

Audio Transcript:
6/24/20 - New Jersey Association of Museums (NJAM)
Connections Program: "History, Culture and Memory"

Presenter: Dr. Linda Caldwell Epps, President and CEO of 1804 Consultants and founding member of the Sankofa Collaborative and

Moderator: Claudia Ocello, NJAM board member

Introduction: Saskia Schmidt, NJAM Programming Chair



Saskia Schmidt

00:00:14 I want to welcome you to today's New Jersey Association of Museums Connections program. We are presenting "History, Culture and Memory" with Dr. Linda Epps and Claudia Ocello, a

- 00:00:20 New Jersey Association of Museums board member. She will be moderating. Just so that you know how we're running this meeting today, it's a little different from the last one.
- 00:00:32 We will be muting you and we will be accepting questions later on.
- 00:00:43 But, during this program, we will also be polling you so we'll be talking about the results of the polls and then, at the end, we'll be accepting questions and the questions will be
- 00:00:57 taken from the chat. So if you have questions, even now, if you'd like to ask a question or pose a problem or
- 00:01:10 anything you'd like to comment on, please do go into the chat room and place it in there. If you also have resources that you'd like to share with us
- 00:01:21 we'd love to hear from you on that as well. At the end we'll be chatting for a few minutes and then you will be receiving
- 00:01:39 a survey in your email tomorrow morning to let us know how we did on the program. So on that note, I want to hand it over to Claudia.



Claudia Ocello

00:01:52 Thanks so much, Saskia.

- 00:01:54 You're welcome. Well, welcome everyone, so glad you could join us today for a special NJAM Connections program. Before I introduce Linda, I'm an NJAM board member and I wanted to convey that NJAM is committed to turning the lens inward on the subject of systemic racism and racial equality...
- 00:02:14 racial equity. In the coming weeks and months we will be exploring changes we can make both in our board and in our operating, to be more inclusive.
- 00:02:23 We welcome any input from you and if you're not an NJAM member, good time to sign up.
- 00:02:28 We hope you'll consider membership and join our efforts. I'll put the membership link in the chat so that if you want to get there right away, you'll get great discounts and lots of resources and programs throughout the year.
- 00:02:43 On to today's program. I'm really honored and delighted to introduce Dr. Linda Caldwell Epps, President and CEO of 1804 Consultants and a founding member of the Sankofa Collaborative.
- 00:02:55 She brings to clients more than 45 years of experience working with educational and cultural institutions, including the New Jersey Historical Society where, full disclosure, I had the opportunity to work with and learn from her.
- 00:03:08 She also worked with New Jersey Network television and held various positions at Bloomfield College. It's a perfect mix of public programming,
- 00:03:17 cultural programming and higher education.
- 00:03:20 So, Linda is going to help us understand the place of history, culture and memory within our organizations, give us a check on our own understandings of race and racism and help us think about how our organizations can make changes
- 00:03:33 to encourage more equity within them and tell stories that need to be told.
- 00:03:38 If you have any questions while Linda presents, as Saskia noted, you can put them in the chat. I'll be monitoring that and I'll feed them over to Linda and we'll try to get you answers
- 00:03:47 or at least directions to look in. You can imagine that an hour is going to be scarcely enough to take tackle this really complex subject so, if
- 00:03:59 anybody can help us get started though, I know that Linda can and will cover what we can in this hour and see what happens next. So I'm going to turn it over to you, Linda. And again, if you have questions, please put them in the chat.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:04:13 So good afternoon, everyone. Thanks to NJAM for inviting me.

- 00:04:21 I'm feeling pretty important that you did that. I hope that I live up to your expectations and thanks to all of you for taking time out of this really very nice
- 00:04:33 sunny summer afternoon to tune in and to talk about museums and culture and race and memory. Glad to have you here. So I'm going to move along because
- 00:04:46 the sponsors are worried that I'm not going to get everything in with this long PowerPoint presentation, but I'm going to go as quickly as I can. And as I said as Claudia mentioned there
- 00:04:58 is time for questions in the chat room. And if I don't get to something that you'd like to cover today,
- 00:05:05 I will freely share my contact information and you can get in touch with me or NJAM can just have me back again. So
- 00:05:13 in 1987 historian Spencer Crew's magnificently curated exhibit "Field to Factory" opened at the Smithsonian Museum of American History.
- 00:05:25 The exhibit chronicled the movement of more than 1 million African Americans from the farms of the rural south to the cities of the urban north. I'm not sure if the PowerPoint is showing, is it?
- 00:05:40 If you can put it up, please.
- 00:05:45 I'm going to keep talking while she does that, because I think every minute is critical.
- 00:05:51 So, shortly after its opening in 1987 I was in Washington DC for our conference and heard about the exhibit through someone and made the decision to skip lunch and to go over to the Smithsonian to see the exhibit
- 00:06:07 I didn't make it back for the afternoon sessions of the conference. I was simply just too filled with emotion.
- 00:06:16 My mother had died a few months before and although still hurting a bit from that experience, I was certainly not prepared for the flood of emotions that would overcome me as I viewed the exhibit.
- 00:06:31 I cried walking through and I immediately started from the beginning and went through it a second time, read every label and examined every object and cried through it a second time. So I'll give you a second to catch up.

