum with its deep associations with imperialism, the development of archaeology and evolutionary anthropology.[20] The Pitt Rivers Museum has embarked on decolonizing endeavor, *Radical Hope*. *Radical Hope* derives its name from philosopher Jonathan Lear's concept of the same name ("Radical Hope" 2022). *Radical Hope* offers a methodology on how people recovery after trauma, such as the destruction of their culture (Ibid.). The Pitt Rivers intervention aims to highlight the museum's complicity in colonialism and "[support] all people to share their ways of knowing, being, understanding and making - a place of many stories told by a multitude of voices," (Ibid.). *Radical Hope* appears to be the Pitt Rivers' "emancipatory intervention," (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 378) but there is doubt (for the time being) that

[20] "History of the Museum." Pitt Rivers Museum. Oxford University, 2022. https://prm.web.ox.ac.uk/historymuseum.

the Smithsonian could engage in such an overt acceptance of coloniality and apologetic commitment to epistemological multiplicity.

Unlike the Pitt Rivers Museum, whose sponsor is the University of Oxford, the Smithsonian Institution is a federally funded agency, and therefore, is not afforded the same level of academic freedom. The Smithsonian must remain neutral in "political" movements. Neutrality is to the Institution's advantage because the suggestion of political alignment with any political party could jeopardize Smithsonian funding and support in addition to alienating potential visitors.[21] The Smithsonian cannot participate in a "fad" either because engagement could be interpreted as a waste of federal funds (although the decolonizing movement has already demonstrated its deep roots in academic consciousness and convictions). Furthermore, participation in a blatantly decolonizing "emancipatory intervention," like *Radical Hope*, could also suggest the Smithsonian has a *need* to atone for colonial abuses rather than a *want* (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 637). It shifts the Smithsonian's volition to a necessity, which would be interpreted as admission of culpability. As geographer and heritage studies professor Tolia-Kelly and her research team describe how national museums in particular weld power over national identity construction (2016, 900-902). She elaborates by describing the national museum as an instrument of government because its academic findings will shape policy and legislation, ratifying the qualification for citizenship and personhood (2016, 905). Given this power and relationship with the nation-state, any message of decolonization from the Smithsonian would also be interpreted as a politicized message on behalf the United

[21] Philip Kennicott and Peggy McGlone, "Trump Wants to Cut the NEA and NEH. This Is the Worst-Case Scenario for Arts Groups," The Washington Post (WP Company, March 16, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/with-elimination-of-nea-and-neh-trumps-budget-is-worst-case-scenario-for-arts-groups/2017/03/15/5291645a-09bb-11e7-a15f-a58d4a988474_story.html.

States government, which could, again, jeopardize the Smithsonian's nonpartisanship. Dr. Isaac also revealed how the Smithsonian is examining steps to decolonize holistically in collections and structure when she listed the Committee on Ethical Return[22] and "address[ing]" power imbalances" (2022).

I asked Dr. Bell a similar question about the Smithsonian's relationship to the decolonizing conversation, and his response reveals a different side of the Smithsonian and NMNH.

> FB: … I know you're at a national museum, so how does that interact with your work?...[W]e [my peers and other academic research] were talking about how national museums can and cannot say certain things that might just be disagreeable with national narratives, for example. I was just wondering if you have experienced anything like that working?
>
> JB: No… there is the academic freedom. Now, there's issues where what we write is owned by the government, so I don't have copyright as a federal employee, it is controlled by that…Every scholar has self-censorship,…but I have never thought like, 'oh, because I work at the National Museum of Natural History, I can't write about 'X.' There have been times where I've realized that…'Yes, I could write about 'X,' and I could win a particular [personal] battle I'm having, but it might hurt me in the longer effort to create systematic change'…There have been times where early on, we did a repatriation, although was pivoted as a return of a loan…I was denied, I was told I couldn't go to it, because it was particularly sensitive. That's the only time that I've been told I can't participate in something. In terms of my exhibit "Cellphone: Unseen Connections." Right now, we're very aware of certain sensitive topics. And so being aware of how to write something, or how to do an exhibit that doesn't feed into certain narratives, etc., or creates problems for people (2022).

The response from Dr. Bell offered a more personal and everyday perspective compared to Dr. Isaac's more administrative response. Dr. Bell explained how he and his

[22] Matt Stevens, "In a Nod to Changing Norms, Smithsonian Adopts Policy on Ethical Returns," The New York Times (The New York Times, May 3, 2022), https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/03/arts/design/smithsonian-ethical-returns.html.

team have general freedom and range for potential Smithsonian publications and exhibits. He recentered the question about how every scholar has "self-censorship" as a professional colleague. Dr. Bell alluded to the fact that "early on" in his career at the Smithsonian he was "denied" permission to attend a "particularly sensitive" matter, but he generally feels that there are few taboo topics. Instead, he and his team are cognizant of the responsibilities of working at the Smithsonian (2022). Dr. Bell discussed how "being aware" of people's sensitivities to certain topics is crucial to writing for an exhibit, and so that the Smithsonian does not "feed into certain narratives" or "create problems for people" (2022). The researcher should not place their needs (personal or career-related) before the needs of the community they are collaborating with. In a later section of the interview while discussing the proper method of handling personal research materials, such as field notes, Dr. Bell also acknowledged how the individual is part of a larger connection to anthropology, the museum and the communities he interacts with (Bell 2022). Likewise, he recognizes the role of the individual in the research process while decentering the individual from the research because the individual represents a fraction of information generated. This caution demonstrates the Smithsonian's commitment to education and "diffusion of knowledge" ("Our History" 2022). This level of awareness signifies a depart from the Smithsonian's encyclopedic gaze and most likely is the result of confronting oppressive colonial methodology. It is at this point that returning to the Smithsonian's past will bring to light its current desire to decolonize and its imperfect recommitment to serve the public rather than itself.

Part III The Smithsonian Institution and Anthropology: Veiling Violence

The Smithsonian as a national museum is culpable of reifying categories, like its European and other American counterparts. The Smithsonian has a complicated history of gentleman scientists pursuing academics and personal recognition while reifying personal views into fact for their own benefit.

The history of the Smithsonian starts with British scientist James Smithson bequeathing his estate to the United States at his death in 1829 ("Our History," 2022). After years of debate, the Smithsonian was established on August 10, 1846 after President James Polk signed the ratifying act, Smithsonian Act of Organization ("Our History," 2022; "Smithsonian Timeline," 2022). The Smithsonian Board of Regents elected Joseph Henry, a prominent "natural philosopher" and professor at College of New Jersey (which became Princeton University), as the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in 1846 ("Smithsonian Timeline" 2022). Henry served for the next 32 years until his death (Ibid.). Secretary Henry established the Smithsonian as a center for scientific and literary experiments, research, publications and education during his tenure. In the same year, the Smithsonian founded the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) by submission of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 283). By 1849, Henry ensured that the Smithsonian sponsored scholastic endeavors for groups and individuals in the United States and abroad, and advocated for international recognition for American science ("Joseph Henry, 1797-1878" 2022).

Secretary Henry also established the resources for archaeology, anthropology (excluding biological anthropology due to his belief that biology was "'politically explosive and morally repugnant,'" and linguistics along with supplies for museum

exhibits (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 283). Henry believed that through the collection, cataloguing and display of anthropological material collected in the ever-industrializing western United States, Indigenous cultures and sites would be saved from the plow (Roberts 1946, 120). The BAE's role to collect and classify artifacts and ethnographies of Indigenous communities supported Secretary Henry's scientific endeavors (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 283). Some of the first archaeological and ethnographic data produced were records of the archaeological history of the "ancient" Mississippi Valley, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* in 1856 (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 284-5). This publication would be the first of many applications to follow of Spencerian Social Darwinism and Lewis Henry Morgan's scale of "savagery, barbarism and civilization" of Indigenous tribes across the United States (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 284; Baker 2007, 28-9).

Lewis Henry Morgan would also be an instrumental figure in the development of American ethnography because he believed it was imperative to document the "ancient [American] Indian lifeways…before they disappeared" as a result of American setter-colonialism (Thomas 2000, 46). This practice established anthropology's salvage ethnographic paradigm by recording "a synthetic ethnographic present" to preserve "'traditional'" North American Indigenous culture (Ibid.). In addition to formal research, Secretary Henry also collected information about Indigenous and other non-white (Asian, African and Latin American) communities from "explorers, U.S. Army officers, missionaries and others;" these materials were later placed in the care of the BAE (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 284, 293). Throughout the 1800s via the BAE and other anthropological departments of the Smithsonian, information was brought back to

Washington, D.C. (Thomas 2000, 56-7; Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 285). Information came in written forms, audio recordings of Indigenous languages, thousands of artifacts, photographs and human remains (Thomas 2000, 56-7; Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 285).

Smithsonian leaders shared a nexus of power with the development and acceptance of American anthropology. John Wesley Powell was another prominent ethnologist who shaped American anthropology; he also served as the BAE's founder (then BE for Bureau of Ethnology) and as president of American Association of the Advancement of Science (AAAS) (Baker 2007, 38; Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 284). Powell embraced Lewis H. Morgan's stratified theory of cultural evolution because he endorsed the concepts racial inferiority as a tool to enhance his career and the fledgling field of anthropology (Baker 2007, 38; Woodbury and Woodbury 1999. 284). Powell's leadership of the BAE ensured that it was "the leading center of anthropological research in North America" (Trigger 1989, 125). By the mid-to-late 1800s, American anthropology solidified its "three distinct axes" of power in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., Penn Museum in Philadelphia and the Peabody Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts (although the American Museum of Natural History in New York City was soon to follow) (Baker 2007, 50). The "three distinct axes" represented partnership between government and institutional anthropology (Baker 2007, 50). Through the scientific legitimization of racial inferiority, government, academia and the public justified their socially constructed white supremacy and prejudice as natural fact (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 285; Baker 2007, 70). The Smithsonian and American anthropology worked in tandem to ensure the creation of race as a legal and social

categorization, and presented race to the public as natural fact through Smithsonian exhibitions of racial inferiority (Thomas 2000, 55).

In 1893 for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the Smithsonian sponsored the "Anthropology Building" to publicize the new scientific field and its documentation of racial inferiority (Baker 2007, 57). The 1893 Exposition was meant to introduce America as a world player and reify white superiority through scientific evidence (Ibid., 56). The Anthropology Building displayed "skulls and measurements of all races" because it was believed that through craniometry, (the now, pseudoscientific study of skull size and shape in relation to intelligence, race and characteristics), anthropologists could scientifically prove that non-white people were inferior to white people (Baker 2007, 57; Thomas 2000, 56). These skulls were often times plundered from recent and ancient graves from across the United States or bought from the "elite natural historian" skull trade (Thomas 2000, 56). Another contribution of the Smithsonian's anthropology department was the "living ethnological exhibits/zoos" (Baker 2007, 57; Thomas 2000, 60). Visitors would observe institution-sanctioned racial hierarchy (Baker 2007, 57; Thomas 2000, 60). The people of the "darker races" were placed at the bottom of the pathway while "lighter skinned" races were placed closer to the central fair area, the "White City" (Baker 2007, 57). The World's Columbian Exposition was one highly publicized and frequented example of the Smithsonian's power to entertain, educate and reify. It offers a glimpse into the extent of Social Darwinian and salvage anthropology's impact on American values.

At the dissolution of the BAE in 1964, the Bureau had acquired over 80,000 photographs of American Indians, over 3,000 phonographic recordings and countless

numbers of artifacts, including culturally sensitive objects and orations (Brown 2003, 25; Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 293). These items were often taken without consent or knowledge from Indigenous communities, or with unscrupulous research methods such as “bribing,” “charming” or “badgering” (Ibid.). Many researchers also actively disregarded the American governments’ displacement and destruction of American Indians because they were collecting American Indian “artifacts” and remains under an adherence to Lewis H. Morgan’s salvage ethnographic paradigm (Brown 2003, 26; Thomas 2000,46). American Indians and their cultures would “die” if not assimilated into white Anglo-Saxon America (Brown 2003, 26; Thomas 2000,46). The development of American anthropology in the 1880s provided a legitimate justification for the collection and study of ethnographic and archaeological materials because anthropology and served as the scientific rationale for American imperialism, industrialized racial segregation and disenfranchisement (Baker 2007, 26; Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 289).

The Bureau of American Ethnology was divided into new programs, centers and projects devoted to the repatriation of Native American human and cultural remains, Asian Cultural History, African Ethnology and Latin American Archaeology (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 293). The BAE’s archives also serve as the basis for the Recovering Voices Program which started in 2008 at the National Museum of Natural History. The Smithsonian continues to reconcile with its colonial past and is working towards creating a more equitable present and future for all scholastic projects (Bell 2022; Isaac 2022; Smithsonian Staffer 2022).

