

***Anti-Columbus Day Tours
of the American Museum
of Natural History***

2016 - 2019

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Declaration on Indigenous People's Day, 2016

We are gathered here at the American Museum of Natural History to issue three demands

RESPECT – New York's premier scientific museum continues to honor the bogus racial classification that assigned colonized peoples to the domain of Nature here, and Europeans to the realm of Culture, across the park in the Met. We demand that the museum's display arrangements and classifications be reconceived by curatorial representatives of the "exhibited" populations, and that human remains, sacred things, and objects of power stolen from Indigenous peoples should be returned.

REMOVE – The equestrian status of Theodore Roosevelt outside the American Museum of Natural History is a stark embodiment of the white supremacy that Roosevelt espoused and promoted. It is an affront to all who pass it on entering the museum, but especially to African and Native Americans. A monument that appears to glorify racial hierarchies should be retired from public view. We demand that City Council members vote to remove this monument to racial conquest.

RENAME– It's time for the Mayor and City Council to rename Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day. New York City sits on the territory of the Lenape, and over one hundred thousand Indigenous people live on this territory today. We demand that this holiday be relaunched as an occasion to dignify our Indigenous brothers and sisters, and it should no longer commemorate a figure widely associated with exploitation and enslavement.

Decolonize This Museum | Decolonize This Statue | Decolonize This Day

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY, 2016 DECLARATION

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— **DECOLONIZE THIS MUSEUM | DECOLONIZE THIS STATUE | DECOLONIZE THIS DAY** —

#decolonizethisplace

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING (available for download at decolonizethisplace.org)

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ANTI-COLUMBUS DAY TOUR

DECOLONIZE THIS MUSEUM



*rename the day
remove the statue
respect the ancestors
we heal*

Public Enemy Remix

WE ARE HERE, in this museum, with our friends, families and communities. We begin by acknowledging that we are standing on occupied Lenape land. Although it is labelled as a Natural History museum, it includes displays of Indigenous and other colonized peoples.

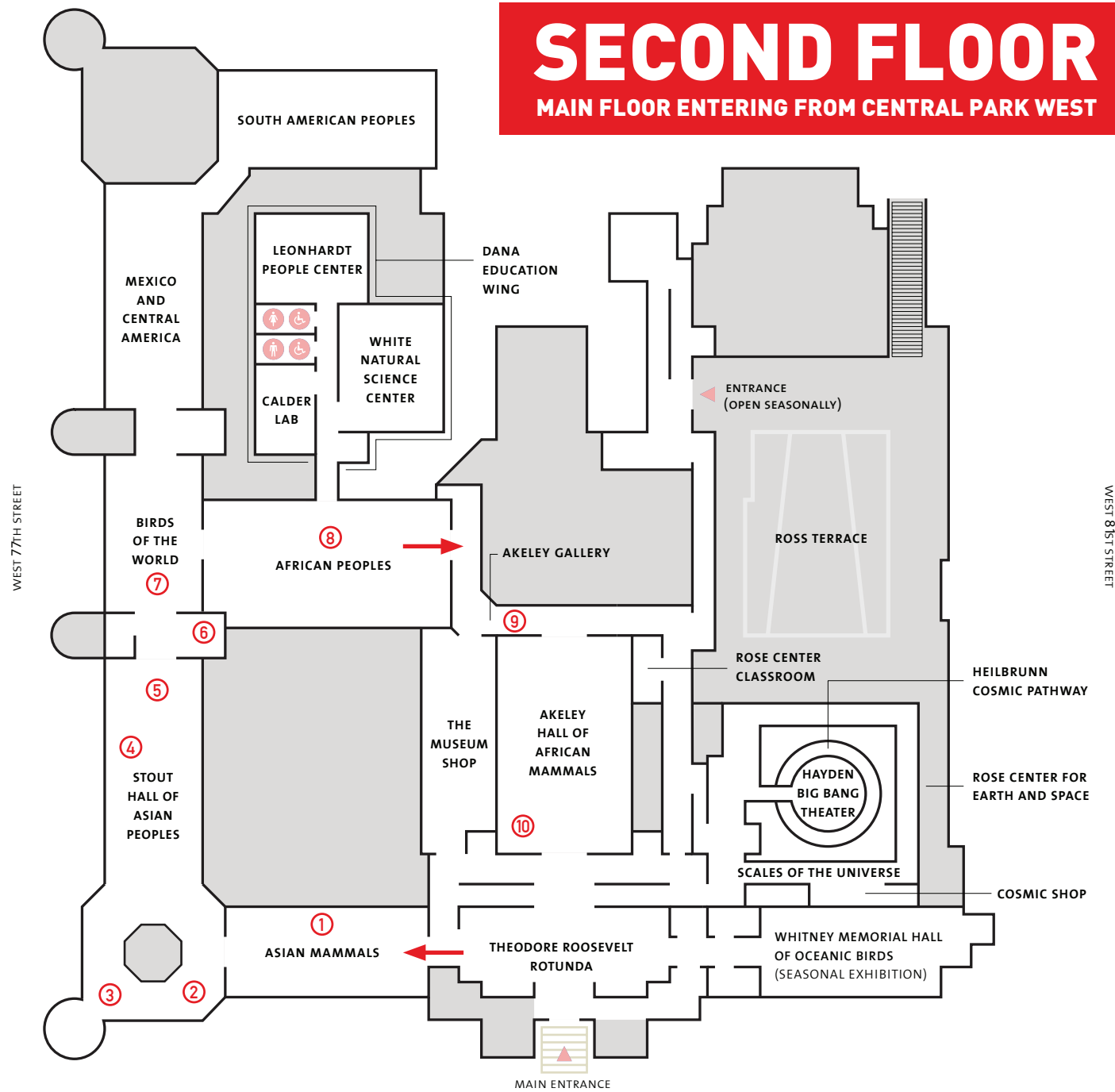
Though its exhibits change from year to year, this museum is frozen in time, bound by nineteenth-century racial classifications that designated human populations as “primitive” or “civilized.” Generations of curators have continued this racist legacy, and millions of visitors are invited to take them for granted.

We are here to amplify the tradition of resistance to this way of depicting history, and to respect the Indigenous artifacts and ancestral presence that have been collected, through acts of violent appropriation, and gathered, under this roof. We are here to protest this monument of white supremacy on a day that should be renamed. And we are here to demand the removal of the Teddy Roosevelt statue that stands outside the museum.

This is an alternative tour of the exhibits on the Second Floor. It is only a sample of how deeply flawed the museum continues to be.