- 00:06:48Second slide.
- 00:06:51Okay, Field to Factory. You can go to the next one.
- 00:06:56Okay.
- 00:06:58My mother with her family migrated to Newark, New Jersey in 1921 she was three years old, hence the picture of the young girl there from the exhibit
- 00:07:10Their stay in Newark was short, as my grandfather's security job at Singer Sewing Machine plant in Elizabeth and my mother attended kindergarten in Elizabeth, which should have been around 1925
- 00:07:23But my grandparents died young and my mother was raised by a series of family members, none of them ever discussed their life before New Jersey.
- 00:07:35There were no trips back to Georgia. There were no visitors to Elizabeth from Georgia. I know of no family members living outside of New Jersey.
- 00:07:45I have no images of my grandparents or my aunts, or my uncles, or my cousins pre-1940 so this exhibit to me was like looking at their family history. Next slide please.
- 00:08:06This is an image from the New Jersey Historical Society and appeared in our exhibit "What's Going On: Newark and the Legacy of the 60s." The photograph
- 00:08:16is titled "Men at Work" and it is a group of men working at a factory in Harrison, New Jersey.
- 00:08:23An approximately three foot by five foot duplicate of this image hangs in the den of my home. Actually, this is the one from the den in my home.
- 00:08:32I always imagined one of the men in the photo could be my grandfather for the photo was taken in 1923 in Harrison
- 00:08:41and one of the few bits of information that I have about my grandparents, is that my grandfather worked in Harrison
- 00:08:47before moving to Elizabeth to work for Singers. So, am I desperate for information about the migration and about my family? You bet.
- 00:08:56Fast forward to 2008 and I'm sitting in my office of the New Jersey Historical Society on a quiet Friday afternoon and a colleague informs me that there
- 00:09:09is a woman sitting on the floor of the exhibit crying. The exhibit was called "What's Going On Newark: The Legacy of the 60s."
- 00:09:18So she suggested that I go down and see if the woman was all right. Which I did and I asked her if she was okay. And she, through a very teary and puffy face, basically says, leave me alone.

- 00:09:32I did. She realized that she was rude and explained to me about an hour later, when she came to my office,
- 00:09:40that one of the names printed on the wall that lists those that lost their lives during those five turbulent days of rebellion in Newark, was her brother.
- 00:09:50He was killed by a National Guardmen's bullet while taking out the garbage when he was 12 years old.
- 00:09:58Her parents immediately moved the family out of their home that next day.
- 00:10:03There was no funeral service. His name was never mentioned in the household. They were told to pretend as if he did not exist. So for 40 years he ceased to exist.
- 00:10:15This woman's daughter with her class came to visit the exhibit and saw the names of one of the victims. The last name was the same as her mother's. It was an unusual name for an African American, so she asked her mom if they were related.
- 00:10:33This was the first family discussion about a brother, an uncle, a brother-in-law because her husband didn't even know
- 00:10:40that was a family member, that there was a family member who was killed during the rebellion. It was the first time that her mother had spoken to her children or her husband about that experience that happened 40 years earlier, and forever changed her life.
- 00:10:57The exhibit unveiled a family secret of outrage and hurt, and for the first time, there was a confrontation of the truth. So, I bring up these two stories to try and explain the power of our work.
- 00:11:15Roger Kennedy, former director of the National Museum of American History, said, and I quote, "In a very real sense, the museum guards our national memory." unquote. I would contend our museums also guard our state memory, our local memory and our personal memory.
- 00:11:36The history and culture of non-European populations have not had a very prominent place in our museums and historic houses.
- 00:11:44African Americans of a certain age have always been taught to be happy for what you have, even if what you have is substandard. Just let me give a small example.
- 00:11:55Until I was in my 20s, African American women could not find stockings or pantyhose or makeup shades appropriate for their skin tones.

- 00:12:05 One would buy hose and dye it in coffee to make them dark enough or purchase makeup and mix colors together to make them appropriate
- 00:12:15 I remember a neighbor telling me that I should be happy to be able to go into the store to purchase such objects whether they were correct or not, because in her day she was forbidden to shop in stores that sold luxury items like those.
- 00:12:31 So we make do, right? Until recently, the same could be said about some of our historic houses and museums. We enter museums and libraries and historic houses, content to learn about the greatness of Western civilization,
- 00:12:45 the Founding Fathers, the Founding Mothers, the toys, the elegant imported sofa from Europe and I'm certainly not minimizing contributions of the
- 00:12:56 great Founding Fathers and Mothers and their descendants nor am I trivializing the craftsmanship of the items peculiar to
- 00:13:04 certain areas of our history. I am simply saying we have always known there was more,
- 00:13:11 so very much more to the story of how we came to be who we are and what and that we had been guilty of omitting from them that narrative
- 00:13:20 and, if we are not careful, future generations will accuse us of omission, and will not be as accepting of being left out of the story.
- 00:13:29 We see the beginnings of that satisfaction now with our Black Lives Matter movement and other such movements. It's time to uncover and share the stories beneath the story that we're telling
- 00:13:42 We've always heard about the prevalence of slavery in the south and southern folklore has always been a nod to that institution, along with Jim Crow, the Jim Crow culture that replaced slavery.
- 00:13:55 But they have represented that story from either the realized or fictionalized version of the European.
- 00:14:02 Recently we have done a little better about presenting the history with at least a nod to the reality of those that were enslaved
- 00:14:10 or of the so-called lower classes. I'm thinking in particular of the "Slavery in New York" exhibit.
- 00:14:17 In northern states, New Jersey included, we have a history of slavery, albeit not as prominent as that of the south.
- 00:14:24 But most residents of the state are still unaware that the peculiar institution existed within our borders, we had done next to

nothing to chronicle the lives of descendants of the enslaved in our historical and cultural institutions in New Jersey. Slide please.