Section 3.01 NAGPRA and Indigenous Archaeology

One landmark piece of legislation that works towards preventing historical mistreatment and removal of American Indigenous objects of cultural patrimony was the National Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). On November 16, 1990, NAGPRA was passed. It aims to legally protect and repatriate federally recognized Native American tribes' funeral objects, graves, human remains, sacred objects and other culturally sensitive information from federal agencies and museums (McManamon 2000; "Working with Native Americans" 2022). NAGPRA also prohibits the removal of human remains and artifacts from burial places and other items of cultural patrimony from tribal and federal lands (McManamon 2000). When first enacted, museums and institutions that received federal funding had to inventory and make summaries of their collections of Indigenous remains and NAGPRA-stipulated heritage collections (Teeter et al. 2021, 202). Another underlying goal of NAGPRA was to encourage institutions to reevaluate collections management and inadequate and possibly unethical storge (Ibid.). Debates about repatriating sensitive heritage collections and human remains occurred before NAGPRA, but with NAGPRA, there was a legal framework *and* obligation to comply (Williams and Ross 2021, 862).

In spite of misgivings about NAGPRA jeopardizing scientific interests, it is ameliorative legislation. NAGPRA allows Indigenous tribes, communities and individuals to "…reconnect with their ancestors and cultural items and control access, arrange for appropriate cultural care, and inform interpretation" along with the ability for Indigenous people to "…share their living memories and responsibilities to these locations, ancestors and belongings…" (Teeter et al. 2021, 204). Natural-ethnographic museums and institutions have benefited from NAGPRA because they have been able to

challenge, revaluate and change problematic Western methodologies, and they can also establish "deeper partnerships" with Indigenous collaborators, as Trigger encouraged (1980, 673) (Ibid., 205). Museums can better educate Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and public about ethical stewardship, creating a more comprehensive and inclusive narrative. NAGPRA offers some legal protection and methodological ethical accountability, but many museums still adhere to pre-NAGPRA procedures about access and use of Indigenous cultural heritage. [23]

Despite NAGPRA's good intentions to remedy historical abuses, colonial legacies continue "…to define structures for heritage management…" for Indigenous people as a result of disenfranchisement of sovereignty and self-determination (Atalay 2006, 282). The legislation forces Indigenous communities to work within a Euro-American legal epistemology of land and object ownership/possession, and the process of repatriation can be difficult due to legal requirements (Thompson 2012, 92; Bardrill 2018, 385). Additionally, the Smithsonian is exempt from NAGPRA. (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 293; "Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation," 2022). The Smithsonian repatriates through the National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989, 20 U.S.C. 80q ("Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation," 2022). Other legal caveats include the Act's authority over only federally recognized tribes and institutions that receive federal funding; in other words, institutions and tribes that do not have federal recognition or funding are not under NAGPRA's jurisdiction ("Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act" 2022)

[23] Ryan Wheeler, Jaime Arsenault, and Marla Taylor, "Beyond NAGPRA/NOT NAGPRA," *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals* 18, no. 1 (2022): pp. 8-17, https://doi.org/10.1177/15501906211072916.

In addition, NAGPRA's stipulations for classifying eligible objects can be difficult to prove due to the passage of time, unclear records of an object's provenance and disputed proximity to Indigenous remains (McMillan and Lopinot et al. 2010, 97). Proving cultural and physical connections from ancient and ancestral "archaeological" sites to individual Indigenous tribes or groups is challenging and, in some cases, impossible due to incomplete or lack of "evidence" (Ibid., 99). Other obstacles arise when historical displacement from homelands, archaeological practices of disinterment, settler-colonial classifying systems and historical obfuscation of Indigenous knowledge and culture prevent claimants from qualifying for NAGPRA or result in legal "dead ends" (Bardrill 2010, 285). NAGPRA also does not account for Indigenous discrepancies and conflicts over land occupation and cultural heritage because there are cases where Indigenous tribes with federal recognition will debate over the return of objects or human remains (McMillan and Lopinot et al. 2010, 101-3). Further, cases exist where federally recognized tribes will attempt to block non-federally recognized tribes because of the federally recognized tribe's advantages over the non-recognized tribe (Thompson 2012, 92). Therefore, NAGPRA can be interpreted as a limitation of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination for Indigenous communities in the United States.

Indigenous New Museum Theory (INMT) challenges the limitations of NAGPRA and de-centers Western archaeological and museological praxis. Activist and museum scholars created INMT to confront normalized "'value systems that are encoded in institutional narratives,'" (Baudino 2013, 62). Such value systems include transforming western archaeology, a discipline founded on and depends on Western epistemology and

methodologies and embedded in colonial entanglements (Atalay 2006, 280). INMT wants to foster:

> …[I]ndigenous-specific set of guiding techniques or rules a museum or an exhibition uses to engage new voices, interpretations, and dialogues, attempting to combat colonial narratives or harmful representations of indigenous peoples and cultures within the museum…Define[d] the techniques of INMT as: acknowledging unique indigenous cultural practices, oral traditions or other narratives of history, sharing previously untold stories (both historical and modern), collaboration with descendant/source communities, indigenous modes of conservation, taking pride in and ownership of indigenous identity, approaching and discussing topical Native issues, and teaching new generations cultural knowledge and practices, such as language and art forms, where appropriate (Baudino 2013, 62).

Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics confront the Western framework of scholastic discourse, striving to incorporate Indigenous epistemologies and decolonizing archaeology into a discipline "'with, for and by' Indigenous people'" (Atalay 2006, 283). To account for some of the shortcomings of NAGPRA and to encourage ethical treatment of Indigenous heritage collections, some Indigenous scholars and museums have adopted protocols that blur the line between NAGPRA and not NAGPRA (Wheeler et al. 2022, 11-12). NAGPRA offers some legal protection against misuse and ownership of sensitive Indigenous cultural property and human remains, but it does not prevent institutions from mistreating cultural objects outside of NAGPRA (Ibid.). Indigenous communities and museums have been known to draft their own extensions of NAGPRA because the groups will come together to discuss and draft proper care for Indigenous heritage collections (Ibid., 12).

One example at the Peabody Museum in Massachusetts. The Peabody Museum demonstrates how the museum and Indigenous groups, such as the White Earth Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, who are represented in the collection came together to

discuss “blurring” “NAGPRA/Not NAPGRA dichotomy” (Wheeler et al. 2022, 11-12). Indigenous heritage collections could have ethical handling, care and display, and the museum and Indigenous communities were part of decision-making processes (Ibid.). Wheeler, the director of collections at the Peabody Institute, does not directly mention decolonizing or INMT, but the collaboration of the Peabody demonstrates their commitment to redefining ethical protocol. This reformation can be interpreted as a type of decolonizing and INMT praxis. While this NAGPRA/not NAPGRA protocol is currently more exception than rule for museums, it set a precedence for other natural-ethnographic museums to follow suit. There is hope that more natural-ethnographic museums will reassess the limitations of NAGPRA and work towards developing their own ethical guidelines that blur NAGPRA and not NAGPRA. The ability to enact protocol more encompassing than NAGPRA also suggests that there is hope to officially “update” NAGPRA. Additionally, there is hope that more museums have already or will write similar ethical standards for groups of people and their cultural heritage that are not protected by a NAGPRA-like act.

Again, it must be emphasized that NAGPRA only applies to Indigenous communities even though there are more than 116,000 sets of human remains in American museums outside of NAGPRA’s jurisdiction.[24] While further discussion of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement in this paper will primarily focus on its relationship with Fallist movements, it must be highlighted how BLM has placed pressure for similar legislation for non-Indigenous remains, especially for Americans of

[24] Shanna E. Williams and Ann H. Ross, “Ethical Dilemmas in Skeletal Collection Utilization: Implications of the Black Lives Matter Movement on the Anatomical and Anthropological Sciences,” *The Anatomical Record* 305, no. 4 (February 2021): pp. 860-868, https://doi.org/10.1002/ar.24839, 862.

African descent (Williams and Ross 2021, 864). Black Americans, like Indigenous communities, had ancestral remains looted from cemeteries, placed on exhibition to support racist hierarchies, such as Morgan's scale of barbarism and racialized intelligence theories like Morton (Williams and Ross 2021, 861). The African American Burial Grounds Network Act passed in the United States Senate in December 2020 (Ibid., 862). Yet, it is not the equivalent to NAGPRA. The African American Burial Grounds Network Act would create "a national database of African American cemeteries and create grant opportunities to aid in the recovery and preservation of [them]" (Ibid.). Specific legislation to protect African American remains and heritage is needed. The proposed African American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act would offer NAGPRA-like protection for African American remains and presumably other culturally sensitive items.[25]

Section 3.02 NMAI and NAAMHC Contrast to Encyclopedic Museums

Legislation, like NAGPRA and the African American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, reflect decolonization and human rights demands. But the legal system is only one method of decolonizing. This statement does not disempower the legislation and its significance. Instead, it stresses that the law is not a *deus ex machina* to inequities and mistreatment. Natural history-ethnographic museums continue to play a role in educating people about diversity and histories. Although a more decolonized approach as cultural-specific museums. Culturally-specific museums can more authentically present, interpret and educate the public about the cultures and people they represent. The

[25] Justin Dunnavant, Delande Justinvil, and Chip Colwell, "Craft an African American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act," Nature News (Nature Publishing Group, May 19, 2021), https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01320-4.

Smithsonian branches of National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, D.C. are two examples.

National Museum of the American Indian is not a direct result of NAGPRA, but it embodies many of NAGPRA's goals. Its goals are advocacy, giving voice to Indigenous creators, educating the public on "stereotypes, representation and misinformation about American Indians in popular culture," and celebrating American Indian heritage. [26] NMAI is a prominent example of Indigenous led and oriented museum, located on the Mall in Washington, D.C. The museum's creation stemmed from demands for a museum since the 1980s (Smith and Timke 2020). It was finally ratified in the 1990s and opened in 2004 (Ibid.). The genesis of NMAI is traced to 1916 with the establishment of the Museum of the American Indian (MAI) in New York City (Haworth 2016).

NMAI emerged from the former Museum of the American Indian (MAI) in New York City, which was compromised of wealthy New Yorker, George Gustav Heye's (1874-1957) collection of North American Indigenous heritage ("History of the Collections" 2022). Heye had a life-long passion for collecting American Indian heritage, and over the course of his lifetime, he obtained American Indian heritage through Columbia University and American Museum of Natural History sponsored expeditions, other excavations and collectors (Haworth 2016). At his death in 1957, Heye had

[26] NB: The online publication did not provide page numbers because of the website format. Paul Smith and Edward Timke, "Native Americans in Popular and Commercial Culture: An Interview with Paul Smith from the National Museum of the American Indian," *Advertising &Amp; Society Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1353/asr.2020.0030.

acquired approximately 700,000 objects ("History of the Collections" 2022). [27] Despite critiques about Heye's now-considered unethical acquisition of American Indian heritage, MAI "was viewed as one of the most, if not the most, valued primary repositories for American Indian archaeological and ethnographic materials anywhere" (Haworth 2016). MAI's collections were transferred to the Smithsonian in 1989 because MAI became the National Museum of the American Indian ("History of the Collections, 2022; Smith and Timke 2020). Heye's collection accounts for approximately 85% of NMAI's collection.

When NMAI opened in September 2004, and it received a lukewarm reception (Smith and Timke 2020). Reviews from visitors and newspapers explain how people were "confused" by the non-linear narrative, and believed that NMAI "tried to do too much" (Smith and Timke 2020). Despite of the mixed reviews, museum leaders and staff celebrated the achievement. NMAI was "envisioned by American Indians, governed by a board of American Indians, and has an American Indian director with Indian staff…[and offers a] 'Native voice'" (Smith and Timke 2020). In response to the reviews, NMAI worked towards improving itself.

Even though NMAI represents decolonized and Indigenous scholarship and epistemologies, it, too, must also reconcile with its colonial origins. Heye had acquired the majority of his collection guided by the salvage ethnographic paradigm (Haworth, 2016). Yet, it is also recognized that "had Heye not collected these things back then, we would not have them today" (Haworth 2016). Nevertheless, NMAI is a milestone for Indigenous epistemologies and representation in academia and American social consciousness. Similarly, the National Museum of African American History and Culture

[27] Haworth uses "American Indian" in his writing, so when referencing his work, I will reflect the language used. John Hathworth.

(NMAAHC), which is also located on the Mall, shares similar (unofficial) decolonizing goals and history of waiting.

Campaigns for a museum that represents African Americans date back to 1916 when the first attempt to establish a museum by African American Civil War veterans (Ariese 2022, 70). Like NMAI, the museum was would eventually become NMAAHC would have to wait decades for approval and commencement. NMAAHC was formally founded by an Act of Congress in 2003, and opened to the public in September 2016 ("About the Museum" 2022). It has more than 40,000 objects in its collection ("About the Museum" 2022). Unlike NMAI, NMAAHC did not assume preexisting collections from other institutions; instead, through museum staff, it collected its objects (Ariese 2022, 70).