SECOND FLOOR

MAIN FLOOR ENTERING FROM CENTRAL PARK WEST



* Museum admission is by donation – if you are getting your own ticket, pay as little or as much as you would like *

* The tour begins in the Hall of Asian Mammals – once you have your ticket, wait for the guides there *

* After the tour, we will gather on the front steps by the statue of Theodore Roosevelt for a speak-out at 5:15pm *

Please add your own comments to the map, take a photo, and tag it with [#decolonizethisplace](https://twitter.com/decolonizethisplace)

RESPECT, REMOVE, RENAME.

1 HALL OF ASIAN MAMMALS

Shot down, stuffed, and hauled to the museum for display, these species made their way here through the circuits of empire. As these animals were collected, the fields, forests, and waters which they shared with Adivasis (the indigenous of the land) were typically seized by colonial authorities, and the human residents were displaced and dispossessed. This process continues today with the creation of “wildlife preserves,” depopulated for the use of tourists, just as the tradition of Indigenous resistance continues.

2 MAN’S RISE TO CIVILIZATION

The central pillar of this hall tells us that civilization was achieved 5,000 years ago with the invention of writing, science, and law. In the case on the right, Koryak and Chuckee peoples are placed historically in the Pleistocene – which ended more than 11,000 years ago. Yet these peoples, who are being exhibited as examples of a long-extinct primitive phase of humanity, are actually living on the land today. Why are they stranded in prehistory? Upstairs on the third floor, Eastern Woodlands and Plains Indians as well as Pacific Peoples are likewise exhibited as if they have no history of their own.

3 JEWS OF ASIA

This display, which references the continuity of “Israel,” recounts Asian Jewish diasporic history as a way of normalizing the Israeli state’s claims to “ancestral lands.” For example, it uses the historical customs of the Bukharan Jews to legitimize the Israeli state’s policy of the Jewish “right of return.” We ask why this exhibit has been modelled this way when the Palestinian right of return to ethnically cleansed villages is not only denied by the occupying forces but also erased from U.S. public opinion by Zionist voices and powerful institutions like this museum.

4 MAHATMA GANDHI

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is heroized here as the man who brought India into “modernity.” Gandhi was one of the leaders of India’s independence struggle, but he also upheld the profoundly unequal caste system—a hierarchy that continues to oppress, and be protested by, the Dalit movement. Often cited as an inspiration for civil rights advocates, Gandhi’s legacy of racist attitudes towards African peoples has been successfully protested by faculty and students at the University of Ghana, resulting in the recent removal of his statue in the capital of Accra.

5 HALL OF ISLAM

This hall presents an extreme exoticizing of Islam as seen through Western eyes. This perspective is characterized by a particular obsession with the “women of Islam” who, in many Westerners’ minds, can never be free. Why try to compartmentalize an entire religious culture into a singular box? This is how the “other” is constructed. This simplification is what allows Islamophobia to thrive – the same belief system that justifies drone strikes and the “War on Terror.” Lastly, where is the Hall of Christendom?

MIDEWIWIN DISPLAY (3rd floor, action in progress)

There is a cloistered nook in the Hall of Eastern Woodlands Indians where sacred beings of the Midewiwin tradition have been hanging naked for over 50 years. The otter pouches and medicine beings in those cases are awake, aware, and they are tired. Anishinaabe women are drumming to feed the ancestors and decolonize the space through sound.

6 HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN

Henry Fairfield Osborn – paleontologist, eugenicist, and museum president from 1908-1933 – oversaw the installation of the first dioramas. The words on his bust celebrate him as a godlike reanimator of the past: “For him the dry bones came to life and giant forms of ages past rejoined the pageant of the living.” But these are bones pulled from colonized land, and they are witness to histories older and deeper than Osborn. His beliefs in the racial superiority of Nordic peoples shaped the arrangement of the museum’s collections, and they have not been substantially altered over the last century.

7 BIRDS OF THE WORLD

The “conservation” of North American birds was pioneered by taxidermist John James Audubon, who shot as many of the same species as possible in order to construct life models for his life studies. He often painted while the bird was in its death throes to capture the most vivid plumage colors. These mass killings in the service of capturing rare species for posterity set the tone for the collecting practices at natural history museums like this one, and stimulated the barbaric trade in fashion for feathers and animal skins. Today, birds like the King Penguin are on the frontline of extinction from climate change – a side-effect of the consumer economy of killing and display.

8 HALL OF AFRICAN PEOPLES

Here, the vast multiplicity of African social and cultural life is thinned out and labelled like flora and fauna. Africans are depicted as pre-modern, bearing curious instruments and colorful costumes, instead of as present-day people. Discrimination against African diasporic peoples is everywhere reinforced by these primitivist stereotypes. The Black liberation tradition has fought long and hard against their legacy. Most recently, and in a very militant fashion, the Black Lives Matter movement has confronted the state forces that bring down racist violence on black and brown communities. Lastly, why is there no Hall of European Peoples?

9 COUNTDOWN TO ZERO: DEFEATING DISEASE

This exhibit celebrates the eradication of smallpox, and the hope that guinea worm disease and polio may be cured soon. In the early twentieth century, eugenicists who met regularly at the museum were preoccupied with “inherited diseases.” They popularized the belief that Indigenous, African American, and many immigrant population groups were genetically “defective,” or “feeble-minded,” and therefore not eligible for full American citizenship. They argued for sterilization programs and ultimately for closing the immigration door, which swung shut in 1924. The International Eugenics Congress was still meeting here in 1932.

10 CARL AKELEY HALL OF AFRICAN MAMMALS

As they forcibly extracted resources from African peoples, so-called naturalists and explorers like Carl Akeley collected a variety of animals across the continent. Their activities led to species’ endangerment, the flourishing of the fur and ivory trade, and widespread deforestation. Akeley was a hunting companion of Teddy Roosevelt and intimate of Belgian King Albert I, who succeeded King Leopold II as the arch-colonizer of the Congo. If you roll up this flyer and put it to your eye, you are looking down the scope of Carl Akeley’s gun. Each of the dioramas you have visited is a snapshot of domination: remember this when you look through the glass to see a human on display.

WE DEMAND: REMOVE THE STATUE



*white supremacist monuments
have no place in our city
or our cultural institutions*

decolonizethisplace

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY 2017 DECLARATION

WE ARE GATHERED HERE AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY TO ISSUE THREE DEMANDS:

RENAME — Many U.S. cities have chosen to do what is just and renamed Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day. Why is New York not among them? There is no reason for holding out any longer. It's time for the Mayor and City Council to stand on the right side of history. New York City sits on the territory of the Lenape, and over one hundred thousand Indigenous people live on this territory today-- more than any other city in the United States! Let's honor the persistent presence of Indigenous Americans, despite attempts toward their elimination and reject the celebration of imperial conquest. This public holiday must be relaunched as an occasion to respect our Indigenous brothers and sisters and no longer commemorate a figure widely associated with exploitation and enslavement. American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) officials have told us that they will neither advocate for nor enter the public conversation about renaming Columbus Day. Their position of non-advocacy functions as an action against Indigenous peoples. Now is the time to reconsider and rename.