- 00:14:43 You are most likely familiar with the very popular Sunday edition of The New York Times last August dedicated to 1619.
- 00:14:50 According to those that contributed to this Pulitzer Prize-winning edition, the 1619 project is an ongoing initiative.
- 00:14:59 It aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative. Slide please.
- 00:15:11 In other words, at the very heart of what it means to be part of the culture of the United States is to a large extent dependent upon the contributions of the enslaved.
- 00:15:22 I would go a few steps further and state that those issues that are dominating our lives today
- 00:15:28 are because of our neglect of confronting the truth about our racism and sexism while you're claiming to be the land of the free and the home of the brave, the slide says, the truth is that as much democracy as this nation has today, it has been born on the backs of black resistance.
- 00:15:49 The irony of our existence is that most people left their native lands, most Europeans left their native lands, to come to the United States in search of a better life.
- 00:16:00 Africans were brought here in chains to make a better life for others. Their enslavement and the lives
- 00:16:07 of their descendants was designed to make money for the European power structure. According to one of my favorite authors, Toni Morrison, quote,
- 00:16:17 "White slave owners believe that their slaves were savage animals in order to justify their own inhumane behavior." end of quote.
- 00:16:25 I am adding their own inhuman behavior for the reward of power and prosperity. Africans provided the economic engine that helped power America to prosperity.
- 00:16:37 What we must do now in our institutions is come to grips with our own understanding of the history and culture of those we have marginalized and to present to our public this history and culture to our audiences
- 00:16:52 in a more realistic and forward-centered way. I am not just putting this on white members of our museum, historic house and educational institutions in the world.

- 00:17:03I am putting this on all of us. We could do a session or two or three or four on the way Anglo- or European-isms have infiltrated the descendants of the enslaved
- 00:17:16We have thoroughly bought into the white world for many reasons. One very obvious one is survival.
- 00:17:23Many African Americans have taken on the theory that the closer one can get to be white, the better off you are.
- 00:17:30Of course, this has just perpetuated self-loathing and a very low level of self-esteem for those that, no matter how hard they try, could not become more white.
- 00:17:40Chinua Achebe and his groundbreaking book published in, I believe, 1958, "Things Fall Apart," says, and I quote,
- 00:17:47"The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay." This is in Nigeria.
- 00:17:57"Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart."
- 00:18:07Sound a little bit about what's happening here today. We have adapted European concepts detrimental to our progress without realizing the consequences. I think all of us
- 00:18:19have in our history, our culture, those who have joined the opposition without realizing the damage done.
- 00:18:26It's like parents believing education (you can change the slide now) for their daughters was dangerous and in doing so deprive them of opportunity to use their talents to the greatest ability and had women convinced that they were not as smart or as worthy as men.
- 00:18:45I attended high school in Elizabeth. I was told, I have never
- 00:18:51investigated to see if it's true, but Elizabeth had the last mandatory same sex high school system in the nation.
- 00:19:00There was a boys high school, there was a girls high school, and there was a coed big vocational school. If you were on a college track or a business track you had no choice but to go to an all-girls high school.
- 00:19:13The problem was the girls high school had a very small college prep program and some of the courses required by colleges were not offered.
- 00:19:22Which meant summer school or arranging a schedule to take the six block walk over to the boys high school.
- 00:19:28Which was not easy to do, when there was five minutes in between classes. Clearly, Elizabeth as a city invested in its sons,

more than its daughters. In this country we have invested in European power more than the others.

- 00:19:44Next slide please.
- 00:19:47We know I was a child of the women's movement, the future is really female.
- 00:19:54So let equality bloom. Hopefully you understand my drift.
- 00:19:58Depriving ourselves of the unknown because of some ideas we have built in our minds and in our hearts is detrimental to not only the victim of the denial, but to the denier.
- 00:20:11We are depriving ourselves of knowing about, understanding, and profiting from other cultures, other views, other joys. (slide please)
- 00:20:20After all, where would we be if I had not lived in a diverse neighborhood. All of my adult life I have cherished knowing the Novickis and the Faellas
- 00:20:31and the Curries, and had it not been for Mrs. Novicki, I would not have known the delicious buttery taste of cheese perogies and where would any of us be without Taco Tuesday? (Change the slide please)
- 00:20:45So during my deaning years, I was once a college dean, I learned that a majority of my African American students believe white families had no problems.
- 00:20:55That they all live lives of complete bliss and pleasure. The only models they had if they had gone to segregated schools were on sitcoms like Happy Days so
- 00:21:07there is really much that we need to learn about each other.
- 00:21:10African Americans can learn about Anglo culture because their institutions are based on that culture.
- 00:21:16For whites to learn about black culture is a bit more difficult because those Anglo cultures, for the most part, have not recorded or represented black culture. (slide)
- 00:21:27Of course, these days, we have "Blackish" around to set us straight, and hopefully you are catching a little bit of the sarcasm in my voice.
- 00:21:35As museum professionals, you have the opportunity to dispel so many stereotypes, you have the opportunity to bring communities together.
- 00:21:44To advance the cause of peace and understanding to explain the past and tell stories of the present that will right the course of the advancement of the country.