NMAAHC invites all people to come and learn about African American culture and history; encourages Americans to recognize how "their histories, and their cultures are shaped and informed by global influences," and acts an institution for inter-museum and institutional collaboration, so more audiences can engage with the narratives ("About the Museum" 2022). Although some of the terminology is vague, it indicates how "global influences," most likely including Western colonialism and slavery's legacies, have shaped and continue to shape history and everyday interactions. NMAAHC's commitment to self-awareness and its impact on also underscores how it acknowledges and embraces museums' ability to evoke powerful emotions and reflection.

NMAAHC offers *Contemplative Court*, a large space with seating and quotes from Black Americans on the walls with a cylindrical fountain in the middle. Similarly, to the Metropolitan's *Chinese Courtyard in the Style of the Ming Dynasty*, *Contemplative*

Court invites guests to become aware of the museum space and their placement. Unlike the Met, *Contemplative Court* offers visitors to explore their emotions in direct response to the collections, especially the pain and trauma of slavery and Jim Crow laws in America. *Contemplative Court* is a "space for pure emotion: for grief, for reflection, for resilience, for relief, for respite and for release" (Ariese 2022, 71). *Contemplative Court* aids guests "process historical grief before walking on to celebrate the contemporary" (Ibid. 72). *The Chinese Courtyard* encourages visitors to personally reflect rather than engage in the large museum experience, suggesting a more compartmentalized and impersonal museum experience. NMAAHC's personal experience suggests a departure from the encyclopedic museum's sterile artifice, and pushes its visitors to deeply engage with the histories and emotions presented. This shift towards a more personal experience reflects NMAAHC's situated knowledge as a culturally-specific museum (Haraway 1988, 581).

NMAAHC and NMAI are products of the on-going conversations and pushes to decolonize encyclopedic museum. They are authentic institutions of knowledge production where individuals of a community have agency over their representation and information. NMAI and NMAAHC are not alternative histories or footnotes. They are histories in their own right. The museums' placement on the National Mall also signifies a nation's imperfect attempt to decolonize and center marginalized communities.

Part IV Entanglements with BLM, #MeToo Movements and Covid-19

Section 4.01 Covid-19 Aggravating and Publicizing Inequities in Museums

The decolonizing work of natural history-ethnographic museums is still in its infancy. It was subsequently slowed by the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic. It, especially Covid-19 local and national lockdowns, exacerbated and publicized the internal neocolonial politics between museum staff and leadership, increasing pressure on museums to reevaluate their messages in a decolonizing present and future (Galla 2020, 222; Miranda 2020). Covid-19 restrictions forced many museums across the world to confront their precarious dependence on visitor revenue. The lack of active income required museums, large and small, to lay off staff perceived to be at the "bottom" of the museum's hierarchy-staff who are predominantly people of color (Miranda 2020). These individuals would also be considered "front of house" because their roles pertain to guest relations and other "front-line" workers (Ibid.). Conversely, predominantly white museum leadership have secured their jobs (Ibid.)

The results of a June 2020 American Alliance of Museums Covid-19 survey of 750 museums directors across the United States revealed that 64% of museum directors foresaw cuts in "education, programming, or other public services due to significant budget cuts" (Khashan 2020). To translate this number into museum staff, there are thousands of museums across the country that employ "726,000 direct and indirect jobs and contribute $50 billion each year to the economy" (Ibid.). The Covid-19 pandemic museum staff layoffs had a significant and "devastating" repercussions on national and local communities (Ibid.).

Although it could be more expected of smaller museums with little endowment and less financial security to lay off staff, prestigious museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and the Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens in Los Angeles laid off staff to response to financial issues despite their enormous endowments (Miranda 2020). The Metropolitan Museum of Art has an estimated 3.1-billion-dollar endowment yet has reduced staff by 20% (Miranda 2020). The mass layoffs conflict with museums' commitments to equity and reflect a long history of exploitation and alienation of marginalized communities. While the Covid-19 pandemic brought to light pay gaps and targeted dismissals, it only alluded the continued struggle of women in museums.

Section 4.02 #MeToo and Feminism in Anthropology and the Museum Settings

As part of my interview with Dr. Isaac, she described the moment she knew that she wanted to enter the museum field as her vocation. Dr. Isaac explained how she was "impressed" by a room of women museum staffers collaborating to solve a problem. At that instance, she "knew" museum work was her métier (Isaac 2022). She went on to elaborate how even though this group of women worked well in their niche, and women can find leadership positions in museums, there is a "glass ceiling" (Ibid.).

> FB: … I was doing some research with museum work and just talking to other women in museums, because it can be quite difficult…I was wondering if you could elaborate on how feminism and the #MeToo Movement has impacted or hasn't impacted museum work?
>
> GI: …In my immediate realm, which would be anthropology and working with Native American communities in a museum, *the MeToo Movement has not restructured things*…Where it has restructured things is in the sciences and in natural history. And my museum right now has, for the last three years…has had to deal with reports that have come out about really offensive and problematic treatment of women and abuse of power….So within my museum, they're only just now I think, coming to terms with

> the fact that they have to restructure things for, it's not just a conversation, they have to have people go through training, they have to have mechanisms in place for women who have been harassed, or anyone, just not just women, but… people in sort of vulnerable positions to be able to speak out…But that's what I would say on the kind of MeToo Movement is that it's for I've seen it more in the science than in the humanities… (2022).[28]

Dr. Isaac's reflections on the #MeToo Movement demonstrated how her museum has started the conversation to implement structures to protect and prevent harm to vulnerable individuals, like women, along with establishing better operating procedures for reporting perpetrators of gender and sex-based harassment and abuse. She alluded to how National Museum of Natural History is "dealing with reports [about] really offensive and problematic treatment of women and abuse of power." Her following statement that "they're [NMNH] coming to terms with the fact that have to restructure…" reinforced how museums and institutions are addressing and implementing formal pathways for training and reporting only *after* inappropriate behavior has taken place. Her statement suggests that more training is needed to *prevent* inappropriate behavior as well as to discipline it after a harm occurred. Dr. Isaac concluded that the #MeToo Movement, generally, has not affected NMNH. It is only recently starting to take more steps to prevent negative workplace behavior.

Over the course of her career (not museum specific), Dr. Isaac also acknowledged how she and other (presumably female) colleagues of her generation were "too terrified" "to name specific individuals who were a problem" (2022).

> GI: …Because certainly from my generation, I think we were all just too terrified. We honestly felt like if we spoke out about something that *we would be destroyed. We wouldn't have a career*….The fact that MeToo provided a space in which, in theory, whoever would come forward and

[28] Author's italicization.

> report it would also be would be, there would be sympathy and protection for them, I think really changed the conversation (2022).[29]

Dr. Isaac emphasized the fact that speaking up could only further endanger the targeted individual's job because there were no safe mechanisms to report gender and sex-based abuse. The phrases that "we would be destroyed" and "we wouldn't have a career" underscore women's vulnerability in the museum field and monolithic authority of male leadership in institutions. Dr. Isaac also highlights how the #MeToo Movement forces museums to confront sex and gender-based harassment, violence and exploitation because they must provide channels for reporting, protection for abused individuals and accountability for perpetrators. Dr. Isaac is cautious with her praise for the #MeToo Movement's impact on museum settings. At her museum, implementing change has been incremental, and she offered how the movement and feminism should and have influenced the work setting.

The #MeToo Movement has rekindled the issue of sexual harassment and lack of female agency in the museum workplace and how concepts of femininity and queerness are mediated through western colonialism (Ozkazanc-Pan 2018, 1212; Haraway 1984/5, 17). Tarana Burke established the #MeToo Movement in 2017 as a channel to evaluate sexual abuse and harassment against women and marginalized groups in the workplace, and Burke's movement also provides resources to individuals who have experienced abuse (Hodgetts et al. 2020, 22; Russell et al. 2018, 273). #MeToo also works towards confronting and rectifying unequal gender-based workplace standards, pay gaps and opportunity differentials across all fields because discrimination, harassment, xenophobia, violence and exploitation often intersect race, class, gender, sexuality and

[29] Author's italicization.

ableism (Russell et al. 2018, 273; Hodgetts et al. 2020, 22) Unfortunately, gender and/or sex-based discrimination, harassment and abuse and other forms of unsavory behavior from male colleagues and leadership towards female peers and students are commonplace in the anthropological, archaeological and museum fields (Hodgetts et al. 2020, 21; Isaac 2022).

The chauvinistic behavior and patterns of discrimination within academic fields emerged from the historically and predominantly "white, cisgender and male," membership; these individuals possess "varying levels of awareness of their privileges" and the power over others' lives and the harms they can [and have] cause[/d]" (Hodgetts et al. 2020, 21). These abuses of power and position have occurred across various educational and academic workplace settings (Isaac 2022; Hodgetts 2020, 21; Russell et al. 2018, 273). Field schools and field work are where female-presenting and queer individuals and groups are most vulnerable due to the physical isolation of the field; (Hodgetts 2020, 21). The context of "fieldwork culture" introduces a mindset of the "wild west" (Ibid.). Dr. Isaac shared her knowledge of men in the anthropological and museum fields taking advantage of their position in the context of fieldwork when I asked if #MeToo has influenced these fields.

> GI: …And the men who are in positions of authority are actually using the field site as this really questionable ability for them to cross boundaries that maybe they wouldn't win there in the university environment, although I think many of them usually do both (2022).

Dr. Isaac's statement demonstrated how typically cis-white men use the field site environment to continue their abuses of power because they are away from the physical university and its gaze. As the most powerful individuals, at the field sites, these men effectively created a toxic masculine environment. Dr. Isaac described that she and her

parents, who were museum staffers, had knowledge of some field sites that were "very macho," suggesting that gender-based and hierarchical abuses were occurring (2022). Her account exemplifies the regularity of toxic culture at field sites. Canadian research based on archaeological field work measured those individuals were more likely to experience instances of sexual harassment and abuse (verbal harassment, physical violence and touching and sexual violence) in the field (Hodgetts et al. 2020, 35-6). The rate of negative interactions and experiences doubled and tripled in the field compared to "other contexts" such as "institutional" settings (Ibid., 37). The research concludes that despite the data collected, instances of gender and sex-based exploitation, abuse and harassment go underreported in campus settings (Hodgetts et al. 2020, 37). Although academic settings can be challenging places, women continue to persevere.

In response to how feminism has impacted the museum, Dr. Isaac shared an equally tentative reaction.

> GI: …In terms of like feminism and the museum, I think there's a lot that museums are going to need to grapple with in the next coming decades about the glass ceiling for really capable women, and the fact that there are so many positions, still leadership positions that are held by men. And *that's*, to me really tragic, because I feel like so much really innovative work in museums, especially around the concept of museology is coming out of the way in which women have reconsidered all sorts of disciplines, whether it's archaeology, Indigenous knowledge and that kind of stuff. And it doesn't then make it into the actual concept of the museum from a leadership perspective, because often the men are seeing it differently…All I can say is watch that space. *Let's hope that we get that opportunity for women in the coming years* (2022).[30]

Dr. Isaac celebrated the diversity of women across disciplines because she recognizes their potential to reinvigorate, contribute and make change in their fields. Men continue to control the subject and rate of change due to their interests. White male

[30] Author's italicization.

heteronormativity continues to be upheld in museum praxis, collections and workplace dynamics despite museum staffers' interests and genders. Despite the present domination the patriarchy in the museum field, Dr. Isaac implemented hope when she transitioned the conversation temporal reference from the present to the future. "Hope" plays an intrinsic role in the betterment for female museum staffers. Aspirations drives change in an uncertain system and raises awareness for continued change (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 379). Dr. Isaac, despite her recognition that museums are not changing fast enough, remained optimistic because her phrase "watch that space" suggests that structural change will come with time. The aspirational tone reinforces decolonization (in this application) as a hope-affirming form of knowledge production (Ibid.). Kleist and Jansen argue that "hope" should be "cast against" metanarratives, such as feminism, nationalism, capitalism and other "-ism's" even though they recognize the significance of these metanarratives on the sociopolitical stage (Ibid., 377). I argue that some of these "-isms" can serve as foundations and encouragement for hope for a decolonizing natural history-ethnographic museum, academia and world at large (Ibid.). Incorporating feminism in natural history-ethnographic museum praxis would not equate to stifling out the male narrative. Feminism demands that museums must have reflexivity to their epistemological systems and hold space for partiality, subjectivity and multi-voiced narratives (Haraway 1988, 589, 596). Like decolonization, feminism is not monolithic. There is no universal feminism nor "unity of women" (Cox 2018, 321). Feminisms exist. The natural history-ethnographic museum must apply the appropriate feminisms.

