

# 1882 Symposium VI



May 14-15, 2018

I Street Conferencing Center

600 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC



## 1882 SYMPOSIUM VI - May 14-15, 2018 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ted Gong, Executive Director



Six years after the first 1882 Symposium, this year's symposium in 2018 marked a juncture between the 1882 Foundation establishing itself among a national network of stakeholders and positioning itself to draw from their collaborative power. It was appropriate that Director of Smithsonian APA Center Lisa Sasaki opened with a confident forward look at the Center's agenda to "empower the Asian Pacific Islander community" by being a "catalyst for changing the American narrative" in 2019 and beyond.

Stepping forward also guided 1882 Program Director John Kusano in moderating panels on heritage tours –the concepts and operations of which had been discussed since the Wing Luke Museum's Pacific Northwest tour in 2010. Although questions of sustainability and marketing for heritage-themed programs continue (also discussed by Tourism Manager Donny Leadbetter of the National Park Service and Shirley Higuchi from Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation), a recurring question of responsibility specific to the California tours was resolved by the 1882 Foundation assuming stronger coordination and operational roles with the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service. A Summit Tunnel tour will be incorporated into the APIAHiP's 2018 conference in San Francisco and calculated to be prelude to further collaborations around the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad (TRR) in May 2019.

At long last, a heritage tour was being implemented, and it had emerged from relationships nurtured over several years among the 1882 Symposium participants. These included Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs (APAPA), the US-China Railroad Friendship Association, and the Railroad Museum who partnered to make the tour possible. Key factors were to think long-term, be broadly

inclusive, and build lasting collaborations through measurable shared activities.

In examining the issues of sustainability, other issues arose. Rick Eng and Davace Chin from Chinese American Citizens Alliance, along with Munson and Suellen Kwok from the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California described efforts to register historic places, map California heritage tours, and uncover neglected rural Chinatowns in Central California.

They discussed variations of tours and raised questions of appropriateness to districts surrounded by rural settings where thriving Chinatowns (evidenced by abandoned cemeteries) have either disappeared or are rapidly becoming lost such as at Fresno and Hanford. The Wing Luke model of heritage tours may not provide the sustained attention and resources needed to preserve these places, which is our underlying goal.

Considerations of their social-historic circumstances raise questions about studies of "Chinatowns" based on premises that the scope of these studies be kept within urban boundaries and social interactions within them. For places like Fresno, a "Montana Road Show" that was first introduced by the Forest Service in Symposium IV may be more suitable. This model calls for broadly working with local historical and commercial entities. Another approach is to work with community educators through workshops at which national or state organizations add expertise and stature to local efforts. This might also fit the APAC wall-less approaches to public education through traveling exhibits and workshops.

The afternoon session continued with calls for meaningful steps. Barbara Wyatt from the Department of Interior highlighted a conclusion from the long-awaited AAPI Theme Study to register landmarks and places, such as the

C.A.C.A. building in San Francisco. National President Davace Chin and Munson Kwok described current efforts. Xiaoyan Zhang offered a new on-line tool supported by the United Chinese Americans to identify and record places on a national timeline. This led into discussions about being aware of and using apps by other organizations and the 1882 network. The “50 Objects Project” on the Tenement Museum’s “Your Story, Our Story” platform illustrated the effectiveness of this collaborative approach. 1882 Director Ali Smith, Smithsonian FLCHC Curator Sojin Kim, and Tenement Museum Program Manager Julia Mushalko discussed the project. Its success contributed to the Museum of Chinese in America deciding to create an exhibit called “A Gathering of Chinese Historical Societies” explained by Herb Tam and Andrew Rebatta from MOCA.

The second day of the symposium focused on issues and approaches to teaching about race, religion, and civil rights. 1882 Education Director Ting-yi Oei moderated. Andrea Neighbors of Smithsonian APA Center, Katie Orr of National Park Service, Michael Hussey of National Archives, Megan Springate of Department of Interior and Deborah Menkart from the Zinn Education Project each provided examples from their work. They engaged participants in lively exchanges about the need to have broad perspectives, consider intersectionality, think about the “missing” and “unspoken,” and recognizing restrictions caused by classroom standards accepted uncritically for years.