- 00:21:54(Slide) Visual artist Kara Walker states in a New Yorker article, "Where art and politics meet, art is a pursuit that embraces so many facets of life
- 00:22:06that it figuratively works on the spirits and minds of those who encounter it." So we should be asking ourselves and trying to answer a series of questions.
- 00:22:16What do you know about slavery and where does that information come from? What do you know about the contributions of black Americans to US society and where does that information come from?
- 00:22:28What are the ramifications of slavery in contemporary U.S. life? Do our exhibits take those ramifications into consideration?
- 00:22:37How does the story of the United States change if we mark the beginning of US history in 1619 instead of 1776? What is our national memory? How do we create it? How can we change it if it's incorrect? So let's take a few minutes to examine how much we know about race. (slide)
- 00:23:01Okay, so this is taken from the American Association of Colleges and Universities. It's a few years old. Not that many. And it's available, should you like to use it on DVD, from California Newsreel and there's the email address, but it's from a documentary series on race.
- 00:23:24So let's go to the first question.
- 00:23:27And I believe you are able to take part in a poll here.
- 00:23:34So the first question is:
- 00:23:39Members of a race can be identified by their: A. Blood group B. Skin color C. Ancestry D. Genes E. All of the above or F. None of the above. I'll give you five seconds to to do this.
- 00:24:08Time's up.



Saskia Schmidt

00:24:11And we are still waiting for a few more to answer the poll. We have 28 out of 45

- 00:24:16now, so if we make it...



Linda Caldwell Epps

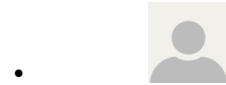
00:24:17OK, so I'll go ding, ding, ding ding a little bit more.



Saskia Schmidt

00:24:21Yes. I'll go bing.

- 00:24:22Okay.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:24:24Then let me know, okay.

- 00:24:27How are we doing?



Saskia Schmidt

00:24:2934, 45%, 75% voted.

- 00:24:35And 36, 37...



Claudia Ocello

00:24:38Yeah, I think we can end it in a minute or so.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:24:40Okay.



Saskia Schmidt

00:24:41 All right, end poll.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:24:43 So for those of you who answered, none of the above, which most of you did, smart group, 54% of you. There are no traits, no characteristics. Not even one gene

- 00:24:55 that distinguishes all members of one so-called race from all members of another. The A, B and all blood groups can be found in all the world's peoples
- 00:25:06 Estonians and Papua New Guineans, for example, have the same frequencies. Skin color tends to correspond with latitude, not race. Sub-Saharan Africans,
- 00:25:18 people from southern Asia and the Pacific, all have very dark skin. Ancestry is difficult to trace. If you go back 30 generations, less than 1000 years, you have a billion ancestors.
- 00:25:33 Okay, let's go to the next one.



Saskia Schmidt

00:25:39 Okay, hold on.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:25:43 Okay. When Jamestown colonist John Rolfe traveled to the court of London in 1619 with his new wife Pocahontas, it caused a scandal because: A. An Englishman had married an Indian

- 00:25:57 B. A Christian had married a heathen C. Pocahontas, a princess, married beneath her by marrying a commoner and D. Londoners had never seen an Indian before. So, plug in your answers.



Saskia Schmidt

00:26:14 Hold on a second. Let me get



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:26:15 We have another



Saskia Schmidt

00:26:16 View. I have to put up Poll #2 now. Okay, there you go.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:26:22 So I'll do my little...

- 00:26:31 Boom, boom, boom, boom. How are we doing



Saskia Schmidt

00:26:34 We're at 68% 71%, 73%, 75%, 80%



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:26:48 Okay, so I'll go ahead



Saskia Schmidt

00:26:51 Okay, I'll end the poll. Okay.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:26:54 Pocahontas, a princess, married beneath her by marrying a commoner. 17th century England was a very hierarchical, feudal society where people's class status was fixed at birth.

- 00:27:10 Status was so important, they even had laws called "sumptuary laws" that regulated the clothing people could wear so they could pass as another class.
- 00:27:20 When John Rolfe took his new bride, Pocahontas, who had been converted to Christianity, back to London, the English settlers,
- 00:27:28 though in conflict with the Indians over land, had not yet developed the ideology of race that would later help justify Indian removal, but it was unthinkable that royalty would marry a commoner.
- 00:27:46 So, congratulations to the 17% of you
- 00:27:52 who got this one right.
- 00:27:56 Okay, let's move on to the next one.
- 00:28:06 Of the \$120 billion in home loans, written by the federal government between 1933 and 1962, what percentage went to white homeowners? A. 45% B. 64% C. 75% D. 88% and E. 98%
- 00:28:31 So let's go to the poll
- 00:28:38 And
- 00:28:41 Do do do do again.
- 00:28:46 I'll wait for you.



Saskia Schmidt

00:28:47 Okay, we're at 80%, 82%, 84%...



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:28:50 Oh, good. That was fast. Okay, look.



Saskia Schmidt

00:28:51 Oh, they're still...86%.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:28:58 Everyone thinks they know this one, they answered quickly.



Saskia Schmidt

00:29:02 I'll end the poll.

- 00:29:04 The results, okay. Share results, here we go.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:29:07 And they were right, okay 98%. Beginning in the 1930s and 40s, the federal government created programs that subsidized low cost home loans, opening up

- 00:29:18 home ownership and wealth accumulation to millions of Americans for the first time, but government underwriters introduced
- 00:29:26 a national appraisal system tying loan eligibility and property value to race, inventing "redlining"
- 00:29:35 and effectively locking people of color out of home buying just as white Americans were beginning to purchase homes and build net worth and, as we know, that generation
- 00:29:46 especially, most of their wealth was centered in their homes. So congratulations to 74% of you who were able to get that one correct. And I think we have just one more. Is it one more, I think?



Saskia Schmidt

00:30:00 Yes, I believe so.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:30:03 That's this one today in America.

- 00:30:07 No, we have two more. Is there one before that? No we'll, we'll go to this one.



Saskia Schmidt

00:30:14 For some reason this one says number 3



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:30:16 Okay, we'll go to this one.

- 00:30:19 In America, the rise of the idea of white supremacy was tied most directly to A. Indian removal B. Slavery C. The Declaration of Independence D. The US Constitution and E. Ancient Greeks So, lock in your answers, please.



