

**ROUNDTABLE: LISTING SUMMIT TUNNEL ON
NATIONAL REGISTRY OF HISTORIC PLACES
PART 4 TRANSCRIPT**

MODERATOR: Okay, all of you in our audience here or participants, are there any questions that we can resource from you based upon what's been discussed this panel? Do we have any particular gaps and things that you'd like [unintelligible]? So one of the thoughts just to kind of carry the conversation a little bit. I brought up the thing about being in Boston and people are like, "Why do we have to do this?" And, you're all from different locations and now we're in a different situation where, like I'm not from the Reno/Truckee or the Sierra Summit area, and there's a sense of authenticity that if it's a local voice who's working for this or is it like an outsider's [unintelligible]? So is there some anecdotes that you are all interested in sharing, or [unintelligible] on your brains this moment, or any other questions you have for this panel?

AUDIENCE: I have an anecdote of something in the general area. Maybe several anecdotes. In the general area, in terms of buy-in and mapping power, or whatever you called it, the community buy-in...I chair a committee that the county--Sacramento County committee--revitalizing the town of Locke, the Chinese American town of Locke which is a National Historic Landmark. But I will just say that in the five years I heavily involved, it was extremely intense and a lot of suspicion about outsiders. Even though I was a resident of Sacramento, to the point I even got death threats. It's not going to be as easy as we all think in here, and we all here in this room agree this is what we want to do. And it seems we can easily check all the boxes to make that [unintelligible]. I don't know how but definitely to get the buy-in of the local not only Native American of course, local Chinese American communities, as well as the local residents who are being [unintelligible]. [unintelligible] So I don't really have any answers, it's just to say that this can be a really uphill battle since the genesis of this needs to be from Washington, D.C. And if they thought of me as an outsider, I'm a native Californian, it will be tough and it will be important to have a very local presence in that community.

MODERATOR: Would you mind sharing something comparable about what was the kind of trigger of the letter, or why you think [unintelligible] was uncomfortable that the Sacramento people [unintelligible]?

AUDIENCE: Well, to be frank, it was a lot of their concern. When I was chairman, I was representing the Chinese American Council of

Sacramento, which was started by Frank [unintelligible], who was a renowned restaurateur and philanthropist, who is a strong Chinese American historian. And so, what I proposed was that there be a right of first refusal for that the people [unintelligible] who are not allowed to own the land beneath their houses when the town of Locke started in 1913 because of Alien Land Law, that any future land that came up for sale, that essentially descendants or ascendants were the people that get the right of first refusal. That in itself was something that created a lot of consternation and a lot of backlash, and the people basically thought, "You're trying to make us Chinese, you want us to wear these, whatever they think are little shoes, you want us to bind our feet." And there was just a lot of raw, basic racism. I think filled with probably, uh, you're okay with me starting this...my husband and I just went to the the Chinese, the Sacramento, the California State Railroad Museum to specifically look at their Chinese American exhibit which is new, even though there were elements of Chinese American coverage of the railroads. And it's not even clear whether it will be permanent, but the very first display, the very first text panel had an extreme example of white cultural bias because the names of some of the Chinese workers in a payroll document were cut off. The actual decision of where to crop, cropped through their names.

PHIL SEXTON: Please explain that I had nothing to do with this.

[laughter]

AUDIENCE: Phil had nothing to do with this, I just met him yesterday. But, [unintelligible] whose great-grandfather worked on the railroad, was looking for his great-grandfather's name, which could have easily been there but we could only see Tsing--part of his last name, not you know Wong Jing-Tsing, his whole name. And this was at the California State Railroad Museum, in their supposed validation and honoring of the history of yesterday's 150th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. So therefore, I think you asked me what it will be, it's all of that. It's the entrenched racism. It's the [unintelligible] racism of the local politicians. Within the Chinese Americans, as the people here know or may not know, there's a lot of factions within the community. There's a lot of people who are very conservative who aren't aware of the entire history of Chinese Americans or Asian Americans since the 1500s, so we'll have to watch for that too. Who's going to give them money? Just because the people are doing an event, does that mean that they get to be telling the story. You have to be really careful of that, you would have to. I don't live there anymore, we're in Hawaii, but we are very interested

and would love to go on the tour that you lead. But basically it's the, the town, in [unintelligible] what it was for the town people, folks in the Sacramento County community that they thought it was outsiders. So the racism and the suspicion of what is perceived and who's perceived as outsiders.

AUDIENCE:

Since we're talking about anecdotal evidence, [unintelligible] and she couldn't [unintelligible] to the community groups [unintelligible] as a storyteller, as an entertainer. And she's often gone into rural America to talk about Chinese heritage [unintelligible]. She is [unintelligible] Chinese, but she talks about these things and make the connection with the community members who have little to no understanding or appreciation of who [unintelligible]. So I think that they, in places like Truckee, is there a need to explore and highlight the contributions of Asian [unintelligible] there. And to get that civic pride in the community for what has happened in the past, I think that's maybe just one aspect. Another is, you know through the bus tour [unintelligible]. That does bring in dollars into the local community, and for the merchants, for the folks at the hospitality industry. They can see that direct benefit of tourism and heritage tourism specifically, to what it could bring to their town. And it's not going to happen overnight, but if we continue to provide that sort of exposure, a symposium, in Truckee, where folks can actually understand and learn about what's in their backyard, I think there's a huge opportunity.

PHIL:

There is a resurgence in a little bit of Chinese history that is in Truckee. There is one building just on Bridge Street, where the only road to cross the tracks is just south of that. It's an old Chinese herb shop that has been refurbished to represent at least partially what it was. It's a modern business but they pay homage to that. There's also a historic monument, in the same way regarding what I think, I'm going to get the numbers wrong but, the 602 community--the vigilantes who burned down Chinatown several times. And the Truckee-Donner Historical Society is trying to not focus on that above all others but to bring the stories to life. So I think there are some fertile [unintelligible] in that and certainly with the connection of Truckee to the Bay area, with the huge Asian population in the Bay area, and as someone who used to live on the [unintelligible] everybody in the whole Bay area going to Truckee every damn weekend. There is a cultural connection there because some many of the stuff the vacationers that come through there from the Bay area, which of course has such a heavily Asian population, there's an awful lot of opportunities there and an awful lot of potential [unintelligible].