In between the two day-sessions, the evening reception at Studio Xfinity was filled with substance. Moderated by Ali Smith under the theme of “Owning Space and Telling Stories,” Mei Lum of New York’s “Wong On Wo Project” recounted how a 93-year old business became both a space for cultural preservation and for resistance to Chinatown gentrification. Chris Lu, former U.S. Deputy Secretary for Labor, received the Spirit of America Award

from C.A.C.A. He observed that knowing history and preserving historical/cultural sites are important to counter racial injustices today. 1882 Foundation Director Ted Gong closed with a call to leverage the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad to organize programs and activities throughout the year and encourage Asian Americans to step onto center stage “from invisible to visible,” a theme coined by Sui Wong and Carolyn Chan from the Chinese Cultural Center in Albuquerque.

**A NOTE OF THANKS** – This year’s symposium owes everything to its many supporters, volunteers, interns, and advisors. Foremost among them are Conference Coordinator Ali Smith and Conference Recorder Jennifer Sugijanto. Key financial support and professional advice came from the Chinese American Citizens Alliance and Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. We are grateful for Studio Xfinity and Gould Properties providing space for our conference and reception, and for La Colombe Coffee for keeping us hydrated and happy throughout the two days. And, of course, the enthusiastic participation of speakers and presenters who volunteered their extensive knowledge and valuable time to travel to DC and exchange ideas at the symposium is always special.

**NEXT YEAR**— The symposium will be held at the Smithsonian American History Museum, coordinated with activities there and at the U.S. Postal Museum to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad. Mark your calendars for May 10, 2019.



[##1882SymposiumVIWrapUpForward//12/01/18](https://twitter.com/1882SymposiumVIWrapUpForward)

## **SESSIONS 1 & 2: HERITAGE TOURS – VARIATIONS ON A THEME – DIVERSITY THROUGH TOURISM**

*Donny Leadbetter, Tourism Manager National Park Service; Shirley Higuchi, Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation; Rick Eng, Chinese American Citizens Alliance; Suellen Kwok, Chinese American Citizens Alliance; John Kusano, 1882 Foundation*

**The concept of “Heritage Tours” has evolved since Symposium I and the original US Forest Service’s Pacific Northwest tours with the Wing Luke Museum. There have been continuous efforts to map tours in Northern and Southern California and Nevada, developments of self-guided tours through a website at CHSA, and discussions with tourist industry about self-sustaining tours and travel promotion.**



Donny Leadbetter explained that the National Park Service (NPS) has many programs and ways to protect the lands they are charged with. Although the NPS does not run itself as a tourism entity, it uncovers stories and organizes content for tourism to build upon. NPS can act as a connector and facilitator between tourism and what the parks have to offer.

Shirley Higuchi from the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation described the issues of “heritage sites” and their multi-purposes. Still dependent on Nisei-led pilgrimages and taking pride in barracks and museum at Heart Mountain as an interpretive center, questions arise about future preservation efforts when current generations pass away and storytelling by former detainees and their children are gone

or when artifacts connected with the Heart Mountain experience are auctioned off.

Shirley noted the importance of expanding national media coverage and of “generalizing” the message to ensure relevancy to current and future generations. She saw needs to develop programing geared to K-12 grades and spoke about virtual tours and collaboration with Japanese government to tap tourists from Japan.

According to Donny, tourism is among the top three employers of each state, both for domestic travelers (growing at 2 percent a year with Asian Americans becoming the largest market) and international tourists, with visits to national parks and monuments attracting a third of the 76 million overseas visitors in 2016, three million of whom came from China.

Chinese visitors illustrate tourism trends –of more repeat travel, going to secondary and tertiary tourist sites, avoidance of pre-packaged tours, and “just-in-time” tourism due to new technology. “Heritage tours” provide the uniqueness sought by many travelers, but the travel industry lacks awareness for promotion and marketing. Providing quality heritage tours may be a niche service for the 1882 Foundation.