In natural-ethnographic and archaeological museum work, despite its systemic sexism, women have and continue to succeed and push gendered expectations and

boundaries with their roles and objects of study. Their work demonstrates how these museums are and can be places of education, work and collaboration for people of all backgrounds. These environments often prove challenging, but in spite, of the obstacles, women have found their agency within the museums, and from their niches, they have fostered community. As more women enter the field, new and diverse opportunities appear. Leadership positions are not impossible because Dr. Isaac stressed one of the reasons why she chose museum work as her vocation was that women could have leadership roles. Dr. Isaac serves as a curator at the National Museum of Natural History along with her many other titles, again evidencing that women can achieve powerful roles within the museum. To her, the museum is a workspace of "comfort" and "confidence." Dr. Isaac and other women in museum work demonstrate how historically patriarchal fields are and continue to open up to women. Increased gender diversity reveals how the museum space can decolonize one aspect of itself. Museums are moving from the white, male only era to a place from James Smithson's time, to a new era of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Natural history-ethnographic museums, like NMNH, are reconciling the fact that they can be aggressive workplaces for non-cis-white men, and are starting to take the necessary steps to ensure a safer working environment. Additionally, they are confronting gender bias in their collections as another part of their decolonizing praxis.

Section 4.03 Objectivity's Masculinity and Subjective Feminism in Collections

In collections, queer and female histories are limited due to the religious and scientific binary of sex and sexuality (Martinez 2014, 165). Concepts of gender and sex have changed over time, but such changes are not often marked. Consequently,

individuals are incorrectly labeled, resulting in a false narrative of the absence of queerness and the rigidity of female/male gender binary (Martinez 2014, 166, 168; Haraway 2016, 20).

Martinez's case study reveals how Juana Aguilar, an individual who lived during the Eighteenth century in Guatemala and whose sexual and reproductive organs had not "fully developed," was medically labelled as "'sexually 'neutral' by the European doctor, Esparragosa."[31] Esparragosa's diagnosis was informed through the "colonial, misogynic and homophobic" lens of Western medicine (Martinez 2014, 160). Since Aguilar did not have "normal" reproductive organs, it was determined that she could not participate in heterosexual intercourse. This assessment proved to be a rupture in sociopolitical norms and laws of Guatemala (Ibid., 165). If she could not participate in "heterosexual intercourse," Aguilar could "commit 'sodomy,'" a crime against the colonial state and Church, with other women (Ibid.). The ruling about her body is an example of how religious, especially Christian, doctrines influenced the interpretation of scientific research, which in turned informed state laws and biopower. From this lack of agency over self-identification, archivists and scholars have made assumptions about her identity, gender and sexuality (Ibid.). Individuals, like Aguilar, who had "nonnormative bodies" were subject to scientific assessments, classification and observation without consideration on how they self-identified. In other words, the nonnormative bodies were placed in comparison to the "normal" body in order to set boundaries of priority and the un/natural, and the archives reflect this interpretation of her from the doctor's patriarchal

[31] María Elena Martínez, "Archives, Bodies, and Imagination," *Radical History Review* 2014, no. 120 (January 2014): pp. 159-182, https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2703787, 160.

and colonial gaze (Ibid., 165, 173). The patriarchy is projected as the unseen, authoritative eye because male scientists have positioned their perspective as the rational structure of experience with all other perspectives labeled as subjective (Haraway 1984/5, 52). Masculine objectivity does not recognize its bias; therefore, the museum presents its subjectivity as objectivity.

As illustrated by Juana Aguilar, collections are not exempt from the western male gaze and patriarchal classification systems. The convergence of Western medical authority and Christian theological power identified and reified heteronormativity and the female/male gender binary (Martinez 2014, 167; Reading 2014, 400; Thomas 2000, 37-8). Their authority disregards that concepts of gender and sex are social constructs, which intersect race, class and scientific discourse (Haraway 2016,16). Traditional museums have isolated and limited "women's perspectives" to domestic roles and interests, such as clothing and care, or women depicted in art and culture as allegorical figures, not real women (Reading 2014, 402). Marginalized scholars and narratives are silenced voices or "hidden voices" behind the prominent heteronormative white male scholar and "his discovery" (Das and Lowe 2018, 8). In turn, the information collected is manipulated or organized into categories, which reflect dominant white male, western epistemologies (Ibid.). The categories are presented as objective, even though the cataloguing system reflects the scientists' biases, reifying bias into fact and natural order (Ibid.).

Despite the presence of women and queer individuals in collections, natural-ethnographic museums are slowly presenting difficult heritage topics of sexual and gender violence even though they depict a more accurate history (Reading 2014, 402). This more complete history emphasizes narratives of gender, queerness and feminism

cannot be essentialized to the responsibility of the people who identify with these categories (Ibid.). Rather, the mainstreaming of these historically silenced groups demonstrate that they should be considered part of History. This reluctance is also reflected in presenting narratives about race and settler-colonialism.

Similarly, museum staffer interactions at the British Museum indicate hesitancy from conservative, older and predominantly white museum staff to confront challenging topics (Minott 2019, 570). Staff argued to "neutralize" the language of exhibitions that critiqued the British Empire (Ibid.). Some change has taken place at the British Museum, but decolonization remains to be perceived as a people of color's issue instead of an overarching problem wanting for solutions (Ibid.). There is a push, now, for scholars and encyclopedic institutions to examine the people and studies they consider "neutral" or normative and represent historically marginalized voices like women and queer individuals (Reading 2014, 401-2). On a more public and visceral level of decentering the heteronormative white male scholar and/or colonial figure, the Fallist and Black Lives Matter Movements have spurred the removal of normalized symbols of colonial oppression from public spaces.

Section 4.04 BLM and Fallist Movements

The Fallist movements, the toppling of public statues and monuments, have triangulated with decolonizing and Black Lives Matter (BLM) movements. The original Fallist Movement began in South Africa in 2015 with the #Rhodes Must Fall (#RMF) Movement, the toppling of a prominent Rhodes statue at the University of South Africa (Brus et al. 2020, 919). Since 2015, the Fallist movements reawakened the public demand to decolonize institutions and confront normalized racism in urban spaces (Ibid.). Urban

spaces, such as Washington, D.C.; London and New York City, are central to decolonizing movements as result of their colonial history, connection to state power, diverse populations and their placement on the global stage (Kølvraa and Knudsen 2021, 2).

In 2015, Chumani Maxwele, a student at University of Cape Town (UCT) initiated the #Rhodes Must Fall Movement when he threw a container of human excrement at the prominent campus statue of British imperialist Cecil Rhodes (Frank and Ristic 2020, 553). Rhodes' presence evoked the trauma of British imperial rule and violence, which in turn suggested to Black UCT students and staff "second-class citizenry" (Ahmed 2019, 281-3; Drayton 2019, 654; Frank and Ristic 2020, 553). The #RMF movement's protestors called themselves "Fallists," giving their name to the larger movement to remove perceived public reminders (e.g. monuments, memorials, etc.) of colonial oppression (Frank and Ristic 2020, 553). #RMF movement inspired other students at predominantly white institutions, like Oxford, Harvard and Princeton, to reassess iconography of past leaders and their personal connections to racist and colonial policies (Ahmed 2019, 283). The Fallist protests have pushed decolonizing rhetoric to the public arena (Brus et al. 2020, 919). In a similar vein, the "Fallist" sector of the American BLM Movement initiated the toppling and removal of Confederate public iconography across the United States, and has inspired international BLM and Fallist movements to act (Green 2020, 486; Mahony 2020, 56).

In response to and in solidarity with the 2020 resurgence of the American Black Lives Matter Movement in reaction to George Floyd's murder, BLM movements across the world felled and defaced monuments and statues of European colonial oppression

(Abraham 2021, 2). In Bristol, England, a statue of Edward Colton, a seventeenth-century human-trafficker, was cast into the port of Bristol, and in London, Winton Churchill's statue was defaced with writing on its plinth reading: CHURCHILL "was a racist" (Brus et al. 2020, 919; Abraham 2021, 4). A statue of King Leopold II, in Antwerp, Belgium, was defaced and then burned in response to his human rights atrocities in the then-Belgian Congo (Brus et al. 2020, 919). In Montreal, Canada, a statue of John A. MacDonald, the Prime Minster of Canada connected to the displacement of Indigenous people within Canada and the creation of residential schools, was removed from its plinth and decapitated (Abraham 2021, 2; Frum 2021).

The global demonstrations represent how the public are recognizing and angrily reacting to the normalization of colonial legacies in a neocolonial world. The public also is starting to understand how BLM converges with decolonization efforts. Both BLM and decolonization explore the intersectionality of identity construction with race, class, gender, sexuality, nationalism and colonialism (Abraham 2021; Mirzoeff 2017, 8). The 2020 BLM movement has also been described as "history-altering" because it has "renewed [the] spotlight on museums and their collections…harbor[ing] ill-gotten colonial plunder" that "celebrate[s] statehoods built on slavery and the suppression of Indigenous peoples" (Anderson 2020, 489).

Many museums, including colonial encyclopedic ones, have demonstrated their solidarity with BLM; some as a means to "retain" public favor (Nugent 2020, 18). Museums have participated in removing contested statues. For example, the Museum of London Docklands removed the statue of slaveholder Robert Milligan in June 2020, and as discussed later in the paper, the American Museum of Natural History in New York

City removed its prominent equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt in January 2022 (Mahony 2021, 57; Small 2022). The themes of public perception and revenue resurface in the context of the Fallist and BLM movements. There is a fear that if a museum does not support BLM, it could lose public favor and possibly, visitor revenue, jeopardizing future stability. In addition to demanding iconographic changes, BLM continues to push for lasting decolonizing goals. Some of these demands are for increased diversity in staff and programming, challenges to racial inequities and acknowledgement and repatriation of looted objects in collections (Nugent 2020, 18).

Anthropological natural-history museums are at an intersection of colonial heritage, post-and neocoloniality and decolonization due to their position as intellectual bridges between academia and the public. Academia influences the public's epistemological systems which shape how people make sense of their world. In this regard, academia has the ability to make transparent the obfuscated colonial entanglements of Western knowledge production. Years of decolonizing literature and data reveal repressed demands for confronting museological coloniality and proposals for inclusivity. But unlike previous attempts to decolonize, academics and non-academics recognize, support and demand change. The Black Lives Matter and the #MeToo movements highlighted, especially in urban settings, the practice of veiling colonial and neocolonial histories, violence and rhetoric (Kølvraa and Knudsen 2021, 5; Russell et al. 2021, 273). Natural history and ethnographic museums help to demystify decolonization and integrate it into non-academic consciousness. Natural history-ethnographic museums' work to shift public perception is an all too familiar situation, as recalled by anthropology's successful attempts to justify racism in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries. Anthropology verified and popularized itself in the public sphere through the dissemination of magazine articles by anthropologists in the hopes that the articles would be taken up by policy creators and legislators (Baker 2007, 74). Yet, now, anthropology, inspired by BLM, feminisms and queer theory, hopes to atone by changing people's perspectives for the better. It remains an influential field of science; therefore, if decolonization is going to be an effective social movement rather than purely an intellectual paradigmatic shift or passing fad, then museum staff on all levels must, again, introduce systems and policies for lasting change. Decolonization will trigger a phoenix-like reformation for natural-ethnographic museums.

Part V Iconoclasm and Iconoclash as part of the Decolonizing Process

Section 5.01 The Colonial Museum performing Iconoclasm and Iconoclash

The removal of political and historical iconography at encyclopedic museums may antithetical due to their stereotypical behavior of collecting and preserving. Contrary to this belief, these museums are already familiar with the power of iconoclasm. Iconoclasm, the destruction of iconography, was essential to the Euro-American encyclopedic museum. Through iconoclasm, museum collections were created, and Western powers assumed sovereign power via politics of recognition (Brus et al. 2020, 920-1). As Western powers seized colonies and Indigenous peoples' cultures, they manipulated Indigenous religious and cultural icons into aesthetics and animated objects into materiality, alienating both people and objects from their cultures (Brus et al. 2020, 921; Taylor 1994, 25). Indigenous iconography was replaced with icons and symbols of the colonial power (Brus et al. 2020, 921; Taylor 1994, 25). The subjugated population was supposed to align their heritage and identity with the Western mother country. The manipulation and destruction of Indigenous symbols of power and religion demonstrates iconoclasm's essential role in establishing colonial power (Brus et al. 2020, 921).

Although acts of iconoclasm can have religious connotations, current Fallist movements emphasize the iconographic power of political figures, as witnessed by the toppling of Churchill, Rhodes, Confederate generals and Theodore Roosevelt (Latour 2011, 18). Abraham, a communication professor who specializes in critical races studies at Concordia University, explains that Fallist movements implement "selected memory," which shapes public consciousness and prescribes perceptions of historical figures (2021, 3). "Selected memory" can also extend to the creation of a public reminder (e.g.

monument, memorial, statue, etc.) to a historical figure. The creation and placement of monuments of "'great men' [usually cis-white heterosexual men]" joins together citizenship, politics and history (Drayton 2019, 652-3). These celebrated individuals epitomize societal values and applauds individuals who also ascribe to them. Conversely, the individuals who do not fit the prescribed narrow lens of citizen or personhood prescribed are actively excluded from society and history (Reading 2014, 402). Iconoclasm describes the physical destruction of the image, but it does not consider the fraught relationship that images may have with their associated societies (Brus et al. 2020, 922).