Saskia Schmidt

00:30:42 Wait a minute.

- 00:30:46 Here we go.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:30:52 I'm not going to give you too much time because I'm looking, I'm

- 00:30:57 already towards the end, do we have at least a few in there?



Saskia Schmidt

00:31:02We have 73%



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:31:04Okay, so we'll go

- 00:31:06So the answer is, C. The Declaration of Independence. Ironically, it was freedom, not slavery, that gave rise to modern theories of race.
- 00:31:15Until the age of Revolution, slavery was an unquestioned fact of life. It was only when Americans proclaimed the radical new idea that all men are created equal, that slavery was first challenged as immoral.
- 00:31:32As historian Barbara Fields notes,
- 00:31:36the new idea of race helped explain why some people could be denied the rights and freedoms that others took for granted. It's all laid out. Can I have the next slide please?



Saskia Schmidt

00:31:49Okay, hold on, all right.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:31:53Okay, so there we have Thomas Jefferson, who is in this painting which, I assume, an enslaved woman in the background.

- 00:32:05Those truths that we hold self evident, that all men are created equal, did not include this woman or, for that matter, any woman

- 00:32:14and is that fight for true independence that we are still trying to achieve on all levels, even in our institutions, even in our libraries, our museums in our historic houses.
- 00:32:27So we are all lovers of culture and history, we would not be here if we were not and hopefully you understand that being more inclusive is not easy.
- 00:32:36But it is also not impossible to do. It takes work and it takes time. It takes dedication, it means having difficult conversations with our staff.
- 00:32:46With members of the communities we serve, with our board members, with teachers, and with other professionals with whom we collaborate.
- 00:32:54It means opening up ourselves to new possibilities and new ways of doing things. It means understanding the world is and has been much larger than you think. Next slide.
- 00:33:09Let me again repeat the words of Kara Walker: "Art as a pursuit embraces so many facets of life that it figuratively 'works' on the spirits and minds of those encounter it."
- 00:33:20We have so much opportunity in the work that we do. I think for so long we had no idea that we were presenting one-sided exhibitions. Now we know.
- 00:33:29I think that some of us are just waking up to the understanding that we have neglected the perspective of the underserved. This is a portrait of... Next slide.
- 00:33:41This is a portrait of Elihu Yale and friends and family enjoying the lovely afternoon,
- 00:33:48playing,
- 00:33:50the children in the background, and sipping, I'm assuming, Madeira, which was the drink of the day, in the front. This hangs in the boardroom of Yale University and as you know, Mr. Yale was one of the earliest and largest benefactors of that institution. Hence, we have Yale University.
- 00:34:09But how many of you see the young servant child in the lower right hand corner? Hopefully all of you do. I can't see you raising your hand, but I'm sure you see it.
- 00:34:21So Yale graduate and MacArthur awardee Titus Kaphar has taken creative liberty to riff on this painting and created, (next slide please)
- 00:34:34this painting called "Enough About You." I think now you can see the child, quite clearly, and you can see the locked collar around his neck. Obviously he is enslaved.

- 00:34:50What do we know about his life? Perhaps, at most, he is listed in Mr. Yale's will. But yes, Mr. Yale is not alone in his negation of the worth of African people.
- 00:35:05I will use as an example, just last week, how many of us have heard of Juneteenth and or the Tulsa massacre prior to last week?
- 00:35:16If you are African American, most likely, you've probably heard about it. If not, I've encountered many who said they've heard about both for the first time.
- 00:35:28(slide please)
- 00:35:31We have institutions that we consider anchors for our work that are invisible to the African American community. It is not because we do not work hard and try to be inclusive.
- 00:35:41It iss because we have not worked hard to discover new ways of being inclusive. "Our institutions," to quote Dr. Lonnie Bunch again,
- 00:35:50"must be appropriate, there must be appropriate tension between stories of real pain, loss and tragedy with those of resiliency, optimism and hope.
- 00:36:01It must give those of the culture, a real sense of legitimacy and possibility but also be a museum that is a lens into what it means to be American with a message that all of us are shaped indelibly by the African American experience."
- 00:36:21As an astute former board member of the historical society about four years ago,
- 00:36:28she made a decision to invest in a project of her own creation as her last gift to the historical society.
- 00:36:36The goal of the project was to go through the archives and the collection and to find any materials, documents, hats, dishes that pertain to the African American presence in New Jersey.
- 00:36:51We quickly found out there was not much in the card catalog or online. The librarian who was responsible for culling the collection quickly came to the conclusion
- 00:37:02that he had to simply explore just about every entry to find information that is information about African Americans. They knew it was there, but they were not given a topic. They were not given a
- 00:37:18documentation of their own.
- 00:37:21(Next slide please) It was easy to find newspaper accounts of Hitler snubbing Jesse Owens during the 1936 Olympics, but very difficult to locate articles about black soldiers who were beaten, just for being in uniform upon their return from World War II.