REMOVE — The equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt on Central Park West outside the AMNH has often been cited as the most hated monument in New York City. It's easy to see why. Flanked by figures that appear to be Native and African stereotypes in a position of subservience, the statue is a stark embodiment of the white patrician supremacy that Roosevelt himself espoused and promoted and is an affront to all who enter the museum. Statuary is not forever and a monument that glorifies racial and gender hierarchies should be retired from public view. The movement that began in the South with the removal of Confederate flags and generals from public display has come to New York. The statue is city-owned and sits on land managed by the Parks Department. The Mayor's commission to review "symbols of hate" should prioritize its removal and City Council members should all agree--it's time to take it down.

RESPECT — Why do Indigenous, Asian, Latin American, and African cultural artifacts reside in the AMNH, while their Greek and Roman counterparts are housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art across the park? Because New York's premier scientific museum continues to honor the bogus racial classification that relegates colonized peoples to the domain of Nature and the colonizers to the realm of Culture and Science. It's time to accept that the Hall of African Peoples does not belong in the same exhibition framework as the Akeley Hall of African Mammals, and that Indigenous or Asian peoples cannot be represented in ways that are akin to the display of fossils and meteorites. These arrangements should be reviewed and reconceived by representatives of the "exhibited" populations. Human remains, sacred things, and objects of power stolen from Indigenous peoples should be placed under the authority of their descendants. The museum, which receives \$17m of public funding annually (a sum greater than that allotted to the entire borough of Queens), has long been an embarrassment to New Yorkers and tourists. It needs a serious renovation, to be undertaken by a diverse range of curators drawn from the populations featured in the museum.

Recently, the museum leadership announced plans to renovate the Northwest Coast Hall, its first cultural gallery, largely untouched since it was built at the turn of the twentieth century. While we welcome this long overdue initiative, the false and degrading representations in the rest of the culture halls remain as a present reminder of inaction and colonial violence. AMNH must immediately begin a formal institution-wide decolonization process that addresses the saturated colonial infrastructure of the museum as a whole. An independent Decolonization Commission must be established to assess the colonial mentality, past and present, that presides over the institution. A full-time Decolonization Officer must be appointed, an internal decolonizing working group must be established, and town hall meetings must be scheduled to allow those affected by the racisms perpetuated in the culture halls to speak publicly.

Moreover, the educational guides provided to teachers and docents fail to properly acknowledge present day peoples. They perpetuate racist stereotypes and demeaning representations, which inevitably reflect back on the exhibits themselves. It is shocking that, in 2017, school children are still subjected to this level of institutional violence in the name of education. This kind of violence should no longer be tolerated. With more than 2 million children visiting the museum annually, the NYC Department of Education should initiate its own independent assessment of the AMNH. This review should evaluate how the museum is addressing, and trying to rectify, the harmful effects of misrepresentation, incorrect information, and structural racism upon New York's diverse school populations. As a publicly-subsidized educational institution, the AMNH must be required to uphold the dignity of all peoples in this city.

NYC Stands with Standing Rock // Decolonize This Place // Black Youth Project 100
South Asian Solidarity Initiative // Eagle and Condor Community Center