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***What people are looking for is a sense of place when they travel... A sense of history, a sense of heritage, something they can connect with.”***

*--Donny Leadbetter, National Park Service*

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Rick Eng, with the Chinese American Citizens Alliance and the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, began exploring remote places 7 years ago on his own. The process uncovered and documented historical sites that can become parts of heritage tours. These include the China House within the Inland Empire of East Los Angeles and at remote desert towns such as where “Seldom Seen Slim” worked. Other visits include to the Channel Islands and Monterey Bay to view fisheries and abalone processing areas. The Golden Spike Conference at Salt Lake City and

Promontory Point will bring attention to other sites along the way, including most prominently the Summit Tunnel.

However, having identified such sites, the issue becomes funding and galvanizing public awareness to preserve them. Week-long Heritage tours of the Wing Luke model may not be the best model. This can be seen at sites such as



Fresno mentioned by historian Suellen Kwok in her search of the C.A.C.A. national archives.

Fresno clearly had a significant and large Chinatown based on membership records and activity reports. This is supported by remnants of an “underground Chinatown” and the large Chinese cemetery at the edge of Fresno’s West Side. Both are neglected and in disrepair. There remains a Chinese Benevolent Association hall once the central venue for cultural and holiday events, but the building now is little used, subject to vandalism, and under sale.

The disappearance of Fresno Chinatown is not caused by gentrification as we know it in San Francisco, New York, and DC. Indeed, the Chinatown spaces in Fresno are underdeveloped commercially and, in certain locations, vacant. The disappearance of these sites appears to be the consequence of the heirs of the Fresno Chinatown community moving away and gradually losing awareness that there is anything worthwhile to preserve.

This does not mean that there is no longer any interest in preserving and celebrating heritage. Rather, the activities and annual cultural events that serve to reinforce heritage have shifted locus to the city of Visalia 45 miles south of Fresno. There, an active Chinese community center is well-supported, and it has affinities to China Alley, a registered historic site in nearby Hanford—an illustration of the value of national recognition.

Fresno’s considerable significance in Chinese American history lacks local champions to preserve it and lacks public reminders that come from sites being listed on historic registers or as monuments. Memories of Fresno Chinatown are now scattered throughout the Central Valley among its sons and daughters. *Their* sons and daughters will not have the same memories and the physical remnants of Chinatown in Fresno continue to waste away rapidly.



Under these circumstances, a heritage tour to Fresno may spark interest in historic preservation momentarily; but, without a documented “there” valued by local preservationists, a tour would be a transitory exercise and not very interesting. A more impactful option may be the “Montana Road Show” explained in previous 1882 Symposiums. This model broadens the appeal of touring one community’s heritage by packaging it with others into a trade promotion and investment event. Significantly, Fresno is important historically for many Asian Americans, including today for Hmong Americans whose national gathering at the Fresno Fairgrounds each year is larger and larger.

“Road Shows” assign responsibility for organizing them to entities such as Chambers of Commerce or trade

promotion groups. Within their commercially-driven events, educational programs have room to highlight and promote heritage and sites that may become permanently identified, perhaps as “monuments” in line with the recently released Department of Interior’s APPI Theme Study.

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***To be listed, a site needs historic context, comparison with others in the nation to prove its national significance in a certain period, and its appearance to be of historic integrity.*** –DOI, AAPI Theme Study

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John Kusano described heritage tours as public/private partnerships to engage APIA communities. He recalled the first tour organized as a Forest Service partnership with the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle in 1994 and again in 2010. These were organized as 2-week long bus trips with Park historians and contracted scholars to historical sites –mines, railroad construction camps, herbal shops-- of the 1800s. The 1994 tour traveled from Seattle, through Idaho and Oregon. The 2010 tour stretched from Seattle to Virginia City.

Later, under the 1882 Foundation’s encouragement, the Forest Service (FS) tried to duplicate the Wing Luke tours in California and Nevada while trying to establish a process of making tours routine and commercially sustainable. The early efforts stumbled on questions like those raised at Japanese historic internment sites --although tours to Chinese American sites can be organized unquestionably as “one off” pilgrimages, making them routine and appealing to tourism faced doubts about commercial viability and concerns from museums that their involvement in organizing tours was outside their mission scope. These were functions for travel agencies.