- 00:37:42But it has been a tension, it was easy to criticize Hitler for what he was doing, but we never looked inward to see what we were doing, as Americans.
- 00:37:52And this tension has existed for as long as the republic probably has been standing
- 00:37:57But if we truly believe that what we are doing is for the public good, we realize that no matter how difficult the reward, we must create new models,
- 00:38:06new collaborations, new affiliations and new examining of our collection in different ways. It's not going to pop right out at you. We have to search and dig for information. (next slide)
- 00:38:20One thing we can start doing immediately is changing the way we amass collections.
- 00:38:25This has been a year of change and thinking about the past three months, what have you done to document this year in your archives? What are you collecting?
- 00:38:33How have you educated yourself to what is going on so you can be assured that what you are collecting is correct?
- 00:38:39Are you looking at community newspapers as well as the New York Times, are you doing interviews, are you looking at who's in the protests and doing interviews there?
- 00:38:49What's going on in hospitals, community conversations? Are you relying exclusively on established media or are you inviting and actively soliciting information from protesters, are you getting family narratives about the effects of Covid-19?
- 00:39:08Just for this particular talk today, I Googled white women and Covid-19.
- 00:39:15I was on my fifth screen before I found an image of a white woman who was not a health care provider who was not in a healthcare providing uniform or a police women's uniform
- 00:39:31I Googled black women and Covid-19. (Next slide please)
- 00:39:37And on the first page, I found this and several photos of black women on line or in clinics or as patients in hospitals. Right? How we look and our mindset
- 00:39:53when we research is something that we need to assess on our own. If I had just paid attention to the first slide, I would have thought, perhaps, even if I were a student
- 00:40:06that the only way white women were connected with the disease was through their work as healthcare providers.

- 00:40:13 I would also think, looking at the first page for black women, that the only way they're connected is waiting in food lines, in the pictures such as this, some of them masked and some of them not.
- 00:40:27 I'll leave you to read, we could do a whole workshop on reading both of those images, but we don't have time. I'm actually almost to the point where I'm supposed to stop talking and I have a little bit more. So I'm going to rush along. (slide please, the next one)
- 00:40:40 Well, closing my remarks. Okay, I'm going to go past this one, but this is 1918 Spanish flu and you could see it's pretty much the same kind of
- 00:40:50 images that we're projecting, we have a black family without masks and civilian uniforms. We have the white women who are nurses and health care providers.
- 00:40:59 100 years ago - we haven't changed too much. (Next slide) Okay, while composing my remarks for today, yesterday morning I received a text message from a former colleague,
- 00:41:11 someone from another life, about the website her high school-age niece and friends had constructed to capture what is going on today. The website is called "More Than a Moment" and I just wanted to share this with you with the idea being
- 00:41:29 sometimes younger people have their act together a little bit better than we have.
- 00:41:34 They have here: "Black Lives Matter is more than a moment. It's embracing black excellence. It's challenging the status quo.
- 00:41:42 It's an ongoing movement that begins with education and continues with sustained positive action." (Next slide in the website, please) Okay.
- 00:41:51 These are the youngsters you see as a diverse group of youngsters who did this. And remember, they're not in school so they're doing this from their homes.
- 00:42:00 "More Than a Moment," which is the name of their website, is the passion project of four friends with a simple idea:
- 00:42:07 to create a hub of informative texts, links to petitions, and other resources. These are historic times, and we want to do our part in ensuring that the demands of the Black Lives Matter movement are met." And you could look at them.
- 00:42:23 So I'm skipping a paragraph or two, but I want to get to the end of my remarks and then we have time to answer some questions. So just let me share
- 00:42:34 this with you.

- 00:42:37When we do our work, think about the power of freedom and the fragility of the freed.
- 00:42:46Remember that collecting is the "now." We should continually be collecting and amassing information.
- 00:42:53That we should be pulling out other voices, that we should be looking for balance in the work that we do, and that we should understand the construction of race
- 00:43:06is a weapon for power.
- 00:43:08The construction of race has, and still is, has been and still is a weapon for power.
- 00:43:17I want to go back a little to the "Enough About You" with Titus Kaphar, and I want to say that we have an obligation to present history
- 00:43:26and culture, along with civic memory when we do our work. The power of art is the power to liberate, the power to dream about a future that is more equitable than our present.
- 00:43:41So,
- 00:43:44I'm skipping. I'll just end with these few words,
- 00:43:48and then a word from Langston Hughes. Now like no other in history, has there been an awakening around the wicked, insidious spiritual nature of structural racism, especially in our
- 00:44:01policing. It is within our power to motivate positive change. Now is the time. Let us, with all our fiber, work towards the advancement of true liberation and freedom for all.
- 00:44:15And, to quote Langston Hughes from his poem "Let America Be America Again", he says, "Oh, yes, I say it plain, America never was America to me. And yet, I swear this oath, America will be."
- 00:44:33So, let us move on to comments or questions, if you have any. And I'm sorry for talking slower than I was supposed to so that I didn't get to everything. Some of you know me because I see one face on the screen right now that does. Hi, Stephanie. And
- 00:44:49so you know how I go on. Okay.



Claudia Ocello

00:44:52Linda, thank you so much

- 00:44:53for that thoughtful and
- 00:44:56thought- provoking presentation.
- 00:44:59While people are thinking about questions and putting them in the chat, I actually wanted to bring something up.

- 00:45:06 You know, you mentioned this
 - 00:45:07 earlier that, you know, a lot of times these stories are
 - 00:45:09 hidden. I work with a lot of small historic house
 - 00:45:13 organizations and a lot of times they're volunteer-led.
- They may have only one or two full-time or part-
- 00:45:18 time staff members, you know, what steps can they take
- given limited resources, how can they
- 00:45:25 how can they start, what do you recommend in terms of
 - 00:45:28 trying to get these stories out?



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:45:32 Well, I'll take the lead in part from what the New Jersey Historical Society did and the librarian/ archivist did that work for us. It took him four years.