2ND ANNUAL ANTI-COLUMBUS DAY TOUR

DECOLONIZE THIS MUSEUM



RENAME THE DAY
REMOVE THE STATUE
RESPECT THE ANCESTORS

WE HEAL

#notmyhero

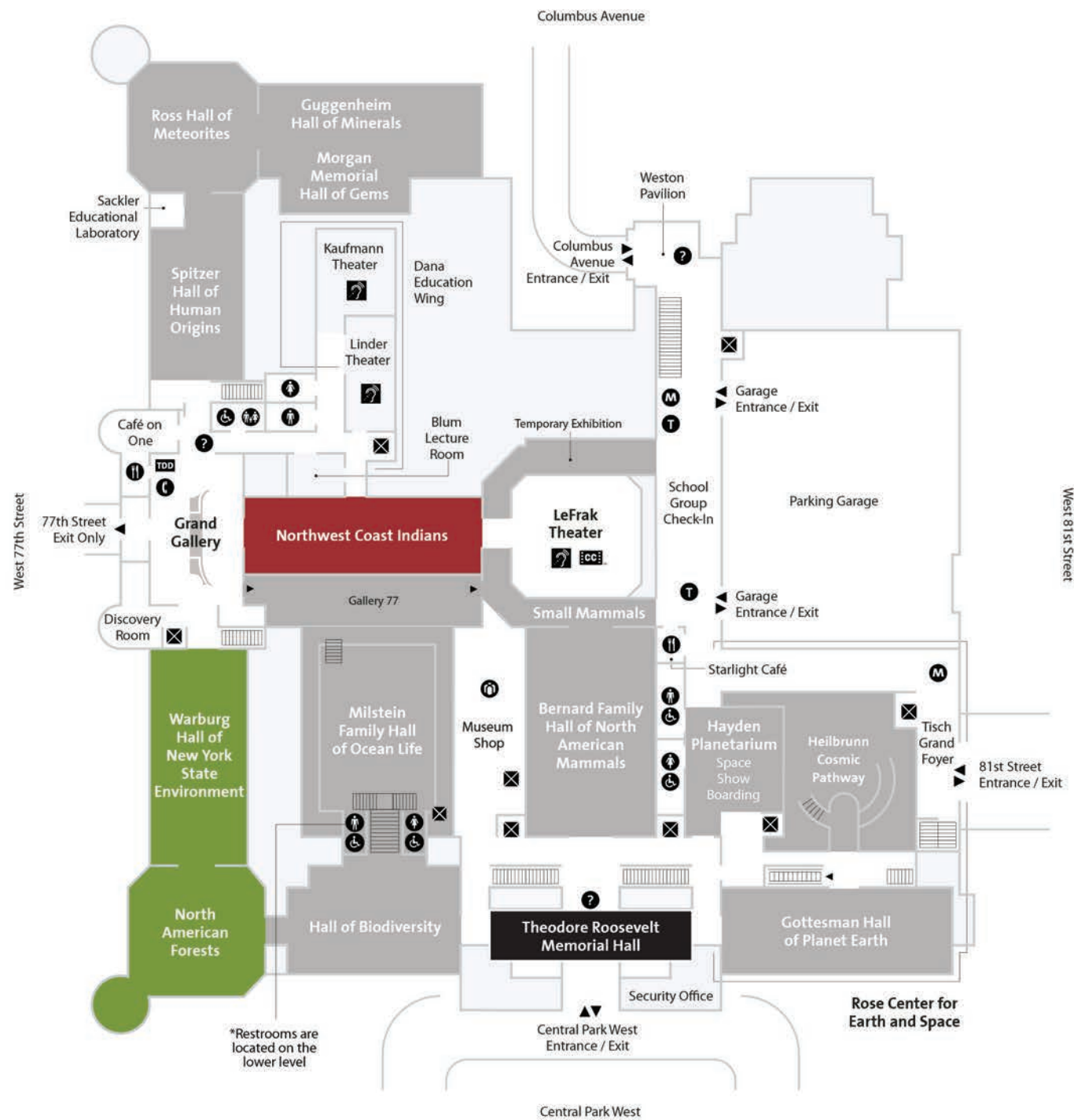
#decolonizethisplace

We begin today by acknowledging that we are standing on the ancestral territory of the Lenni Lenape. This was, and is, their land—a reality that all of us who have come here must acknowledge. Our action today, at its most fundamental level, stands in solidarity with the Lenape, and all Indigenous peoples, whose land was stolen to create the settler states and who continue to live under siege, surveillance, and colonial structural violence on their own occupied land. We stand with our comrades advancing Indigenous resurgence and decolonization through ongoing settler colonial oppression. We stand in support of the return of their lands. This is where we must begin.

REMOVE THE STATUE • RENAME THE DAY • RESPECT THE ANCESTORS

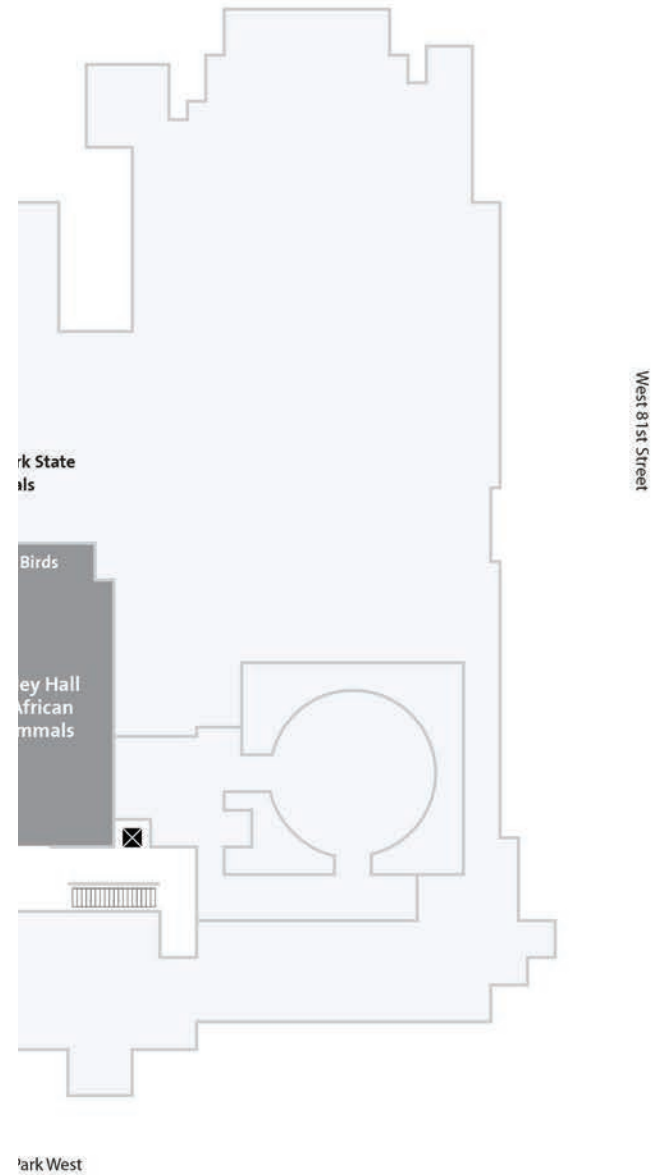
Decolonize This Place

First Floor



Third Floor

us Avenue



**RENAME
THE DAY**

HALL OF EASTERN WOODLANDS INDIANS

Ask yourself where you stand. You are in the Hall of Eastern Woodlands Indians: half a continent contained in an afterthought, dust settling and lights burning out on leftover real estate. You are standing over, above, looking down on things older and wiser than you: a hide robe with histories of Nations, a birchbark map of the world, a medicine bundle whose contents were not meant for your eyes. You are standing eye to eye with someone else's ancestors, and they are looking back. And above all, you are standing on what is still the territory of the Lenape people.

HALL OF PLAINS INDIANS

There is no greater insult than to display stuffed animals, petrified trees, fake humans, and sacred objects behind these glass displays. As with the Native American that flanks Theodore Roosevelt's horse outside, the "Indians" are presented here in an effort to recreate their "life" as death and to set the stage for their inevitable, destined replacement. The wall texts are not only historically inaccurate, they are hurtful. The Ghost Dance Prophecy did not fade away; it was violently suppressed through the massacre of three hundred men, women, and children at Wounded Knee. Indigenous people do not struggle to adapt to modernity; they are faced with genocidal techniques, coerced into treaties and then denied the rights pursuant to those treaties. Hundreds of treaties broken. Contrary to everything displayed here, the "Plains" was and is home to living beings and relations. The resistance at Standing Rock is a reminder of centuries of struggle for sovereignty over land, water and air, which continues to this day.

HALL OF PACIFIC PEOPLES

This island peoples of the vast Pacific Ocean were "offered" to ethnographer Margaret Mead, to classify and exhibit as she saw fit. The organization of the displays tells us more about her privileged viewpoint than they do about the complex lives of these peoples. How can one anthropologist's version of the cultural traditions of Polynesians, Melanesians, and Micronesians be so detached from the long history of colonization in Oceania? American visitors should reflect on the silence about the U.S. occupation of Hawai'i, American Samoa, Guåhan (Guam), Palau, and the Northern Mariana Islands, and how their residents fought to avoid being placed on the frontlines of Cold War militarism. Commenting on the fates of Marshall Islanders irradiated from nuclear testing, Henry Kissinger infamously said, "There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?"



How to Contribute to the Snapchat Story!

1. Snap throughout the Anti-Columbus Day Tour
2. Post snaps to the public "Our Story: New York City" and/or "Our Story: American Museum of Natural History"
3. Wait. Snapchat will add all snaps to the Snap Map
4. After the tour, open Snap Map + enjoy!