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines an "iconoclast" as "a person who attacks settled beliefs or institutions" (2022). A second definition specifies a person who "destroys religious images or opposes their veneration," (which is not completely unrelated in the colonial museum setting) ("Iconclast," 2022). The definitions of iconoclast and iconoclasm do not offer nuance to the act. Bruno Latour complicates this certitude by revealing the ambivalence of the defacement through icono*clash*. Icono*clash* adds nuance to the defacement and destruction of political images:

> …We can define icono*clash* as what happens when there is *uncertainty* about the exact role of the hand at work in the production of a mediator. Is it a hand with a hammer ready to expose, to denounce, to debunk, to show up, to disappoint, to disenchant, to dispel one's illusions, to let the air out? Or is it, on the contrary, a cautious and careful hand, palm turned as if to catch, to elicit, to educe, to welcome, to generate, to entertain, to maintain, to collect truth and sanctity? (2011, 20).

Latour delves into the often-conflicted motivations of icono*clash*. Latour's questions also allude to how the destruction of images renegotiates the power of the person/ historical figure portrayed because the public's memory of the person is

challenged. His questions cannot be answered without retrospection. Maybe in ten or twenty years Fallist protests will have proven themselves as effective decolonizing methodology, or maybe next year, new statues of contested figures will appear and counter-Fallist movement will emerge. Without the benefit of retrospection, the Fallist movement's long-term impact is undeterminable. For now, semi-public approval serves as validation for Fallist decolonizing protests. An ambivalent audience is the natural history-ethnographic museum. Iconoclash complicates decolonizing methodology because it is not uncommon for encyclopedic museums to have direct associations with colonial figures. These figures may have served as Secretaries, as witnessed with the Smithsonian Institute, or patrons, as previewed with Theodore Roosevelt at the American Museum of Natural History. Again, iconoclash as decolonizing methodology further complicates the museum's new narratives, identities and truths. Latour offers insight to the fraught process of inconoclash, but he also narrows the analytical lens.

Latour's rhetoric of a singular "truth" replicates the trouble because it appears absolutist; there is only one version of the facts (Latour 2011, 20). A more accurate description of the ambivalence of iconoclash would describe a multiplicity of *truths*. The destruction of an "ultimate" truth raises the question of managing that truth in relation to the other truths since erasure of the "old, colonial" history would renew the cycle of historical manipulation and silencing. Instead, decolonization would help de-center the colonial truth as the only source of knowledge. Decolonization acts as an epistemological system that challenges the misconception that the western epistemological systems control "truth." Through iconoclash's space for ambivalence, people can interrogate their given epistemological structure while exploring obscured parts in their structure, or

explore other systems of knowledge productions. What truths are revealed or have been obstructed? Iconoc*lash* serves as another "emancipatory intervention" of decolonization's ability to decenter the west and de-normalize racism (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 673). The falling of the Theodore Roosevelt statue at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City exemplifies the entanglement of cult of persona of a historical figure, normalized racism and a museum's incomplete attempts to reconcile its involvement with anthropology as a tool of American imperialism.

Section 5.02 Iconoclash: The Equestrian Statue of Theodore Roosevelt at AMNH

For all of The American Museum of Natural History's (AMNH) colonial entanglements as "a Greek temple, a bank, a scientific research institution, a popular museum, a neoclassical theatre" and Victorian tribute to Man's dominance over Nature, as Donna Haraway describes it in her essay, "The Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," I have great affinity for the museum (1984/5, 21, 39). One of my earliest memories is at AMNH because I was fortunate enough to grow up in New York City. I went with my preschool class of nineteen other four-year-olds and our teachers to AMNH on a field trip. We were in the dark diorama Hall of African Mammals. I remember gazing at the staged animals in their glass dioramas. In the dim light, I could almost sense them just emerging deep from the wilderness; their poses frozen in time. I felt as if I could almost reach out and stroke their fur and hides. The animals' eyes pierce through the vitrine, unsure as to whether I was a welcome spectator or intruder. It felt as if I turned around, the animals, seizing their opportunity, would dart back into the depths of the scene. It did not matter that there are cracks and chips in the painted scenes of Africa. Nor did I care that most of the animals'

fur are faded from decades of display. I accepted the fact that Theodore Roosevelt as a big game hunter and conservationist contributed his kills to the museum because big game hunting was old fashioned like AMNH.[32] Roosevelt contributed to the antique romanticism and other worldliness of the Hall. I had been transported. I was entranced. I had naïvely succumbed to AMNH's Edenic illusion and tropes of Africa (Haraway 1984/5, 20). Regardless, this field trip would be the start of a lifetime connection to and fascination with AMNH. My connection to AMNH was cemented when I went to visit my friend who lived close to the museum on the Upper West Side. I kept my eyes out for the "guy on the horse" in front of the American Museum of Natural History because he was a landmark that indicated I was nearing her apartment.

I grew older and studied the history of New York City; New York, and the various United States presidents, the "guy on the horse" was realized as the 26th President Theodore Roosevelt. The man who inspired the teddy bear. The father who brought his five children and a menagerie of animals to the White House. Roosevelt was a New Yorker, Rough Rider, naturalist, former governor of New York, Nobel Peace Prize winner, a man who despised slavery and tried to provide a "Square Deal" for rich and poor Americans. Theodore Roosevelt's cult of persona continues to capture and inspire generations of Americans even a century after his death. Roosevelt's beloved mythos of the blueblood New Yorker turned cowboy and Rough Rider has been forever crystalized in Robin William's portrayal of the jovial, ruddy "Teddy" Roosevelt in *Night at the Museum* (2006).

[32] Haraway 1984/5, 22.

There is a more informal yet dignified bronze statue of Roosevelt sitting on a long, curved bench in the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall Rotunda in addition to the formal (now removed) equestrian statue at the main entrance of AMNH. The statue has a patina from the years of school children climbing over him. I can picture one of my teachers positioning us around the statue for a school trip photo with one of my classmates sitting in Roosevelt's lap. No doubt, other New Yorkers have similar memories and affinities towards the museum because there are always countless numbers of families, school groups and summer camp field trips traversing the halls. Yet, below the romanticized patina, there is a more realistic Roosevelt.

In October 2017, protesters threw red paint, symbolizing blood, on the base AMNH's Equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt because they believed that it represented "patriarchy, white supremacy and settler-colonialism" (Moynihan 2017). The protesters wanted to force AMNH to recognize and reevaluate its colonial roots (Ibid.). The statue, depicts him on horseback with African and North American Indigenous men flanking him on both sides. It was located at the main entrance of AMNH. Roosevelt is the only identifiable figure while the African and Indigenous men represent all African and Indigenous populations.

In summer of 2020, the statute was preassembly temporarily removed from the entrance in response to the "Fallist" section of Black Lives Matter movement which was defacing and toppling statues of colonial oppression. AMNH created a temporary exhibit of "Addressing the Statue" ("Addressing the Statue" 2020). The exhibit featured interviews from individuals from a diverse set of backgrounds. One interviewee, a New York student, described how he also saw the Equestrian statue as "a guy on horse"

("Addressing the Statue," 2020). Our uninformed and normalized perspective of the statue demonstrates how statues center colonial legacies, power and images, and how they contribute to the mythologization of historical figures, the "invented traditions" (Kølvraa and Knudsen 2020, 2; Frank and Ristic 2020, 554;). But long before 2020, there were people who found the statue "offensive" and symbolic of white settler-colonialism; it is only recently, however, that these voices have become heard and mainstream (Small 2022). Conversely, some people only view Theodore Roosevelt as an imperialist, supporter of racial nationalism, warmonger, strong proponent of Manifest Destiny and eugenics and colonizer who does not deserve to be remembered fondly let alone romanticized in a children's film. They would not be wrong either. As much as Theodore Roosevelt was a force for good, he also was an unapologetic imperialist who believed in the White Man's burden (Burns, 2014; Raphelson, 2019).

Theodore Roosevelt leaves a complicated legacy because he symbolizes the nexus of anthropological development, natural-ethnographic museum creation and governmental adoption of racial superiority and eugenics. Woodbury and Woodbury capture the essence of this "Golden Age for Natural History" (1999, 289). The anthropologic museum "at the turn of the century [20th]…the field [archaeology] was primarily controlled by a self-proclaimed elite of Washington archaeologists, supported by a Philadelphia--New York--Boston axis…" (Thomas 2000, 56). The Roosevelt family were part of the New York elite. Theodore Roosevelt's father, Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. played a crucial role in his son's lifelong interest in natural phenomena and history and its influence in academia and the museum field. Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. was also one of the instrumental figures in establishing AMNH in 1869 when, he, Pierpont Morgan and

Joseph Choate collaborated to found the American Museum of Natural History (Thomas 2000, 55). The placement of the museum was by the newly designed Central Park (started in 1857) and adjacent to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (established 1874) (Thomas 2000, 55). The proximity of the museums along with Central Park hoped to provide an "urban oasis of culture, education and amusement" (Thomas 2000, 55).

Like the Smithsonian Institution, the American Museum of Natural History is complicit in purchasing plundered artifacts and human remains, sending intrusive research expeditions to Indigenous communities and bringing back Indigenous people as live "specimens" (Thomas 2000, 248; Nicholas and Wylie 2012, 29).[33] After the death of Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., Teddy Roosevelt continued to contribute to AMNH and the advancement of natural science and conservation (Haraway 1984/5, 21). It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully examine the "enduring contradictions" of Roosevelt and his impact on natural-ethnographic museums and American legal system, but I will provide a few illuminating and relevant examples (Hardy 2005, 186).

Roosevelt served as New York State Assemblyman in 1884, years before he became president at the assassination of President McKinley in 1901. In the same year, he critiqued British sociologist Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* because Roosevelt believed that the different races and classes were locked in battle in the march towards process and evolution (Baker 2007, 78). Roosevelt elaborated how "most races" would progress but Black Americans had "no hope" (Ibid.). He described Black Americans as a "perfectly stupid race" without intellectual merit, a sentiment also shared by Smithsonian Secretary Powell (Ibid.).

[33] One of these expeditions would serve as the basis for the Hall of the Pacific Northwest at AMNH, which is currently undergoing "extensive renovations" to preserve and reimagine the space.

Roosevelt believed America was meant for "racially superior whites" not for non-white communities (Raphelson 2019). He regarded "Indians" (North American Indigenous people) as "ardent warriors" and a formidable "opponent to white Americans," but he saw them as "savages" who were going extinct and should be extinguished in the process of developing, industrialized America (Ibid.). When Congress passed the Dawes Allotment Act in 1887, which divided "Indian Country into 160-acre parcels" and stipulated that "Indians" were to take up farming, participate in government and become assimilated into "'civilized'" American society, Roosevelt praised the Act (Thomas 2000, 67). He exclaimed that the Act was "'a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass'" (Ibid.). His imperial attitude of Indigenous North American people was legitimized by the developments in anthropology along with his personal and familial involvement with the establishment of AMNH and interactions with the Smithsonian (Baker 2007, 39, 70; Haraway 1984/5, 23; Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 284-5). Despite his racist attitudes, Theodore Roosevelt curated an image of himself as a champion for racial equality.

In contrast, Roosevelt believed slavery was a "sin" that Englishmen introduced to America even though he supported racial nationalism (Raphelson 2019). One famous example of now President Roosevelt portraying himself as an advocate for civil rights occurred in 1901 when he invited Booker T. Washington to dinner at the White House. Washington was the first Black American to be invited to the White House in this capacity (Burns 2014; Conan 2012). The purpose of the "dinner" was to allow Roosevelt and Washington to discuss social justice (Conan 2012). Roosevelt had defied segregation laws, and scandalized not only his reputation but that of his wife, Edith Roosevelt, and

his daughter, Alice, because they attended the dinner (Burns 2014; Conan 2012). In spite of the dinner and his actions to support social justice for Black Americans as the President of the United States, he continued to believed that white people were superior to Black people (Burns 2014). Theodore Roosevelt embodies the intersection of power between the state, science with race, class and gender. Given his beliefs about Black and Indigenous people, *The Equestrian Statue of Theodore Roosevelt* is an increasingly difficult statue to justify for a public, family-centered and decolonizing museum. The statue is a clear celebration of Roosevelt, the white nationalist and American colonizer.