- 00:45:42 It wasn't a fast project. He worked two afternoons a week, in between helping patrons coming into the library.
- 00:45:51 Now I am going to say that once he became involved, he became so involved that he put in some volunteer time for himself.
- 00:45:59 But I wanted to bring that point up you can never just go to the first level of your research. And that's the point I was trying to make with the pictures that I put up that was just a short three minute
- 00:46:11 clicking on certain pages. And that's what I found, it takes a lot of dedication and it takes a lot of time.
- 00:46:19 But it's the only way that it's going to get done. Because let's face it, we're not high priority on the funding list for foundations and institutions we get, you know, we get some money.
- 00:46:30 But it's going to take a whole change of mindset for the country at large to give us money to do the kind of research that needs to be done to capture those other voices.
- 00:46:40 But we all are eligible for interns from colleges and universities. I know that some institutions that I work with as a consultant have found
- 00:46:52 help in that way. They've had students from high schools and from colleges that are willing to devote Saturdays or afternoons to dig through
- 00:47:04 their collection to see what they could find. Retirees are another source of help for this and you might find that people who have no interest in your institution itself do have interest in this topic of uncovering unknown history and might

- 00:47:25really be interested in doing work for you in that area, even if they're not necessarily interested in in Boxted Hall or something like that, that they are interested in that particular topic.
- 00:47:38Also, I know that, and they're probably going to kill me for this, but our own historical commission, they are interested in doing, uncovering some of these histories
- 00:47:49and might be willing to support or help you find support for this kind of work. It's not easy. If it were easy, it probably would have been done already.
- 00:47:59It takes many hours of dedication and time. Make sure that you keep your glasses up to date because it's tedious work, it's reading some old writing with the magnifying glass.
- 00:48:14We found in a journal, that we thought was all about farming,
- 00:48:20pages and pages of documentation of the enslaved who built what is now Springfield Avenue, which was then Springfield Turnpike.
- 00:48:31That particular farmer lent out his enslaved people and the person kept meticulous notes. How many stones they moved. How many trees they felled. The people who did it are given names.
- 00:48:44Who needed a replacement of shoes. It was just a wealth of information that was a find that we never expected to find. That came maybe like year three into the research project. So it's there. It's just taking the time to do it.
- 00:49:00That's
- 00:49:00good advice, thank you.



Claudia Ocello

00:49:03So if anybody has any, you know, questions or comments or wants to share some resources, feel free to put them in the chat. I'm wondering, you know, I have to be honest with you, Linda, so I recognize that I have white privilege.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:49:16I mean,



Claudia Ocello

00:49:17even having grown up in New Jersey and, you know, worked my way up the museum ladder.

- 00:49:24I'm uncomfortable talking about this topic.
- 00:49:27I am afraid to make mistakes in what I do,
- 00:49:30how I present information or what I say. How can we be more comfortable? Any thoughts about that or any advice? I know that it's a little bit scary sometimes for us.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:49:42Of course it's scary.

- 00:49:45And I'm not going to tell you a lie and say that it's going to get more comfortable. It's not necessarily going to get more comfortable.
- 00:49:52But you are going to garner so much respect from doing it because once people see that you are serious about this, I guarantee you they will cooperate with you in doing the work that needs to be done, and they will
- 00:50:07perhaps smirk a little if you ask a question that they feel is naive, but they will give you the answer.
- 00:50:15They will give you the answer and
- 00:50:18once they know that you're not just in this for the moment, because the Black Lives Matter movement is now popular, but that you're in it because you honestly and truly
- 00:50:29want to enhance the work that you do, they'll be cooperative and it's like finding a physician. You know, I've had many doctors that I've gone to that I didn't like. And I just had to change and find one I did.
- 00:50:42And I think finding resourceful people is that same way. So you may not get along with the first or second person that you asked, but I believe that eventually, if you keep at it, you will.
- 00:50:55You will, because we all want our institutions to be more inclusive.



Claudia Ocello

00:51:00 Thank you.

- 00:51:02 We have a question from Natasha.
- 00:51:05 Decolonizing in your museum organization is an essential step to committing institutionally to an honest history. But how do you get your leadership and board to buy into this?



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:51:15 That's the most, that's trouble.

- 00:51:20 However, most organizations, my
- 00:51:24 screen has been laden with statements from organizations about what's going on today either about Covid or about the racial tension that's in the country.
- 00:51:37 So, at least outwardly, most of them are committing, making some sort of commitment that we're going to look into this, we're going to change this. So you do have a weapon that we didn't have previously and say, look, this is what we have to do.
- 00:51:53 You know, and quite frankly, the reason I brought in the students from West Orange
- 00:51:59 is because I think that this younger generation is really going to hold us accountable.
- 00:52:04 They are looking for more from our institutions and we have an obligation. They are our public as well as our board members, granted, they don't have funds.
- 00:52:16 But maybe one day they will, but they are our public and we're responsible to them.
- 00:52:24 And, as you know, Claudia, when we did the exhibit on the rebellion at the historical society, we lost a board member or two over that because they thought that we should not be handling such a subject.
- 00:52:37 But we also gained other friends like this woman who paid for this last project. So, I'm not going to promise you that it's going to be easy. It's not, I'm not going to promise you that you might not lose someone.

- 00:52:52But I think that you have to make them accountable. I don't know of one organization that I'm involved with, or even one product that I purchased that I haven't seen some sort of message on the internet, talking about, well, you know, you've seen it, too.
- 00:53:04So we just have to say this is more than just talk. It's more than just issuing one statement.
- 00:53:09This is not something that's going to go away. It's been with us for 400 years. We are now just at the point where we probably should have been 150 years ago.
- 00:53:18But we're finally there now and we can't let it go. We really have to do something about this. And we have to put our resources into resolving this issue, or else if you think we have problems with attendance now, it's only going to get worse.
- 00:53:32Because people will not see your relevance.