This situation led to a new tact, and FS partnered with Chinese Historical Society of America on the “Explore APA Heritage” website from which individual travelers can download self-guided tours. The website now, according to Hilda Kwan who oversaw its creation on behalf of FS, includes over 60 guides. Many of them were submitted by the Chinese

American Citizens Alliance of Los Angeles and Chinese Historical Society of Southern California.

It also led to the 1882 Foundation taking a stronger coordinating role and closer partnership with FS. Working with Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs (APAPA) in Sacramento and the Chinese Railroad Workers Descendants Association, Chinese American Citizens Alliance and other associations that have included at times Asian American Studies Program at Sacramento State University and the Railroad Museum, and others, the 1882 Foundation organized a heritage bus/train tour to railroad work sites from Sacramento to Reno, particularly of the Summit Tunnel. The tour will be attached to the national conference of the Asian Pacific Islander Americans in Historical Preservation (APIAHiP) in San Francisco November 10 -13, 2018



### **SESSION 3 – FINANCES TRUMP EVERYTHING, BUT MOVING FORWARD**

***Barbra Wyatt, Department of Interior; Davace Chin National President Chinese American Citizens Alliance; Munson Kwok, Chinese American Citizens Alliance; Hilda Kwan, U.S. Forest Service; Xiaoyan Zhang, United Chinese***

***American, moderated by Franklin Odo, Amherst College and 1882 Foundation Academic Advisor***

**Among topics covered in this session, Barbara Wyatt of the Department of Interior spoke about two National Park Service (NPS) programs --National Historic Landmarks and National Register of Historic Places. There are close to 2,600 Historic Landmarks and nearly 100,000 national register listings, but there are few APIA sites, most of which are Japanese American internment sites.**

The AAPI Theme Study commissioned by the Department of Interior and edited by Franklin Odo of Amherst College and Senior Advisor for the 1882 Foundation, sought to increase the number of APIA historic registrations by reviewing the complicated and broad Asian American history and determining an approach to evaluate sites for inclusion into national registries. To be listed, a site needs historic context, comparison with others in the nation to prove its national significance in a certain period, and its appearance to be of historic integrity.

For State Historic Preservation Offices and local entities, NPS grants may help. These include "Under-represented Community Grants," which have benefited Utah and California in their theme studies. Los Angeles and San Francisco also initiated their own surveys of APIA sites. The Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant has been supporting national historic listings for past 7 or 8 years.

Munson Kwok of Chinese American Citizens Alliance observed that the Alliance has been supporting APIAHIP efforts to identify sites and their historic significance. The stories behind the sites are the most important and, in the Chinese American context, the stories are ones of exclusion. After identifying railroad sites and gold mines in a "feel good story" of nation building, "what happens after the job is done?" asked Munson. "We need the sites to certify our civil rights as Americans."

In listing its SF headquarters building, National President for the Chinese American Citizens Alliance Davace Chin noted the importance of working with SHPO, gaining support from local land owners, and knowing the city rules,

plus having funds (expected to be up to \$20,000 for a consultant's report). The site should be ready for listing in three years in time for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building's construction.

Hilda Kwan, from the US Forest Service, described the "Explore APA Heritage" website created with Chinese Historical Society of America. Rick and Munson had contributed to drafting information on many of the sites on that platform. Rick would like the site to be further strengthened for mobile



devices, and the website become a lynchpin for an interactive and continuously growing network of visitor points and museums. Other apps add educational value such as Xiaoyan Zhang's new program supported nationally by the United Chinese Americans (UCA). The platform allows for individuals to upload photos and reviews onto a digital timeline from 1796 to 2018. The timeline and process will be officially unveiled at a UCA conference in September 2018.