The artist James Fraser, in 1940 at the statue's unveiling, intended to present all figures with dignity and strength ("Addressing the Statue" 2020). Roosevelt sits on horseback and fully clothed white two unnamed, semi-clothed African and North American Indigenous flank him. Regardless of Fraser's good intentions, the composition expresses white nationalism, (Moynihan 201). Roosevelt's beliefs of white superiority and colonialism as a justifiable means of control compounds the insidious racist tone of the statue (Small, 2020). Decolonization discomfort can be a constructive force for systemic change in museum expectations and praxis because it forces the audience to question their reaction and their positionality while revealing a museum's reflexivity (Giblin et al. 2019, 473; Frost 2019, 478). But this discomfort comes from understanding the violence behind the seemingly ahistorical, decontextualized object in a grand building (Haraway 1984/5, 21). It is a discomfort caused from recognition that change is needed.

In June 2020, Ellen V. Futter, the president of AMNH, announced that the statue will be removed from the museum's entrance because of its message of "racial hierarchy" and in response to the BLM movement (Pogrebin 2021). As observed with the falling of

statues of Rhodes, Colton and Confederate figures, BLM and other related Fallist protests:

> …highlight the racism of infamous figures, the racist societies that produced these representations and the way these representations and these statues continue to both normalize and obscure settler-colonial racism (Abraham 2021, 2)

Public spaces are subject to change and are not always preserved "in perpetuity" because they play an active role in people's lives (Drayton 2019, 655). The *Equestrian Statue* illustrates Latour's concept of icono*clash* in that AMNH delayed removing the controversial statue due to Theodore Roosevelt's familial and personal connections. AMNH President Futter clarified that the removal was due to *Equestrian Statue*'s "'hierarchical composition;'" Roosevelt's racist attitudes did not factor into the removal decision (Pogrebin 2021). Futter went on to state that the removal of the Equestrian Statue can be "a symbol of progress in our [AMNH's] commitment to build and sustain an inclusive and equitable society" (Ibid.). AMNH did not overtly denounce Roosevelt. The reason of "'hierarchical composition'" and the statement about process and equity can be interpreted as AMNH's attempts to temper Roosevelt's racism and distance themselves from his attitudes as part of the new decolonizing era. AMNH balanced the removal with the third announcement that the Hall of Biodiversity will be renamed after Roosevelt as to recognize him as a "'pioneering conservationist,'" (Ibid.). Latour's "hammer" of icono*clash* is not ready to personally denounce Roosevelt, but rather, the cautious hammer aims to "'recontextualize to facilitate difficult, complex and inclusive discussions'" in new home in North Dakota (Gershon 2021; Latour 2016, 20).

AMNH's decision to remove and rehouse the Statue to the new Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library (opening 2026) in Medora, North Dakota is welcomed

because North Dakota also appeals to Roosevelt's image as gentleman cowboy naturalist, whose legacy of rugged individualism and American masculinity has characterized this area's socio-political beliefs (Haraway 1984/5, 22; Hardy 2005, 177; Raphelson 2019; "The Project" 2022). The relocation to the Library, again, underscores the uncertainty of icono*clash* because it appears that this statue will serve as an object that will elicit emotions and educate within a curated environment (Latour 2016, 20; "The Project" 2022).

Although the Library is not yet built, I visited The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library's website. I was immediately presented with a video of North Dakota hills with "Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library" and "The world needs Theodore Roosevelt now more than ever" superimposed over it ("The Homepage" 2022). A further exploration of the website reveals that it focuses on the persona of Roosevelt as a fearless outdoorsman, statesman, explaining that he was "'a New Yorker by chance and North Dakotan by choice'" ("Why North Dakota" 2022). The site implements similar rhetoric to underscore its disdain for Roosevelt's East Coast and New York roots. Exampled by the website's description of how the Badlands transformed Roosevelt from "a frail underweight city-dweller into a larger-than-life character, as he is popularly remembered by today" (Ibid.).

The tab familiarly called "Teddy" presents the Library's focus on Roosevelt: "Leadership," "Conservation" and "Citizenship" (2022). Each section explains how Roosevelt embraced the courage of his convictions against personal odds, his innate leadership and his ability to build himself into a man who governed the country into modern 20th century life. There are no references to Roosevelt's racist attitudes. Nor does

the website mention the inclusion of Black and Indigenous scholars, artists, historians and communities to help contextualize and reconcile Roosevelt's more racist beliefs (Gershon 2021). The overarching message is clear: Roosevelt is more relevant than ever because he is "quintessentially American" ("Why North Dakota," 2022). The rhetoric of "quintessentially American" qualifies Americanness in narrow prescriptive "Bull Moose" terms. Americans who do not define themselves by the Library's interpretation of Theodore Roosevelt's persona are not Americans. The message reinforces Roosevelt's beliefs that America belongs to white Americans. The reclamation of Theodore Roosevelt as a "'New Yorker by chance and North Dakotan by choice'" examples how Right-wing Americans embraces historical figures as validation for prejudice and racist beliefs because of the figures' perceived Americanness. The only icon*oclash* was Roosevelt's prominent existence in front of a New York City landmark because his "Get Action" Bull Moose white heteronormative masculine legacy remains strong in the North Dakota Badlands. While AMNH's efforts to decolonize should be recognized as an "emancipatory intervention," the celebration of Theodore Roosevelt's white supremacy underscores how decolonizing is a fraught, imperfect social movement and reflects the deepening American sociopolitical schism (Kleist and Jansen 2016, 367).

Section 5.03 Complicated Emancipatory Interventions at AMNH

> [Dirt] implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Dirt is the by-product of systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements (Douglas 1984, 36).
>
> Dirt is a symbol for a part of history which is unpleasant—conflict, class divisions, poverty in the midst of plenty, and even the exploited classes themselves: slaves, itinerants, the 'lower orders' in general (Gable and Handler 1993, 13).

Despite the American Museum of Natural History's complicated relationship with Theodore Roosevelt and his mythos, AMNH has implemented some "emancipatory interventions" towards reckoning with its colonial relationships with some of its collections. Two of the most prominent endeavors of decolonizing or "reconsiderations" of AMNH's past are the "Reconsidering the Scene" which confronts stereotypical portrayals of Dutch settler-colonialism in New Amsterdam and the total renovation of renamed Northwest Coast Hall.

The first intervention is part of the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall, the life-sized "Old New York" diorama Scene. It recalls a scene from New York's history as New Amsterdam as an homage to Roosevelt's Dutch ancestry and nod to local history. [34] The diorama, which was installed in 1939, depicts an encounter between two male European figures, one with a wooden leg, and two Indigenous men, set on a painted backdrop of an idyllic colonial town. Even though the figures were unidentifiable to people without knowledge of New York history, the scene conveys a stereotypical and highly sanitized version of European settler and Indigenous interactions through its composition and inaccuracies. The scene is meant to convey a diplomatic exchange between Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch director-general of New Netherlands and the Lenape, who already lived on the Island of Manhattan before the Dutch arrived. The addition of this knowledge only makes the scene even more offensive and inaccurate because it was based in history rather than conjecture.

[34] Ana Fota, "What's Wrong with This Diorama? You Can Read All about It," The New York Times (The New York Times, March 20, 2019), https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/arts/design/natural-history-museum-diorama.html.

The Lenape Tribe figures' "Otherness" is heightened because they are (inaccurately) dressed in loincloths while the Europeans are fully clothed, reinforcing not only their un-Europeanness but also their temporal disconnection. Bradley Pecore, a visual historian of Menominee and Stockbridge Munsee descent, stated that "You can only be so American without Native Americans…For me, that's the reason it's in the Roosevelt memorial" (Fota 2019). He explains how Indigenous individuals were understood to be stuck in time and part of American history, not the American future. Pecore's reference to Roosevelt alluded to knowledge of Roosevelt's racist attitudes towards Native Americans. The "Old New York" scene offers "cultural hierarchy" not "cultural exchange" (Ibid.).

Contextualizing additions have been added to the diorama to correct the historical inaccuracies of the diorama and to demonstrate American Museum of Natural History's commitment to "reconsidering" its colonial past. In 2019, translucent placards have been placed at most egregious inaccuracies after twenty years of research and planning (Fota, 2019). At the top of the diorama's glass reads in large lettering: "Reconsidering the Scene" with subtext describing how the diorama is "incorrect" by modern social attitudes (Ibid.). Other texts contextualize original scene's narrative as a representation of 1930s American perspectives of European settler-colonialism. Additions to the diorama also incorporate Lenni-Lenape community voices and history. Narratives from a Lenni-Lenape elder describe the pain of displacement, and they contribute to correcting the historical inaccuracies and prejudices. The revisions hold the museum accountable and demonstrates that the museum is thinking critically about its role in colonialism and its

association with Roosevelt. The reimagined scene prompts visitors to reassess their assumed biases and encourages decolonial dialogues.

Another prominent example of American Museum of Natural History's intervention is the renovation and reimagining of the prominent hall in the museum is about Pacific Northwest Indigenous communities in North America. The Hall of the Pacific Northwest opened in 1899 and is one of the museum's first collections ("Northwest Coast Hall" 2022). It aims to educate visitors about the Indigenous tribes of Northwest Pacific Coast of United States and Canada and also examples AMNH's exploitation of Indigenous people. A brief history of the Hall's collections reveals that North Pacific Expedition in 1881 sanctioned by Museum President Jesup and led by Franz Boas, junior museum staffer and future-father of American anthropology contributed a large part of the thousands of artifacts in the Hall (Ibid.). Some of the objects were legally obtained by the Expedition team, but they also stole artifacts because they either did not pay for them or simply took them without permission (Nicolas and Wylie 2012, 29). While some of the artifacts are connected to a fraught history of exploitation and looting, the Hall, itself, was also problematic.[35]

The Pacific Northwest Coast was decorated murals of the Indigenous tribes that the Boas and the team interacted with on their expedition ("Northwest Coast Hall"). When they were first painted, the murals represented accurate depictions of the tribes. A more accurate description would be that they represented American attitudes towards

[35] In accordance with NAGPRA, AMNH has repatriated 1,850 culturally sensitive objects to Indigenous Americans. Arthur Lubow, "Museum of Natural History's Renewed Hall Holds Treasures and Pain," The New York Times (The New York Times, May 5, 2022), https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/05/arts/design/museum-natural-history-indigenous-art.html.

Indigenous North American tribes. The murals, like the "Old New York" diorama, depict Indigenous people as "noble savages" living in a highly stylized romanticized pre-industrial wilderness. This misrepresentation reinforces stereotypes of Indigenous people viewed as child-like, "primitive" and reminder of America's "simple past" as fact because it has been demonstrated that museum offers an objective knowledge. Incorrect tribal names also compound the visual misinformation (Ibid.). AMNH has renamed Northwest Coast Hall due to the inaccuracies and antiquated representations of Indigenous communities and because of the advanced age of the Hall itself. The Northwest Coast Hall prepares for its reopening in the upcoming days (Lubow 2022). The previews reveal a physical modernized hall and confronts the Hall's colonial past. Importantly, the updated Hall highlight AMNH's on-going collaboration with Northwest Indigenous communities. A completely new section of the Hall celebrates their community in the present with the introduction of an ever-changing exhibit of contemporary topics (Ibid.).

The offending "historical dirt" has become an anomaly which threatened the stability and the legitimacy of the system, AMNH (Gable and Handler 1993, 168).

> There are several ways of treating anomalies. Negatively, we can ignore them, just not perceive them, or perceiving them we can condemn. Positively[,] we can deliberately confront the anomaly and try to create a new pattern of reality in which it has a place" (Douglas 1984, 39).

AMNH is no longer ignoring or only condemning their anomalies, the stereotypical and antiquated portrayals of Indigenous peoples and the sanitization of European settler-colonialism. Rather, they are "deliberately confronting" them and creating a "new pattern of reality," decolonizing exhibits (Douglas 1984, 39). AMNH is cleaning its literal and metaphorical, "historical dirt" (Gabler and Handler 1993, 168).

The updates to the exhibits align with the museum's commitment to modernize while at the same time trying to remain authentic to itself as institution created at the height of American colonialism and anthropological colonialism. Rather than entirely removing the "offending dirt/anomalies" during renovations, the annotative texts and other alternations contextualize the inaccuracies while asking visitors to reflect on their past and their assumptions. As witnessed with the "Old New York" diorama, it retains the majority of its "'visual authenticity'" of AMNH 1930s history because none of the original components have been removed but instead, decolonizing actions have added to it, symbolizing how decolonizing is additive process rather than subtractive (Gable and Handler 1993, 5). Douglas explains how "As learning proceeds[,] objects are named….once labelled[,] they are more speedily slotted into pigeon-holes in the future" (1984, 37). The application of Douglas into the decolonizing methodology demonstrates the shifting temporal definition of "dirt." The anomalies do not become obfuscated but rather, "condemned," or more accurately in AMNH's case *identified* and then integrated into the new system. Assumptions of the previous structure are modified to make sense of the harmony (Douglas 1984, 37). Adoptions of decolonizing methodology can become second nature or the new *schema* (Douglas 1984, 37). Following this logic of recognition, AMNH's historicity or *schema* enables it to have methodological precedence for future, aspirational decolonizing endeavors.