**#DECOLONIZE
THISPLACE**

#NOTMYHERO



@decolonizethisplace @decolonize_this @decolonizethisplace

SECOND FLOOR TOUR CONTINUES

HALL OF AFRICAN PEOPLES

Look around, the vast multiplicity of African social and cultural life is positioned outside of modern time, in the past tense. With such a cacophony of sounds and colorful costumes, there is little space to ask: How did all these artifacts and costumes arrive here? And how do they perpetuate primitivist stereotypes which continue to feed discriminatory treatment of diasporic African populations today? Consider the German genocide of the OvaHerero/Mbanderu and Nama people from 1904-1908. 100,000 people died -- half of the Nama. Heads of victims were severed and sold to collectors of race science and medical students. Just last month, it was reported that one such collector later sold four skulls to this museum, where they were just discovered. In storage. Currently, representatives of the OvaHerero and Nama are calling both for a genocide memorial in the museum and repatriation of the remains. This is what a decolonial demand looks like.

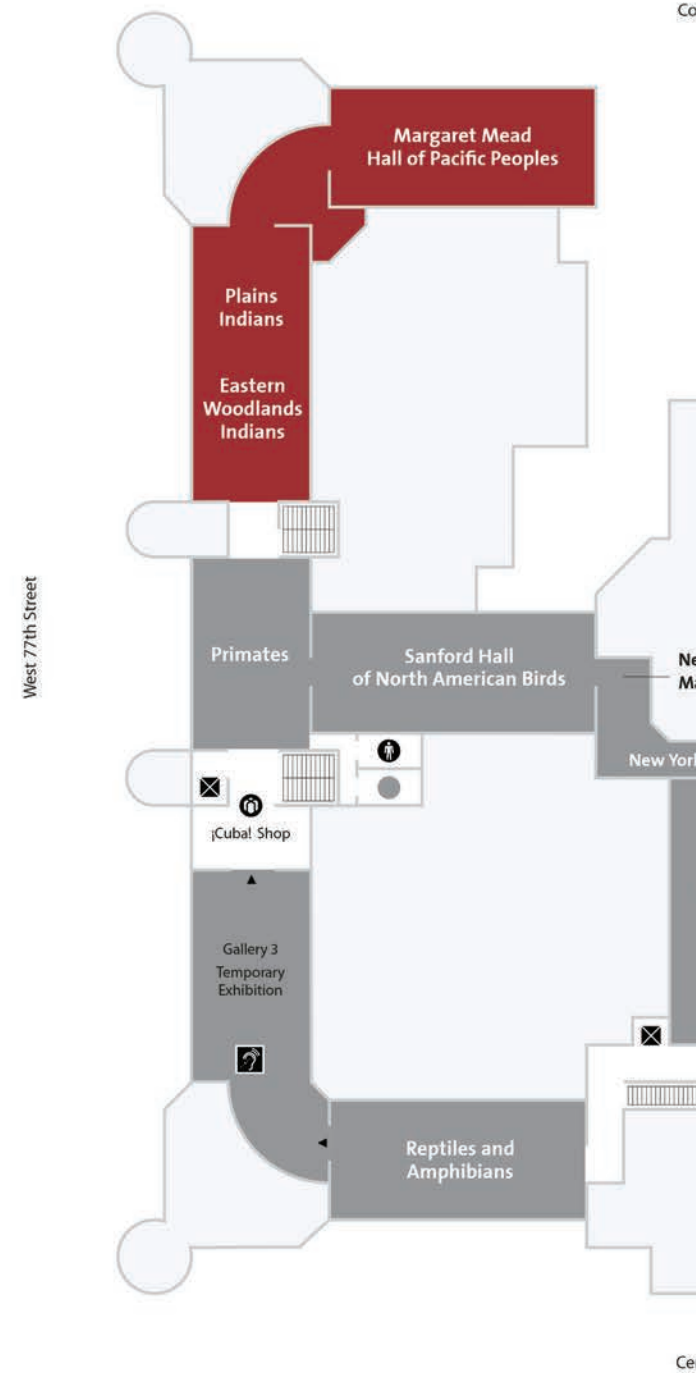
SLAVERY IN AFRICA & THE AFRICAN TRADITION IN AMERICA

This short corridor, which occupies less than .003% of the entire space of the museum, leads to nowhere. This is where the museum accounts for slavery in Africa and the African Tradition in America. Here we are offered a scant overview of how slavers coerced pre-colonial African communities into participating in the trade of captives. Yet absent is any reference as to how slavery on the African continent inflicted harm on indigenous ways of living and weakened resistance to the coming European colonization. Here, slaves are recognized as human only insofar as they carry over some African cultural practices into their new countries of captivity. There is no mention of the millions of Africans who died on enslaved ships en route to the Americas or how they were forced into work upon arrival. No mention that those who survived and their offspring built the economic backbone of the United States and other settler-colonies throughout the Western Hemisphere.

HALL OF AFRICAN MAMMALS IN AMERICA

As they forcibly extracted resources from African peoples, so-called naturalists and explorers like Carl Akeley collected a variety of animals across the continent. Their activities led to species' endangerment, the flourishing of the fur and ivory trade, and widespread deforestation. Akeley was a hunting companion of Teddy Roosevelt and intimate of Belgian King Albert I, who succeeded King Leopold II as the arch-colonizer of the Congo. If you roll up this flyer and put it to your eye, you are looking down the scope of Carl Akeley's gun. This is a way of seeing. Each of the dioramas you have visited is a snapshot of domination: remember this when you look through the glass to see a human on display.

Decolonize This Place



THEODORE ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL HALL

Theodore Roosevelt was not a noble man of science. He viewed land, territories, animals and people as his to be tamed, to be controlled and sometimes to be destroyed. As a "frontiersman" he proclaimed "I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indian is the dead Indian, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn't like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth." His devotion to conservation is celebrated in this hall, but it was driven by a desire to dominate Nature. His ethnically cleansed wilderness parks were conceived as places of refuge and recreation for elite White Anglo Saxon Protestants. As governor and as a president he expanded U.S. empire into the Caribbean and the Pacific with Big Stick diplomacy. He justified direct U.S. intervention in the affairs of other American nations if it was in this country's interest. He advanced white supremacy in the domain of law, science and state power. Today, this museum still stands as a testament to his vision, and the statue outside is its embodiment. It cannot be separated from the museum. It causes daily damage by perpetuating stereotypes of the Indigenous and African figures obedient at his feet. The public celebration of white male imperial rule has no place in this day and age.