**SESSION 4 – 50 OBJECTS PROJECT: ENGAGING DIGITAL STORYTELLING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS**

***Julia Mushalko, Tenement Museum; Sojin Kim, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage; Ali Smith, 1882 Foundation***

**At the end of the last symposium, the 1882 Foundation entered into a partnership with Lower East Side Tenement Museum to submit 50 stories related to the Chinese American experience the museum's newly established "Your Story, Our Story (YSOS)" platform.**

Julia Mushalko from the museum explained the museum had started the platform "to connect past and present immigrants and to help define the meaning of being

American” through digital images of objects about which short stories are told. Since YSOS started two years ago,



over 3,500 stories have been compiled, including the 50 Chinese American Stories the 1882 Foundation had committed to gathering from around the country.

Sojin Kim of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and Ali Smith to led the 1882 Foundation’s “50 Objects Project.” Sojin noted similar projects by the British Museum and the Smithsonian. “50 Objects of Japanese American Incarceration” brought attention to objects in museums and personal collections. With contributions from over 20 regions –including family heirlooms, personal documents, and holdings and pieces of art from isolated museums and neighborhood historical societies—the shape of Asian American history (often considered nonexistent) takes form. These digital collections prove there is more for collaborations and partnerships to uncover for preservation.

Recording images for the sake of preserving artifacts is an objective. The objective is also to preserve the story for which the image of an object –however ordinary or unique—acts only as a prompt. Julia observed these stories fill gaps between what can be said about artifacts which themselves must be limited to what can be displayed physically within museums. Thus, the role of curating or interpreting images and their descriptions remains as important as curating artifacts, even though digital collections of objects and their stories are largely designed to be unedited to retain perspectives of submitters. Trained curators, however, can keep the facts of the stories and their emotional essence while crafting them into more affecting narratives with an historic context often unarticulated in individual submissions.

Ali Smith from the 1882 Foundation observed that the stories attached to objects are not meant to tell the entire

story but to give a brief snapshot or glimpse of human drama to make the history and its issues more relatable.

This can be seen in Stan Lou’s submission of an aged photo of one-room schoolhouse that he attended in Mississippi with other Chinese children during time of racial segregation. For Sui Wong, her image of porcelain tea cups, spoke about world war, the fall from Shanghai’s privileged society to forced migration eventually to New Mexico where the cups were too delicate to use in their daily lives. Terry Guen described a picture of dance shoes with golden heels to weave a story of four generations from an herbalist working on railroads in the 1870s to a Boston Chinatown mother who provided job training, health care and social services to the elderly.



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*Where does Chinatown end? What does it mean to be Chinese?*

*--Herb Tam, Museum of Chinese in America*

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**SESSION 5 – A GATHERING OF CHINESE HISTORICAL SOCIETIES**

**Herb Tam, Curator and Director of Exhibits, Museum of Chinese in America; Andrew Rebatta, Assistant Curator MOCA.**

**For its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) plans to organize an exhibition to highlight the breadth of the Chinese American history across the United States and efforts by communities to document their own experience. The exhibition will focus on the formation of organizations, historical societies and projects to archive and interpret Chinese American history.**

Starting with a survey, explained Herb Tam, MOCA seeks to define the scope and themes of “A Gathering of Chinese Historical Societies” exhibit tentatively scheduled to open April 2019. In the process of connecting with family and professional societies around the country, with individuals who know of associations that have disbanded, and with emerging associations such as UCA representing new immigrants, the exhibit will track change and continuity of the Chinese American experience over time.

The give-and-take in defining an “object” for the exhibition also defines Chinatown and what it means to be Chinese. Herb wanted exhibits and objects to act in a dynamic fashion to be more thought-provoking, and to challenge observers with questions of “Where does Chinatown end?” and “What does it mean to be Chinese?”

Assistant Curator Andrew Rebatta described MOCA’s founding objective of collecting artifacts and stories so that “recent immigrants learn about who was there before them” and how Chinese Americans are transforming the Chinatowns and the suburban landscape.