Claudia Ocello

00:53:35And as the West Orange students say "More Than a Moment."



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:53:38That's right, it's more than a moment.



Claudia Ocello

00:53:40And speaking of these West Orange students, you know, what if you're not in a position of leadership at your organization?

- 00:53:47How can you
- 00:53:47effect change when you're not, you know, you may be a mid-level or a, you know, an educator, who's there part-time or you may not. You don't have to have the director's ear, necessarily. What do you suggest?



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:54:02Well,

- 00:54:05you probably don't want to hear this, but I think sometimes you have to go out on a limb and do something on your own, that's not necessarily sanctioned
- 00:54:14and then bring it to their attention and say, you know, look, I know you said that we're not going in this direction,
- 00:54:23but here is evidence that I have from our constituents, or from people who could be our constituents are saying this is what we should be doing,
- 00:54:33and this is my idea, and I'm going to keep bringing up this idea until I can frame it in such a way that you understand the importance of it, how critical this is particularly at this time.
- 00:54:46And you're probably going to be labeled a nuisance, but I am just going to walk out on faith and say that
- 00:54:54I do believe that this is the time. I am really heartened by the nature of the protests, that they're diverse as far as age is concerned,
- 00:55:03as far as race is concerned, and as far as gender is concerned, and I think that we're living in a very special moment. I still sort of believe in miracles.
- 00:55:12I believe that what we went through in the late 50s, in the early 60s, when Jim Crow was overturned, that that was one miracle that just advanced far enough and that we're now in the next stage of it and that we just have to keep working. I mean,
- 00:55:28I would not be talking to you if it had not been for 1964 and everything that happened then, because I would not have probably have had the ability to go to college
- 00:55:39and let alone get three degrees and to have the expertise and the luxury of being able to retire
- 00:55:46and have the skill set to do this kind of work, had it not been from that miracle, that happening. So all of you who are women, as far as I can see,
- 00:55:56had it not been for Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, we, you would not be here either. Some of you. Some of you might be because you came from progressive homes, but most of us did not
- 00:56:07and you would not. When I was a senior in high school, we were still getting hope chests from the local furniture store because it was the expectation, by the time we were 18 or 19 we would be

getting married. But the world changed. And I think the world is also capable of greater change.



Claudia Ocello

00:56:26We have one more comment from Nancy Norris Bauer about national history day and just- Hi

- 00:56:31Nancy - a reminder that
- 00:56:33students are looking to connect to local topics for their research. So if anyone who's
- 00:56:39you know, has that ability. Nancy has put her email there in the chat. Would it be okay if I shared your 1804 Consultants email with everyone, Linda? So in case there



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:56:52are any questions,

- 00:56:53and my number you did share, too?



Claudia Ocello

00:56:55Okay, I don't know if I have that right away to share but also

- 00:57:00I have another question from Michael will end with this one: Thanks you for great content. In Atlantic City there's a diverse population, a school down the block from us has 33 languages spoken
- 00:57:11there. How do you recommend we engage further with Black Lives Matter, while also not forgetting about the others and
- 00:57:18a recommended language to use when doing that.
- 00:57:21Okay.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:57:24 Well, I've explained this, I don't know how many times, not Michael's question, but this whole thing of what Black Lives Matter means. It does not mean to the exclusion of other lives.

- 00:57:34 It means we know that these other lives matter. We've had proof of that. But we have not had proof that black lives matter.
- 00:57:43 And I would think that the diverse population of his school, he would have to explain that to them as well.
- 00:57:49 It doesn't mean that only these lives matter, it means that all of our lives matter and all of our lives should matter equally and perhaps craft assignments for them around that message
- 00:58:01 that, you know, as a person of color, if they are, if they're Hispanic, if they're Asian, they're also considered a person of color, that their lives matter as well
- 00:58:13 and design cultural projects around that and they're fitting into the American scheme
- 00:58:18 of things, how they see themselves, what they find good, what they find not so good, what they would like to see change or simply, what does this moment mean for them, you know, what does this moment mean for me as someone from
- 00:58:35 India. What does this moment mean for me, I'm from Costa Rica. You know
- 00:58:41 how are these protests related to me and and the life that I live and the work that my parents do and and the place where we live, so thank you Michael, I see you say thank you.



Claudia Ocello

00:58:54 And I think that's a really great way to end, actually. Thank you, Linda. I know Saskia has some closing remarks, I just wanted to note that I put your email address in the chat as well as

- 00:59:03 the NJAM email. There's a resource page that our board put together, promoting equity and I'm adding one that I just found today. It's the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice it's "10 Ways to Do Racial Justice Advocacy After You Say Black Lives Matter"
- 00:59:19 relates to something else that
- 00:59:20 you said. So Saskia I'm going to turn it back to you so you can close this out.



Linda Caldwell Epps

00:59:25 Okay.



Saskia Schmidt

00:59:26 Sounds good. All right, well thank you everyone for participating in today's session. I'm just going to bring up everybody's picture here.

- 00:59:35 And really enjoyed the program. Thank you, Linda, for a wonderful discussion and I just wanted to let everyone know, remind everyone that
- 00:59:47 to go to the New Jersey Association of Museums website and check it out, perhaps become a member
- 00:59:54 and also look forward to a future New Jersey Association of Museums Connections meeting, we're planning to hold them once a month.
- 01:00:05 So in July there will be one forthcoming and look for the email announcing it
- 01:00:12 **Also, you will be receiving a survey so please do fill it out. That way we can tailor our next programs to what is of most concern to you. So on that note, I'm going to end the program. Thank you so much and until next time!**