DIORAMA OF CHIEF ORATAM & PETER STUYVESANT

In 1500 there were 7000 Lenape Indians in what is now Manhattan, what they called "Manhatta." By 1700 there are 200. Where did they go? Rather than account for their death, relocations and current lives, this diorama represents a meeting between the Chief Oratam and Dutch Governor Peter Stuyvesant in 1660 and refers to what is now the Bowery as a "meeting place." Oratam signed the peace represented here after two years of the Dutch waging a vicious war against the Lenape and the British. The Lenape are denied their history, their present, and their role as caretakers and owners of this territory. Why is the diorama here in this Hall? Because Roosevelt's family can be traced to their Dutch ancestors who came to New York around the time this supposedly amicable meeting took place.

VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!

Roosevelt ascended politically as a General in the Spanish-American war. He was crucial in establishing the United States as a colonial overlord of Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii and Guam. Let us acknowledge the people of Puerto Rico, a colonial territory of the United States annexed by Roosevelt. And, let us honor their work of mutual relief and collective resistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria as the colonial government leaves them to fend for themselves. Viva Puerto Rico Libre!

PLAQUE FOR HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN

Osborn, the most formative of the museum's presidents, was central to the community of eugenicists who met regularly within these walls to plot how to "save" the national gene pool from dilution by lesser breeds of men and women. A close associate of Roosevelt, Osborne's belief in the racial superiority of Nordic peoples helped to close the immigration "door" in 1924, and it has shaped the arrangement and display of the museum's collections down to this day.

GIANT SEQUOIA TREE

The rings on this cross section of an ancient Sequoia tree, felled by settler-loggers in 1893, are correlated here with the Eurocentric marking of 1400 years of human history. The museum finds it important to highlight that Napoleon seized power in France in 1800 A.D., Yale was founded in 1701, and Columbus "discovered" Orinoco River in South America in 1500. In a decolonial museum, these dates would tell a different story and different histories. It would acknowledge Indigenous life in the forests of California, the clear-cutting of Redwood trees by agricultural speculators, the ransacking of lumber for settler homes and towns, and the growing threat to these and other trees of drought stress from global warming. Where fire management in forests was once a sustainable pre-contact practice, forest fires in California are "fought" today by incarcerated people who are predominantly African American and who are compensated a dollar per hour. As we look at the rings of this Sequoia, let us also think of the genocides and ecocides, and movements and struggles, that we hold within our skins like the bark of a tree.

AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT

Indigenous people! We were here in "The Forest Primeval," cultivating and communicating with the land in ways that left no scar. We raised forests and planted corn. The land was not 'untouched'; we were here. We were here in 1790 when settlements spread; we were here in 1840 and 1870 despite broken treaties and forced removals. We were here in the 1950s when agriculture was 'perfected', as a calculation for converting land into the purest profit possible. Like the land, we have been cut apart, colonized, commodified. But we are here still.

HALL OF NORTHWEST COAST INDIANS

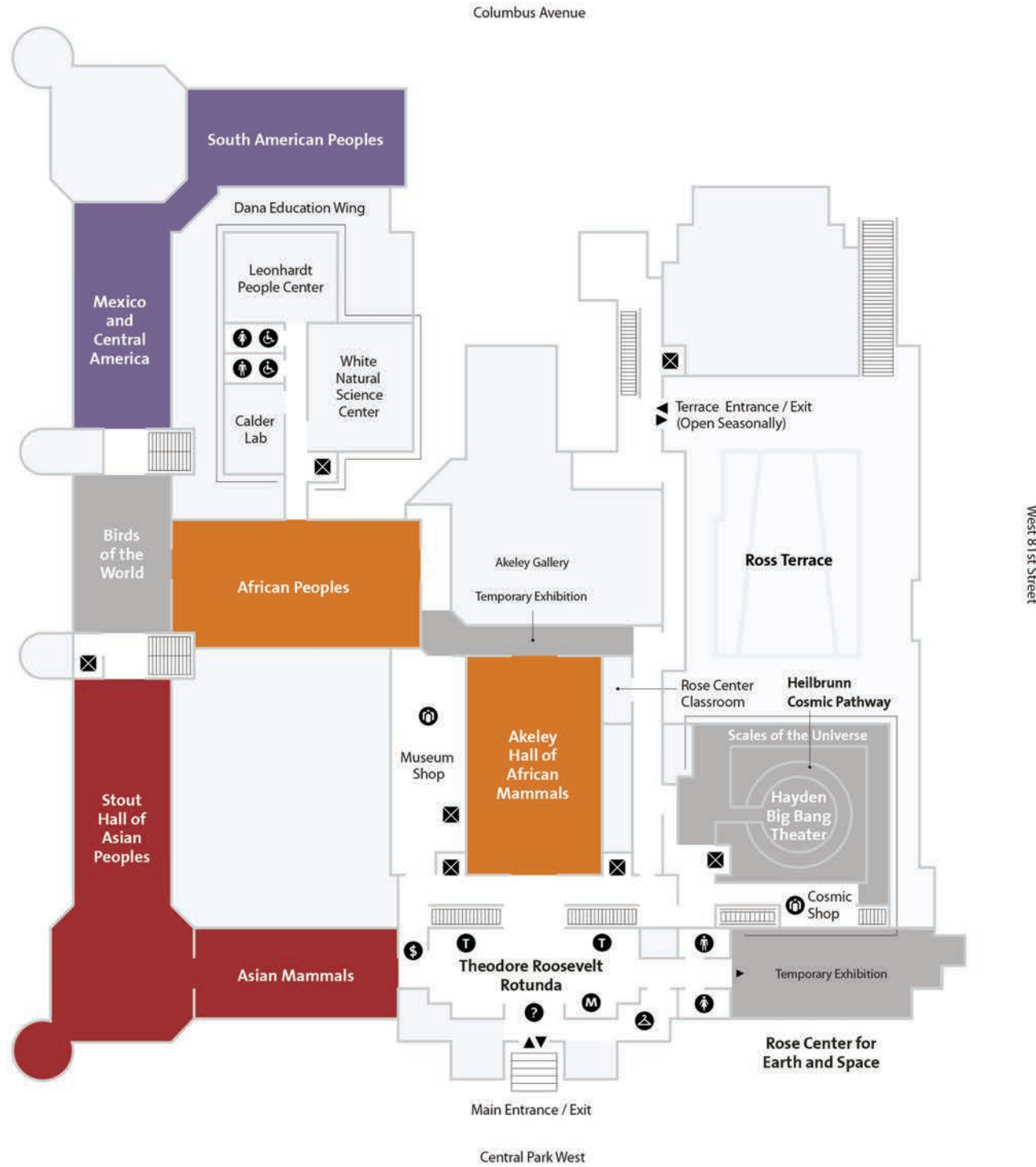
Next to the Hall of Human Origins we stand outside the doors to the "Hall of Northwest Coast Indians." This is the museum's first cultural hall, built around the turn of the twentieth century. Museum curators recently announced that they will renovate it, in consultation with Indigenous groups whose possessions are displayed there. It took them more than a century to decide to address the harms done by these exhibits. How long will it be before they conclude that the whole museum needs to be overhauled? If and when they do, how can the harms generated over the course of the last century be recognized and recorded? Will they retain any of these mannequins, which have only served to denigrate and dehumanize? How will they acknowledge their role in ongoing colonization? What will it take for them to recognize the right of Indigenous advocates and curators, not simply to be consultants, but to make real decisions about how they will be represented.

