Ali Smith:

Thank you so much RJ and thanks for all of our panelists. I think that in the discussion that will follow now, I'm just so excited to get us all thinking and gearing towards our next session as well. Bringing in the educators, who we can't be doing one without the other, right? This activism to affect change at the standards of learning level across three different states, California, one of them, given the shout out. So be thinking of those relationships too as we go into this conversation.

So I'd like to invite our three panelists up here. And just take a moment everyone to be taking it all in, framing some questions. And just while you're thinking about what you'd like to ask our presenters or bring into the conversation, I just again want to emphasize that these discussions and today's day of recognition around the Transcontinental Railroad is really just to frame all of us collaborating together over the next year and thinking about 2020 and bringing more folks into the conversation who we've already been in dialogue with, including groups like the Brasero Project and thinking about so many other organizations who are doing similar types of work and how we can leverage each other's platforms. So we have about fifteen minutes before we transition into the next discussion on education and policy change. Does anyone have any starting comments, questions? Great I'm going to come back here, maybe Jaja [sp?] can you get the other microphone please? I think it's behind the podium and then we will have more mobility. Thank you. And if you would just introduce yourself with your name and the organization you are with, if you have one, so we all get to know each other.

Audience member:

Hi, my name's Mindy Leon. I'm with the Chinese American Museum in DC. And my question is for the two crowdsourcing projects that were mentioned. How did you guys, what strategies did you guys use to get more and more people involved as your projects got bigger and bigger? What sorts of marketing techniques did you use to get the word out there?

Ali:

I guess we need the mic up there too. [laughter] Jaja [sp?], thank you. That's important

[audience laughter]

Michelle:

I think with one of our challenges being limited capacity of staff and volunteers, it didn't blow up that big.

[audience laughter]

Michelle:

But that meant it was manageable for us. And that those contributions, each one is very meaningful to us so we can monitor that and think it's hard for folks, it's on their own time. We were kind of hoping in the beginning, we were just like "Live pinning! A bunch of everyone doing everything." But it was like crickets when we did that kind of call to actions, if we were like "Today, pin about, you know, railroads." There would be crickets [laughter] because everyone does things on their own time. We did webinars and things of that nature, and I think those, I can only give you, in this day and age, I can only give you thirty seconds of my attention. And then I will just bookmark this to go in the middle of the night when I can't sleep or need to procrastinate.

[audience laughter]

Michelle:

So it's really like being time-responsive is not a thing for us versus it's we want to, how you want to, it's on your terms. And so really that's how we respond and that's how we encourage folks so they don't feel the peer pressure. But if we do have excited individuals or organizations that have something, that's also, we can also respond to that. We've had with the work we do with historic preservation, if there's a threatened site or if there is something that researcher is like "I need more information about this building" Then we'll public call-out. Those are time-bound to deadlines, those are the urgent calls to action so we can do both in that way. Our ticks of activity, we don't even care to look at them because that's not what matters to us and that is something we had to decide is, we don't respond to online like Facebook. We don't look at algorithms, we just look at the pins from the family of the pin, and who's contributing. If it's an individual who's never been on here or whatever. So we just kind of ignore those kinds of digital demands.

Tenement Museum Speaker:

Okay, so for the Tenement Museum, this site actually started as a Pinterest board for a public school in Brooklyn, P.S. Home 30 for fifth graders. And I mention that to say, I think that most of the stories have come from schools and colleges and groups who have someone sort of supporting the

contributors and creating their stories and posting their stories. But at the museum we don't really do any advertising at all. So I think a lot of it has been word of mouth and for those people who just independently decided to contribute stories, I think some of it has come from the social media posts, I think some of it has come from mentioning the project on our tours and our public programs. And then I think some people might not even know it's really associated with the Tenement Museum and they might hear of it from an organization that they trust or that they communicate with and stories come in that way as well. Another thing that brings in stories, I don't think this brings in a huge volume of stories, but I know that Win Wick [sp?] Museum uses this sort of strategy too, sometimes people will want to donate an object to a museum's collection and we don't really have much space for objects and things like that so we encourage people to contribute to Your Story, Our Story and then from there we can sort of make a decision if we want to actually accept that object or maybe the fact that it is on the website is good.

Ali:

Thank you.

Eric Hung:

I'm Eric Hung from the Music of Asian America Research Center. My question is, have you ever had to take things down or not approve certain objects and what do you, what are your criteria for doing that?

Tenement Museum Speaker:

So, yes, we have. Luckily, we don't, we read through all the stories that come, that's important to us that we don't change them at all or edit them. We want it to be the voice of the story teller. And it's very very rare that we get any sort of spam submissions. You know, we have this in a challenge of the project too, as like I just mentioned so people don't really realize what they're submitting to, so we work to be more clear about the privacy measures. And some students, for example, were in a college class and submitted a document that was sensitive, they didn't realize what was happening so they contacted us and of course we take it down right away. But we really, that's not a good situation, we're trying to work so that it is very clear that this is something that is going to be public, so people use that to choose what they share on the site.

Michelle:

We are fortunately hosted by History Pin which is, their headquarters are in [indistinguishable] so it's an international company and there's actually someone in London, every time a pin comes in she [indistinguishable] asleep.

[audience laughter]

Michelle:

So, yeah there's one person involved [laughter] so it's very small. But there is [indistinguishable] each pin and so as it happens and then also even when comments are done there is review of that. Not just of anything that may be derogatory but if it's like totally in the wrong location or one of the fields that you contribute is totally incorrect or a commenter is like "You're wrong. We're Japanese American not Chinese American." Then they revise it, but most of the time there is someone monitoring, fortunately for us from our host site.

RJ:

I'm too new to have to take anything down.

[audience laughter]

RJ:

But I will say, sometimes I've had to put new things up. I had met a woman who started a foundation in honor of her father who had been murdered in the South and she had literature that tells his story. And I was like these are just little snippets that don't capture the humanity of somebody so I was like, "Can I use this story of your father and honor it in that way?" So I added it.

Ali:

Okay, any other questions, comments, ideas for 2020? Because remember that in the spirit of all that everyone is doing, you know Ted has long been describing this vision and this goal of showing institutional strength of all the storytellers both individual, museum, cultural institutions in a way that's accessible, reaching more audiences, and creating more conversations so that's our goal here with this conversation. Does anyone have any final questions? We just have a few more minutes for this panel. Oh thanks, Katie.

Audience member:

Hi, I'm Katie Lourn. I'm with the education project. RJ, I have a question. Cool site. Who's writing the content? Is that you, are you coming up with all that or do you have [laughter] or are you working with teachers? Are you working with historians?

RJ:

That's a great question. The Monroe Work site, I did write myself. That was a passion project, but the idea here is that there will be many, many authors on the site so that in fact, it could be an organization. It could be the Bridgeport of African American Community Center doing the history of Bridgeport, that community there. It could be Dr. Annalisa Cox who did research on the great Northwest and it could be a project by her, scholarly. And I by no means want to write the entire history of people of color and the stories that are being suppressed. I want the people who are experts in it to be writing it. My hope is that people own the work that they do, they just allow it to be seen on Plain Talk History, or allow it to be found on Plain Talk History.