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*...sites are places to represent stories and history to make our memories and culture known. ...to certify our civil rights as Americans.*

*--Munson Kwok Chinese American Citizens Alliance*

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## **SESSION 6 – EDUCATION WORKSHOP; TEACHING THE TOUGH STUFF II**

*Andrea Neighbors, Smithsonian Asian Pacific*

*American Center; Katie Orr, National Park Service; Michael Hussey, National Archives; Megan Springate, Cultural Resources National Parks Service; Deborah Menkart, Zinn Education Project; Ting-Yi Oei, 1882 Foundation.*

**Building on last year’s workshop, this session continued discussions on the challenges and innovations of bringing provocative materials and fresh perspectives into the classroom. Race, religion, and civil rights are not easily broached if teachers are unfamiliar with content. A key consideration is for programs to reach out, interact, and make resources and information visible.**

Andrea Neighbors of the Smithsonian APA Center spoke about the Center being an “incubator” unrestrained by walls and seeking to build “education collectives around the country” through specific projects and traveling exhibits to spark discussions. The Center wants to connect with the work done by educators who themselves crave more information. “Culture Lab Manifesto Playbook” and “2-3 day pop ups” and “sand boxes” engage educators on historical and cultural topics. Congressional Gold Medal programs bring attention to important stories about patriotism, military service and racial and cultural tolerance. The goal is to apply moments in history to inform our present.

From the National Park Service, Katie Orr, Education Coordinator, stated that “good history” is useful and changes us. Good histories develop critical and empathetic thinking. For example, the preservation of the Iolani Palace in Hawaii teaches visitors about imperialism.

Michael Hussey of the National Archives added that it is important to know historical context before going into government sources of information because these sources are from a U.S. government perspective only. But, they are there is a lifetime of material at the National Archives that include several million pages of documents and photographs of Chinese immigrants and American-born Chinese trying to reenter the country. He gave an example of 20 photos of Chinese deported through Vermont in 1906. Their stories

from the primary descriptive documents are of individuals faced with the immediacy of the issues of the time. We can see them with more empathy. We gain a deeper understanding of the era and we acquire insights to help us evaluate similar issues today.

Megan Springate, Coordinator for Cultural Resources at the Department of Interior, observed that including perspectives of individuals and non-government organizations allows for a broader approach to fulfilling the National Park Service requirement to include the stories of all Americans. An affirmative reach to underrepresented communities establishes formal and informal partnerships to ensure local stories contribute to interpretive history.

Her work, such as on the commemoration of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the “20 Suffragists for 2020” project, can be complex, the themes difficult to message, and the media evolving. The work should not be a commemoration for the

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### *Don'ts and Do's in Heritage Education*

- *Don't forget who you want to reach and your communication goals.*
- *Do reach out to education organizations and curriculum developers.*
- *Don't make expensive technologies a requirement to access*
- *Do think about distance learning.*
- *Don't take for granted that the content will be boring or awesome—they can be both depending on how they are framed and perceived.*

*--Kaite Orr, National Park Service*

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moment but create lasting products that can be used after the centennial. They can identify historical personalities not normally remembered, such as Chinese suffragette Mabel Ping-Hwa Lee.

Deborah Menkart from the Zinn Education Project and Ting-yi Oei Education Director for the 1882 Foundation both addressed issues of teaching for change and rethinking

established school curriculum. They want to introduce methods that engage students to discuss American values, challenge preconceptions, and affirm values. Moreover, perspectives are not limited to just two sides --there can be multiple views of historical events and issues. Exercises – such as role-playing –can bring them out.

It is important to understand what has been left out of curriculum. Workshops to expose teachers and parents to what they do not know are obviously important and, in the case of Virginia, there is increasing support for programs teaching about APIA heritage. This support has allowed the 1882 Foundation to organize teacher and public programs south of DC within this year to include at an historic black college in Norfolk on race and identity, a state-wide teacher workshop at the Library of Virginia on 1965 Immigration Law, and a film screening/community discussion on the Chinese Exclusion Act at a public TV station in Richmond.

Symposium participants from other states have also reported progress. A conference to share notes about them from around the country would be a part of year's agenda.