RESPECT THE ANCESTORS

REMOVE THE STATUE

Decolonize This Place

Second Floor



was reactivated when US forces swept through their homelands during the initial stages of the "War on Terror". They are continuously subjected to lethal drone attacks by the U.S in both Pakistan and Aghanistan.

Palestine, the museum amplifies the non-indigenous Zionist claim to a land while simultaneously ignoring the indigenous Palestinian population - whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim - who have always been there, long before the violent creation of the State of Israel.

INDIA

This exhibit is devoted to what is now known as India. The British are sometimes praised for uniting India through colonial rule. As a colonizer, the British actively fostered the conformity of sexual and gendered roles to religious orthodoxy. So called unification was carried out to more efficiently extract massive amounts of wealth for the Empire. They also used the tactic of divide and rule to control the people, and exploited fault lines between castes, classes, religious, linguistic, and ethnic communities.

Mahatma Gandhi is heroized here as a leader of India's independence struggle against the British. But as with the "founding fathers" of other nation-states--including the United States--the heroization of Gandhi ignores his reinforcement of structures of oppression. He is often cited as an inspiration for civil rights advocates, but Gandhi's legacy of racist attitudes towards African peoples is well documented, and he was an upholder of the caste system in India.

The Hindu caste system is a hierarchical ranking of people where so-called "lower caste" communities are regarded subhuman, undeserving of basic rights. Dalit today is a term of empowerment claimed by oppressed communities formerly called "untouchable." "Lower caste" communities have used the term Bahujan as they represent the actual majority of the population. Although caste discrimination is outlawed in the Indian constitution, Dalits and Bahujans are often persecuted, forced to live separately from the rest of the population, sexually assaulted, and killed while the upper caste perpetrators of these acts remain unpunished. Refusing this systemic oppression, a massive movement of Dalits now exists in India. As Dalit anti-caste revolutionary Babasaheb Ambedkar said, "caste is not a division of labor, it is a division of laborers."

HALL OF ASIAN MAMMALS

The people indigenous to the lands in this Hall have always co-existed with these animals. They shared the fields, the forests, and the waters. When wealthy conservationists like Theodore Roosevelt created national, or "wilderness," parks they actually displaced and dispossessed indigenous people. The parks were exported to Africa and Asia as "wildlife preserves" that elites visit and admire, to view and hunt charismatic mega-fauna undisturbed by people whom they consider to be social inferiors. And look around! Just like a wildlife preserve, this hall is also made for spectacular consumption. Yet, contemporary struggles of Adivasis (the indigenous of people of the land) against resource-extraction and land-confiscation have no place in this way of looking at nature.

AZTEC STONE OF THE SUN

While some artifacts in the hall of Mexico are "authentic," others are skewed replicas with inaccurate and outdated attribution, and some are not named at all. One example is the Stone of the Sun. We are told that it is "mistakenly known as a calendar stone." Yet this is what the Mexica know as a "sun stone," and an obsidian circle is used to view eclipses, the sun and meditate on our own reflection. The replica in the exhibit is of the sacred Aztec Calendar that tracks time through the balance of interdependent elements and energies that sustain life and order in the cosmos. It is still used today for this purpose, and, contrary to what the exhibit suggests, it has never been associated with the worship of a sun "venerated above all things" and "sustained through blood sacrifice." By rejecting the agency of a sacred culture, the museum as an institution negates the reality and genius of a humankind that uses time to balance the interdependence of all beings. It instead, reproduces a narrative based on a supremacy rooted in insecurity and fear.

CHINESE WEDDING CHAIR

These are the words museum educators have students learn before they take class trips to the Hall of Asian Peoples: "Dynasty", "divination", "dowry", "ancestor worship", "shamanism". This hall showcases the museum's imagination of life in Asia before European contact. It ignores the violent history of the United States in the region and its continued military occupation of many Asian nations. In these dioramas, you see a small selection of the Museum's 60,000 cultural artifacts plundered during colonial expeditions in Asia. One such object is the Chinese Wedding Chair. It depicts a Chinese bride with her face and body hidden within the confines of the ornate carriage. Curators explain Chinese matrimony as a sexist tradition rooted in the superstition of bad luck. This framing omits the role of Western patriarchy in creating the stereotype of East Asian women as exotic and submissive. Such portrayals incite the ongoing sexual violence against and exploitation of Asian women.

HALL OF SOUTH AMERICAN PEOPLES

Welcome to the Orient of the Americas! Here, among the sacred gold artifacts, mummified heads and replicas of Indigenous elders, shamans, and warriors, you will find a spectacle of mysticism to match your fantasies about ancient civilizations and Indigenous cultures. Pizarro described Cuzco, the Inka capital, as Rome's equal, yet the metal trinkets and ritual funerary garbs on display do a poor job of expressing the sophistication and beauty of a culture that far surpassed the achievements of Europe at the time, and whose linguistic refinement is a living legacy among the Quechua peoples of the Andes today.

SHUAR PEOPLES

This exhibit gives priority to the name (Jivaros, or "Savages") the Spanish gave to the Shuar people after they successfully resisted the conquest of their Amazon lands. The Spanish were driven out, but the predators keep coming back. Today they lust after the reserves of gold and other precious metals that are in contention between the national government and Chinese mining corporations. We are the Shuar peoples, Guardians of the Amazon, protectors of Mother Earth, her sacred medicines and ancestral truths. We rise, we reclaim, we rename, and we heal.