Decolonizing has allowed AMNH to offer metacommentary on its past and its position as institution of knowledge production. AMNH's ability to balance its "dirt," entertainment factor, audience expectations and education reinforces how embodiments of decolonization are museum-specific. Similar to the Pitt Rivers Museum and the British

Museum, AMNH has not officially announced its adoption of decolonizing methodology, but this multi-million-dollar renovation of the Northwest Coast Hall evidences how AMNH understands "reconsidering" scenes and halls a worth while investment. The language of "reconsidering" also underscores how AMNH hopes to continue its relevancy into the future by drawing upon its historicity. The American Museum of Natural History emerges from its colonial origins, shifting its coloniality to its past and recommitting itself as educational and community space for all.

Part VI Decolonizing for Whom? Conversations with Smithsonian Staff

Section 6.01 Imperfect Aspirations

I return to the framing question of "for whom do museums decolonize?" because the question accepts as fact that a decolonized museum is oxymoronic. It also centers attention to a museum's goal of public education. This paper has also illustrated that museum staffers have called for decolonization efforts. So, "for whom is the process of decolonizing?" And how is a national museum complex like the Smithsonian attempting to implement change?

Dr. Bell spoke about the decolonizing process and its intended recipients.

> FB: Ok, so what about 'process'?
> JB: Who is the process for?
> FB: Yes, if that's a more effective way of framing the question.
> JB: I think the process is intended for *all parties*, obviously… I would say that it's about creating more equitable relations and the grounds for more equitable relations. And that's primarily for the community members, but it's also for us [museums]…I think it's about creating a *new culture shift.* That has profound implications…[I]t starts in the museum, but it also has wider implications… [I]t's not just us in the museum, that it is part of one *hopes* for wider, *societal shifts*. And it's also for the community [the subject group in a museum], right? It's about *equity*. It's about *creating more equitable relations,* so that it's dialogic as opposed to one sided (2022).[36]

Dr. Isaac shared an equally hopeful view.

> GI: I would *hope* for *everyone*. I would be concerned if the process of decolonization wasn't. …There are specific communities that have been the subject of colonial violence and power imbalance that are asking for a change. So *decolonizing is first and foremost, to meet their needs, and to redress these power balance issues*. But I think if anyone in a museum thought that they would lose something through that process, that is their loss. I think you *gain* something through the renegotiation of your relationship, both with that community, with your own history, and with how you then move forward in the ability to tell that history from more

[36] Author's italicization.

> than one perspective…As people get to understand the concept of decolonization and the role of the museums and how this can have benefits, then people will also say, 'I'm interested.' As someone [a visitor] who's not even necessarily from one of the communities says, 'I'm interested, I want to know more, and I want to learn about maybe my community's role or my cultures' role…(Isaac, 2022). [37]

Similarly, the Smithsonian Staffer wrote in her email:

> SS: Decolonizing movements are deeply intertwined with community and institutional memory in museums. Many of the pushes on museums have been to acknowledge, rethink, and/or change the museum's historically (and sometimes currently) fraught relationship with the communities of origin of their collections… *Ultimately, decolonizing of the museum should be decolonizing for the communities and other audiences who have not been served, represented, or acknowledged by the museum throughout its history*" (2022).[38]

The decolonizing process is for "everyone" because decolonization aims to have a "societal shift" not only an academic one, and does not have to be a narrative of loss, trauma and pain (Bell 2022). It can offer a path to healing and reconciliation for marginalized communities like Indigenous communities and former colonial populations. Decolonizing also helps people "gain" more insight about their assumed heritages (Isaac 2022). The Smithsonian staffer and Dr. Isaac stressed how decolonization is a process primarily for "communities and other audiences who have not been served, recognized or acknowledged by the museum throughout its history" and this process allows for these unserved communities to have their needs met and "redress power issues" (Isaac 2022; Smithsonian staffer 2022). Decolonization is about de-centering the West as the universal epistemological system and including other systems of knowledge productions as equals rather than "alternative," which suggests inferiority. Decolonization offers a more complete narrative of history because it does not rely on one knowledge source; it allows

[37] Author's italicization.
[38] Author's italicization.

for multivocal narratives and truths. Many of objects in the natural-ethnographic museum are tangible examples of colonial abuse, and serve as rallying points for the decolonizing movement.

The use of "hope" by Dr. Bell and Dr. Isaac also demonstrates how museum staffers exercising their agency within their institution to advocate for and help change. Decolonization is ultimately a hopeful endeavor, aimed to improve the experience of visitors, especially those who have been historically neglected, and foster better knowledge production. Appadurai explains how "aspiration" and "hope" are often enjoyed by the privileged individuals rather than "marginalized" because marginalized communities do not have access to the same advantages of more privileged classes; the application of hope in the museum context aims to rectify class inequity (2004, 67). Decolonization wants to dismantle the barriers that discriminate and discourage groups and individuals from participating in the museum as a whole, again, highlighting the intersection of class with decolonization efforts. Decolonization as the embodiment of hope empowers the marginalized because hope demonstrates that the marginalized groups have the agency to change their situation and future (Appadurai 2004, 70). Hope provides the temporal framework for present and future decolonial aims. Just as hope transcends temporal boundaries, my interviewees discuss how this concept of "objects as a third space" allows objects to physically transcend temporary boundaries (Bell 2022). "Objects as a third space" provides context and fosters more egalitarian collaborative environments between museum staff and partnered scholars and communities at the Smithsonian.

Section 6.02 Decolonizing at the Smithsonian:

> SS: "History and memory intersect in critical ways with museum objects, although historically in many museums, objects were sometimes orphaned from their history and memory and viewed as sort of 'sterilized' specimens…" (2022).

As part of the research for this paper, I interviewed Smithsonian staff about their experience at branches of the Smithsonian's older, more directly foundational natural-ethnographic museums. When I asked Dr. Bell and Dr. Isaac how memory and history interact with museum objects, they drew upon their work with the Recovering Voices Program at the National Museum of Natural History in partnership with the National Museum of the American Indian, the center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and the Asian Pacific American Center and other global communities. [39] The Recovering Voices program was established in 2009, and through multi-museum collaboration and public and community outreach, it aims to respond to language and knowledge loss around the world. In addition to "documenting, revitalizing and sustaining languages and the knowledge embedded in them" through current research projects, Recovering Voices also draws upon the Smithsonian's "diverse collections [of] archival, biological and cultural" materials ("Recovering Voices" 2022).

> GI: …[Recovering Voices is] a cultural revitalization program with the idea that we are working to, again, this is infrastructure that we want to change the structure of the museum. And one of the ways in terms of making it more accessible and more open to Indigenous communities. And the way we do that is we [the Smithsonian] provide funds for communities to come, and work on the collections. But they [Indigenous communities] pick the topic, they decide who comes. They put an application in, and they say, 'We have this idea, and we want to work on it.' But they pick from their community who comes…They spend time in the collections. We record everything [The Smithsonian provides resources for the communities.], and then they go home with the recordings. And then we try and kind of set up ongoing relationships with communities. If there's

[39] "Recovering Voices," Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, 2022), https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/recovering-voices.

> follow up, if there's projects people want to do based on that visit, that we can support them, but it's really trying to fund communities [outside of the academy] (2022).

Dr. Isaac's description illustrates how Indigenous scholars have agency over their research topics, and how the Smithsonian takes more a "hands off" approach to collection access and storage of the research. The Smithsonian also encourages long term relationships between the institution and the Indigenous communities and seek how to best offer support and funding for future endeavors. The values that drive Recovering Voices are in stark contrast to the Smithsonian's Bureau of American Ethnology. The Bureau of American Ethnology exploited Indigenous culture for the benefit of white academia and actively worked against forming relationships with Indigenous communities (Woodbury and Woodbury 1999, 284). Dr. Bell also recalled how Recovering Voices has connections to the Bureau of American Ethnology.

> JB: …The Smithsonian through Bureau of American Ethnology have been engaging with communities for better or worse. We [Smithsonian staffers] don't shy away from the worst, but do point out that a lot of the documentation, even though perhaps it was misguided…as in the salvage paradigm…[F]or me, Recovering Voices became a way of doing the sort of decolonial work that we're now talking about more overtly, while also *recognizing that decolonization at some levels is never possible*. And that really what we're doing is establishing better relations are renewing relations with communities to kind of facilitate access…[I]t's the oldest new initiative, Arctic Studies, since the [19]80s, have been doing really important work. And so a lot of what we did was to kind of try to harness a lot of those energies, National Museum of the American Indian was a partner (2022).[40]

Dr. Bell highlighted how Recovering Voices owes its existence to the fraught collection of North American Indigenous languages from the BAE. Recovering Voices' mission is to revitalize, include members of non-white communities and academics and

[40] Author's italicization.

demonstrate how the Smithsonian can "unofficially" engage in decolonizing processes. Yet, despite its diversifying actions, Recovering Voices will be intrinsically attached to colonial era Smithsonian research practices and data collection. Recovering Voices, as Dr. Bell said, has shown that "decolonization at some levels is never possible" hence the overarching goal of a decolonized museum is oxymoronic (2022).

Section 6.03 The Impact of Memory and History on Museum Objects

> FB: How does the role of history and memory interact with museum objects?
>
> GI: I can tell you from my experience in Recovering Voices, that objects are really important…They help create these intergenerational and…sort of conceptual convening around ideas that often if *you don't have the object, the conversation is based on either text or just memory*…[T]he objects often bring to the table things that people maybe had forgotten, or that they knew were there…I also see that when the when the groups come in and talk about certain objects, how those objects go much beyond just the object. They start to also talk about the particular timeframe that that object came from…(2022).

Dr. Isaac relayed a story about collecting tree bark for basket weaving because while basket weaving is perceived as a woman's craft, husbands and sons are involved in the process (2022). Usually, the men in the family (fathers and brother) cut down the trees, and cut them into sections (Isaac 2022). They help pound the logs in preparation for them to be made into strips for the basket makers (Ibid.). This knowledge about men and boys' involvement would have been unknown since the traditional Euro-American categories decontextualize the object, removing its agency within a community. Similarly, Dr. Isaac talked about how a Manitoulin Island Anishinaabe community elder visited the NMNH shelves while discussing quill work found and maple syrup equipment.

> GI: …[He] got very excited about it. And the next thing you know, even though that wasn't part of the visit, this whole conversation around the actual reality of how *knowledge takes place in the community*, as opposed to the museum……And the fact that he resources the natural materials for his wife, who makes the quill work. He does the birch bark containers. He collects maple syrup; he collects the quills, the porcupine quills, all this kind of stuff. His knowledge of the environment was really important. But you don't get to know [this knowledge], if you're a researcher, and you're going through the collections. You're with these European categories of like, musical instruments (2022).

From this spontaneous find, the elder placed the museum objects into sets of relations within the community. The elder's find underscored how Euro-American categories appear to arbitrarily place objects into categories based on Euro-American expectations and assumptions rather than storing and archiving objects based on their cultural origins. The ability for individuals to holistically share the knowledge about these objects reveals the intersection of memory and history. Dr. Isaac also recalled how objects also can physically transcend time and have their own agency in the decolonizing process.

> GI: … Objects will be these really interesting agents of change. Because they've kind of sit quietly for generations…[W]e [museums] think we're holding on to the object, so that they get to espouse our perspective. But you have to wonder whether actually, the objects are actually sitting there quietly waiting for others… The objects have a power of making it beyond more than one time period... …[L]ayering of all the different things that goes into what how they mean does give them power, and I think people really understand that, and therefore, they want to certain extent control the narrative or the ownership or whatever. Museums are always going to be in the middle of that, because they are the ones that that put objects into long term sustained frame, so they're always gonna have to deal with it. Never gonna change unless you get rid of museums (Isaac 2022).

In a similar vein, Dr. Bell discussed his work in the Purari Delta in New Guinea where he worked with community elders to do memory work with heritage materials, such as old photographs from bygone days (2022).

> JB: …And those photographs create this kind of *third space* in which people can point to things talk about, and all sorts of unexpected…For me, history is, the story we tell ourselves and memory is, of course, also the stories we tell ourselves, but perhaps is the more active engagement is one way of thinking about it. Memories, of course, and history are faulty, and so one always runs into issues where there is the perception of injustice or more violence that may or may not have been present, or that those acts of violence and injustice have been forgotten (2022).[41]

While history and memory can lead to very joyous celebrations of traditions and cultures, they can also remind people of the hardship and abuse of the past. Memory and history become part of intergenerational trauma. Both Dr. Bell and Dr. Isaac explained how memory and history are contested and they actively shape identity construction for communities and individuals. Dr. Isaacs referenced how unexpected conversations have also led to conversations about pain and trauma at residential schools and museums' need to recognize that "history of memory is not over" and healing is needed (2022). Objects as a "third space" allow evoke powerful feelings because they can directly reference colonial trauma.