### **OWNING SPACE AND TELLING ITS STORIES**

*Davace Chin, National President Chinese American Citizens Alliance; Chris Lu, Former Deputy Secretary for Labor; Mei Lum, Wong On Wo Project; Ali Smith 1882 Foundation.*

**At Xfinity Chinatown we welcomed participants and guests at a place that can showcase how commercial space and historic narration can go together. Tools for storytelling were on full display for those who wanted to understand their capabilities with Xfinity technicians. Mei Lum's comments on transforming her family's commercial space into a venue for education and storytelling dovetail with 1882 Foundation's advocacy for public/private partnerships to preserve Chinatown heritage, especially in turning perimeter display spaces of shop fronts into dynamic educational exhibits.**

National President Davace Chin presented the Chinese American Citizens Alliance's Spirit of America Award to

former Deputy Secretary of Labor Chris Lu who had presided over the induction of the Chinese Railroad Workers on the DOL Wall of Honor in 2014. Preserving sites and supporting Asian American Studies programs are important, said Mr. Lu,



to keep awareness of the history that has too often been whitewashed as illustrated in the textbook photo of two trains coming together in 1869 and no Asian faces there.

This sanitizing of the historical narrative denies Chinese Americans their earned place in history of the nation, and it denies all Americans lessons in how to handle racial conflicts today and how the strength of diversity was harnessed to make possible the Transcontinental Railroad and which can be applied now to ensure the greatness of America.

Mei Lum of the Wong On Wo (WOW) Project in New York Chinatown gave keynote remarks. As the fifth-generation owner of the oldest operating shop in NY Chinatown, Mei explained how she was inspired to keep the shop opened after neighbors had expressed concerns about culture being displaced if the 93-year old shop closed. She noted that her identity and connections to the community are embedded in the shop and in her work there with her grandparents throughout her life and now in her management of the business and her organizing of storytelling, community discussions and activities in that same space. The shop is “a small business in a time of rapid change,” but the WOW Project seeks to keep ownership in both the daily sense of operating the business and in the sense of a metaphor for a community refusing to be

displaced by unrooted new owners. The act of “staying put” protects Chinatown and that protection is reinforced by the arts, culture, and community activism emanating from the shop space.

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***The most radical thing I ever did was stay put, and staying put is contributing to the preservation of the Chinatown community.***

*--Mei Lum, Wong On Wo Project*

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These concepts also drive the 1882 Foundation agenda in DC Chinatown. They are integral to efforts to hold off the disappearance of a meaningful Chinatown by organizing monthly Talk Story Events there despite entreaties to hold them in the suburbs where the Chinese American community has largely moved. Underlying Talk Story Events is the belief that “the life of our community lies in the power of stories remembered and shared” and where we gather to tell stories (as well as to make new ones) becomes our sacred space. The preservation of space and stories come together.



Nine Man Volleyball in DC Chinatown, photo by Harry Chow

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## Talk Story Events

Two steps to subscribe and receive notices of events.

1. go to <http://bit.ly/TalkStoryList>
2. Register email and confirm

The **1882 Foundation** has three mission initiatives. They are the **1882 Symposium**, which seeks to strengthen collaboration nationally through an annual symposium of established and emerging museums and agencies engaged in preserving the history of Chinese Americans. Ultimately, we would like to see the collaboration crystalize into a National Chinatown Visitors and Talk Story Center. **Talk Story** is our second initiative. It encompasses programs to collect oral histories and preserve historical sites. It includes projects that tell our stories through creative uses of modern media and heritage tours. Thirdly, the 1882 Foundation supports **Curriculum and Lesson Plan Development**. This includes creating new lesson plans and cataloging others into a national bank of information and material for teaching up to grade 12. We organize teacher workshops and promote state and local support for including Asian American subjects into core studies and State Standards of Learning.

Registered in the State of Virginia, the 1882 Project Foundation is an IRS-approved non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. Donations made to the Foundation are tax deductible. EIN: 46-1144885. Mail checks made out to "1882 Foundation" to PO Box 2492 Fairfax, VA 22031, or donate on line at [1882foundation.org](http://1882foundation.org).