> JB: …Coming into museum spaces, can reawaken, or create grounds for the confrontation around these events…I've seen people cry, get very angry, upset…[A]s someone from, the unmarked category of white male, that is very upsetting, and being a representative of these museums…I do not enjoy either being the brunt of people's anger, and, or having to witness their sorrow. I think it's important to experience both, but it's not a fun aspect of the job. It's a part of the job that I fully acknowledge needs to be done, in my view, that has some interesting impacts in the discipline. I think with all these things, you have to face the good and the bad face on it and be open and honest about it (2022).

> GI: …Recovering Voices really changed for me this ability to think with museum objects about history and memory… [I]t changes it from an individual talking about an object and shifted [to] resituating recontextualizing it in the historical documents, and shifted it into this really interesting conversation about how things mean within the community and how all the different networks of people and how that is still meaningful…*History and Memory also can be about loss and the*

[41] Author's italicization.

> *need for healing*…I have that also woven through all the work that I do, and how to honor that, how to work with that, and make it so that there is a *responsibility for the museum to recognize that and that history of memory is not over*…I think in some ways, so much of what we do in these museum projects is have to deal with the fact that this is history, that's not over (Isaac, 2022).[42]

Dr. Bell also exampled how museum collections serve as a "third space" for the creation of museum and community relationships. Dr. Bell and I talked about how some methods of ensuring more equal collaborations between museum and communities is the creation and maintenance of relationships and friendships.[43] He talked about a Smithsonian collection Hawaiian canoe scanning project, and how he along with his team work with Hawaiian and Māori (due to shared cultural history between Hawaiian and Māori cultures) scholars. The canoe had been a gift from Queen Kapiolani in 1887. One of the Hawaiian scholars, Ray, addressed the canoe in Hawaiian, so the canoe would be "greeted" and receptible to the rest of the team and placed a lei over it as a "welcoming gift from home" (Bell 2022). Ray also gave the canoe a new paddle since the original had been dissociated and lost during its long history, and there is a Hawaiian belief that a canoe without a paddle could invite restless spirits to settle in the canoe. Dr. Bell also noted that the canoe, unlike other Smithsonian objects, was not associated with colonial trauma because Queen Kapiolani had gifted it to the United States with educational intentions. In the spirit of the gift, Dr. Bell explained how the canoe should continue to "both educate people about canoes but also about Hawaii, cultural resilience [and]

[42] Author's italicization.

[43] Frances Barranco and Joshua Bell. MA Paper Interview with Dr. Joshua Bell. Personal, February 3, 2022.

continuity…" (2022). The canoe can maintain as a reciprocal gift of education and cross-cultural connections. In other words, friendship was one of the main results of this collaboration.

> FB: …So do you feel that [those are] typical museum interactions? Or is this part of the new decolonizing face of museum studies or just museum work?
>
> JB: Yeah, I mean, I think it [decolonizing] varies for everyone. I think a lot of people, when done well that happens, but it usually comes out organically…Now, a lot of staff are, perhaps, more aware and open to it…I don't want to kind of make a grand pronouncement. But it's certainly the end goal is to have, but it also raises this issue for staff and for the communities... From your own friendships, friendships go through periods of activity and dormancy. The same thing happens with these museum focused relationships…[L]ike the stuff around the canoe, it kind of slowed down as people have been dealing with the [Covid-19] pandemic, etc. But I think, you know, ideally, these sorts of relationships happen…Speaking very frankly, …it's really hard to maintain at a very high level, these sorts of relations. There's always that question of how sustainable it is. And what is possible and what is realistic, and sometimes relationships need to come to an end. *Projects end and one moves on both for the community and for ourselves* (Bell 2022).[44]
>
> JB: …One thing I would add is, I think there is an issue in that one does need to be very open and conscious of the fact that one is not replicating or creating new [inequalities]. The nature of the relations in that: how this impacts [you]. Are you, reinscribing inequality through what you're doing? Or is that actually coming out of a place of equity? What are the power dynamics? I think one of the key things is just this constant checking and making sure that you [museum staffer] are not replicating inequality in the relationship. That's definitely important, and that's hard to do. Yeah, it's just about being reflexive (Bell, 2022).

Although relationships and friendships between museums and communities develop because of projects, they sometimes only last because of the shared activity, and can fluctuate depending on need and interactions. Dr. Bell shared advice for accepting the fact that these partnerships do not always last beyond the shared project, and "moving

[44] Author's italicization.

on" is part of the natural process. The community should not feel beholden to the museum for its collaboration because such relationship is reminiscent of the asymmetrical dynamics of colonizer/colonized and research/researched relationship and gaze (Haraway 1988, 581). Likewise, the museum must understand that the community may have other projects and priorities other than the museum's interest. The community can act independently from the museum because it does not exist to fulfill museum research queries. The relationship does not need to be forced. Rather, the communities and the museum can come to and depart from projects as equals.

Dr. Bell explained how the anthropological museum has been grappling with debates of decolonization more frequently and directly than other subfields of the discipline.

> JB: The discipline [anthropology] has created this situation where there's this effort to disavow colonial histories, because anthropology is deeply implicated by the colonial endeavor and is continually; however, there are colleagues who decide to work [on]…the latest trend…and the thought is that they are somehow at the cutting edge of the discipline. And what that allows them to is to not deal with the messiness that I've just been talking about with you [decolonization processes]. And then it then those of us who have to deal with it, because of our jobs [museum staffers]…There's this marginalization… (2022).

Dr. Bell analogized museum anthropologists to sanitation workers because in his mind, museum anthropologists and sanitation workers must manage society's "literal and metaphor crap" and by extension are implicated with the original source of the "dirt." This dirt is the same "historical dirt," anthropology's culpability in colonialism and imperialism and the dissemination of racialized knowledge through museums, that which natural history museums deal (Gabler and Handler 1994, 168). He argued that all anthropologists, regardless of their subfield, must work towards the larger goal of

decolonizing anthropology. Therefore, unlike natural-ethnographic museums, anthropology has not *yet* "deliberately confronted" its "anomalies" in the process of reforming its *schema* (Douglas 1984, 37, 39). Museums wrongfully become the pariahs of anthropology for wanting to confront the "original sin" of colonialism (Bell 2022).

> JB: …So what happens is museums and being marginalized. Yet, actually, *museums are at the core of our discipline*. *It's where the origins of the discipline are,* for better or worse…Reclamation and repair in the discipline are actually happening in museums…I would argue that the rest of the discipline, and I don't mean to denigrate people [are in other fields of anthropology]. But I do notice there's this kind of, because we have to get in and get messy and deal with the legacy of our [anthropological] ancestors…[The] museum has profound implications… (Bell 2022).

Dr. Bell's comments suggest that museums are more directly implicated in colonial legacies compared to other branches of anthropology because decolonization is not an academic exercise to be indulged in but rather an academic necessity. Museums, founded on their anthropological methodologies, are knowledge construction and reification of knowledge and shape theories and social attitudes that shape people's perspectives of the world. Decolonization demands that scholars understand their world in dimensions and sets of relationships.

Part VII Aspirations for a more Decolonized Future

I return to the classroom of my Decolonizing Museums class. It is the end of term, and my professor posed the last question: “What would a decolonized museum look like?” Some students described museums with acephalous leadership, governed by a diverse panel of members as to remove issues of hierarchy and other bias. Others explained how museums would repatriate all the human remains and fraught objects to their descendant communities because repatriation would be the closest action to correcting wrongs. Another student said that museums would focus on the community they serve rather than attempting to compile a world history. The most striking response from someone in the room suggested that a decolonized museums will change so much, it would be beyond our current recognition for a museum. It would retain few collections and have knowledge continuously cycling from community to museum. Eventually museums would cease to exist to their increasingly strained relationship to their colonial legacy, because only then, we could fully decolonize a museum. A decolonized natural-ethnographic museum does not exist. Certainly, the cessation of museums will not occur in the next few years, nor in the next twenty years, but change has arrived. The force is there. Decolonization is permeating the marble halls, the display cases, the rows of archives and board rooms. It is inspiring change. The hope for decolonizing museums has yet to fully reveal its intentions, but the natural-ethnographic museum is becoming more self-aware of its colonial heritage. The natural-ethnographic museum field hopefully pushes itself through this metamorphosis.

Natural-ethnographic museums across the world are facing a reckoning because the public is awakening to recognizing and challenging neocolonial institutions and their

influence over everyday encounters. The natural-ethnographic museum can never be fully separated from its colonial foundations, nor should it be because decolonizing will not erase and trauma. Erasure and ignoring colonial abuses would only continue the colonial practice of sanitizing history. Decolonizing does not have to dwell on trauma either because only focusing on the pain and suffering of a group can retraumatize the group, and evoke a spiral of guilt from the former colonial power. Decolonizing as described and evaluated in this paper is imperfect. Guilt and pain are subtractive. Decoloniality hopes to inspire a plethora of voices, narrative and rich histories. The Smithsonian's commitments to change seeks to usher in reconciliations and a celebration of heritages and narratives. Even if the Smithsonian does not overtly label its methodologies as "decolonizing," it is clear from their actions and aspirations that the Smithsonian is entering a more comprehensive, maturing decolonizing phase. The National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture are admirable examples of the Smithsonian's capacity to decolonize, and they set the national precedence for what decolonizing museums can be. Yet for all their perfection, they are incomplete since the Smithsonian must ensure decolonizing methodology extends to the museum as the workplace.

Although the #MeToo Movement did not have as much of an impact as expected, decolonizing methodology can continue the fight for workplace equity. Continuing demands for restructuring and workplace safety help to dismantle the museum as a place of trauma and pain. The museum as a whole can foster a safe, creative environment -- not only in niches. A decolonizing museum would ensure that staff, regardless of their positionalities, are treated with dignity and respect, and are physically and mentally safe

from harassment. A decolonizing museum would also ensure that visitors receive a more accurate interpretation of collections through proper labeling and organization. An object is not reduced to one "objective" perspective but rather it can be understood through its web of contextualized connections. The American Museum of Natural History, likewise, is also reassessing its encyclopedic gaze.

The American Museum of Natural History is in the process of decolonizing by offering visitors to "reconsider" some of the more antiquated and directly colonial aspects of the museum through their annotative diorama and completed renovations of the Northwest Coast Hall along with their partnerships with Indigenous communities and scholars, but they are still wrestling with the complicated legacy and connection to Theodore Roosevelt. AMNH is ambivalent to publicly critique Roosevelt's racist attitudes. I hope that AMNH's actions of icon*clash* of the *Equestrian Statue* acts as a preview of more collection-based and administrative interventions to come.[45] Even though AMNH is slow to confront Roosevelt, the removal of the statue suggests a more nuanced attitudes.

A permanent exhibit about "Reconsidering Theodore Roosevelt" (borrowing the language from "Old New York's" Reconsidering the Scene) would allow AMNH to draw upon its narratives of historicity and hope while supporting their implicit mission to decolonize and their explicit commitment to education, community engagement and diversity. The exhibit can exercise balance between Roosevelt's historical dirt and mythos because it could offer a tempering perspective for the created ultra-conservative,

[45] Further research is needed to accurately describe potential areas for decolonizing AMNH administration.

rugged individualistic Roosevelt of the Badlands and the equally crafted persona of the jovial, blustering gentleman scholar Roosevelt.

This tempered version of Roosevelt could would need to consider people's preexisting conceptions of, affinity for and dislike of Roosevelt because it cannot appear to endorse bias. The goal is to teach a more accurate version of Roosevelt instead of shaming someone's perception. The examples can vary because AMNH understands its attraction as a family and child-oriented museum, so the examples do not have uncover all the "historical dirt" about Roosevelt, but rather, this exhibit could serve as germ of critical thought. The contradictory examples would teach visitors about Roosevelt's complexities and encourage critical thought about historical figures, supporting AMNH's mission to educate and foster critical thinking. The "Reconsidered Theodore Roosevelt" exhibit would act as another example of decolonizing methodology at AMNH another opportunity to offer metacommentary on its history and "situated knowledge," stemming from previous interventions (Haraway 1988, 581).

A truly decolonized encyclopedic museum will never exist to its foundations in Euro-American colonialism. Yet, there is no need for disappointment. A decolonizing museum accepts its uncanny existence as fact. It works towards countering racism, sexism and phobia of queer communities. The museum embraces self-awareness, reflexivity, and the multiplicity of epistemologies and histories. Maybe, as my peer suggested, the encyclopedic museum will disappear as the legacy of colonial approaches an infinitely smaller "decolonizing zero." But for now, decolonizing museum visitors can experience the wonders and import of the world. People can take pride in their cultural exhibitions and feel authentically represented. The natural history-ethnographic museum

can be a place for community education by the community *and* for the community. A decolonized natural-ethnographic museum is an oxymoron, but it does not have to be beholden to its colonial heritage.

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