JERICO BEFORE JOSHUA AND JEWS IN ASIA

Here, we see a diorama about archeological digs in the world's oldest city, Jericho, in Palestine. It references the biblical figure of Joshua. His alleged military conquest of ancient Canaan and destruction of the city is used today to advance the settler colonization of the West Bank. Archeological digs are routinely used to "prove" that the Biblical narratives are historically accurate, and to support that claim that all of the Occupied Territories belong to the Land of Israel. The nearby display on "Jews of Asia" also upholds the historical continuity of the Land of Israel by recounting the story of Mizrahi Jews as a way of normalizing Israel's right to "ancestral lands." In most of the other exhibits on this tour, we see how the museum relegates indigenous peoples to the past tense. By contrast, in these exhibits relating to historic

HALL OF ISLAM

This hall presents an extreme 'othering' of Islam as seen through a whitewashed colonizer's lens. This perspective is characterized by a particular obsession with, and dehumanization of, the "women of Islam" who, in many Westerners' minds, can solely exist within the confines of heteropatriarchy. The Muslim community is not a monolith, especially along the lines of gender and sexuality. This hall fails to recognize the complexities of these experiences and cultures. There is also the notion that warriors are constructed in Islam and such a narrow classification of an entire religious culture is what has legitimized Islamophobia. This is the same belief system that justifies surveillance, drone strikes, and the 'War on Terror.'

PATHANS

The Pathans, also known as the Pashtuns, have historically been portrayed as a warlike people. Why is that? For almost 200 years they have had to contend with a series of invading forces--from the British, the Soviets, and, most recently, the Americans--all aimed at suppressing their efforts at autonomy. This community's traditional homeland is in the mountainous borderlands straddling Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their community remains fractured because of a line drawn by Sir Mortimer Durand in 1893 while negotiating the end of the second Anglo-Afghan War, another example of a colonial wound that remains open. Pathans' practice of resistance to foreign occupations is deeply ingrained, and

SECOND FLOOR TOUR CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

WE DEMAND: REMOVE THE STATUE



*white supremacist monuments
have no place in our city
or our cultural institutions*

decolonizethisplace

PUBLIC LETTER ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY 2018

On October 8th, we will be returning to the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) for the third year in a row. Unlike the guided anti-Columbus tours of previous years, the next visit to the museum's dusty cultural halls will be fully participatory and will culminate with a People's Assembly. Why the change of plan?

Since our first action in 2016, the concept of “decolonizing museums” has entered the mainstream of public opinion. Awareness about the topic has also gone international, impacting museums in the UK and Europe faced with similar challenges to the AMNH. Clearly, the public appetite for pro-active change has grown in scope and urgency, and museum officials have been scrambling to respond. Despite our city's preferred self-image as on the cutting edge, New York's major museums have barely registered this seismic shift, and the AMNH, which has the most heavy lifting to do, risks being left even further behind—solidifying its reputation as a chronically outdated institution, crammed with deeply colonial and faulty representations of culture. While the framing of these contents is firmly rooted in the distant past, the exhibits perform the daily work of reinforcing racist legacies that reside in the minds of the AMNH's visitors.

So, too, the closed room conversations we have conducted periodically with AMNH curators and officials seem to have run their course. Those we meet with are usually always in agreement with us about the need for a decolonization process (with full attention to demands for reparations and repatriation of human remains and sacred objects) but we feel the oppressive weight of institutional inertia in the room, and the responses are too measured and painfully slow in coming. In a recent correspondence with us, the AMNH acknowledged the problem: “We recognize that the Museum's 150-year history and that of its collections are embedded

within the larger history...of western colonization....We also recognize that some aspects of the Museum's cultural halls are out of date and include presentations and treatments that do not accurately represent either the cultures presented or the values and perspectives of the Museum today." Accordingly, the AMNH has finally begun its overhaul of the Northwest Coast Hall. But, at the current rate of progress, it will take another fifty years to re-do all of the cultural halls. In the meantime, the cultural violence will continue, and generations of young people will be exposed to the harms generated by degrading representations as they pass through the museum.

As part of our children's education, they have a right to know the full story behind the collecting and the exhibiting of the museum's contents. They should be told how and why the AMNH was the center of the eugenics movement in the early part of the twentieth century. They should learn about the real Teddy Roosevelt, strenuously driven, as he was, by the ideals of male chauvinism and white supremacy, and how those socially destructive values were, and still are, embedded in the museum's classification and framing of materials. They should be informed about the ongoing contribution of these misbeliefs to present-day racism, sexism, and homophobia. They should be prompted to ask why the museum only exhibits the culture of non-Euro/settler peoples i.e. the colonized populations of the world. And, ultimately, they should be encouraged to consider why such cultural halls belong in a museum of natural history at all.

The AMNH likes to describe itself as an educational institution, but there is nothing in the museum that would inspire schoolchildren to ask such questions, even though hundreds of thousands are required to visit annually as part of the New York public school curriculum. As for higher education in the AMNH's would-be peer institutions, the museum tends to feature only in college curricula as a case-study in colonial nostalgia. In our universities, course syllabi are constantly being amended to reflect new schools of thought and breakthroughs in historical knowledge. By contrast, most of the museum's dioramas and exhibits have not been altered in many decades, and many are untouched since they were installed a hundred years ago.

Nor has the museum lent its influential voice to the two other causes we have brought to its doors.

1. It has been silent on the issue of renaming Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day, and it has yet to move forward on the acknowledgement that its building sits on occupied Lenape territory—a decision wholly under its own control. We have condemned this position of non-advocacy and

this reluctance to adopt a Territorial Acknowledgement as aggressive actions against Indigenous peoples. We have demanded that the museum take immediate steps to remedy the harms.

2. In the course of the debate generated by the Mayor's commission to review "symbols of hate" in New York City, the AMNH made no public comment on the fate of the equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt which greets visitors to the museum on Central Park West. The commission was split over the decision to remove the monument—a full half of its members voted for its relocation. Given how integral the statuary and hagiography of Roosevelt is to the AMNH, the museum should have taken on its share of responsibility for addressing the Monument's future rather than punting the decision wholly to the City. Its officials have privately described to us their shame at having to pass by the monument every day, and the time is now long overdue for them to address their "Roosevelt problem." We have demanded that the AMNH leadership publicly state its resolve to rethink this deeply flawed adoration of Roosevelt, which confronts visitors at the entrance and which is further imposed on them inside the museum itself, in the lavish homage on display in the Theodore Roosevelt Rotunda and the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall. The museum is not a private institution, it relies heavily on public funding (upwards of \$17 million annually), and so we all have a right to insist on accountability. As people gather on October 8th, we will ask them to help reclaim the space of the halls through self-organized tours and to imagine a different kind of institution. The assembly to follow will feature reports and testimony from these tours. We will acknowledge the decolonial proposals presented over the last two years, and consider the museum's responses, as outlined above. With these in mind, the assembly will formulate new demands, for adoption by those present. Participants will pledge to pursue these demands with the AMNH's senior officials and board members, and with elected city officials who are ex officio trustees.

Decolonize This Place

NYC Stands with Standing Rock

Signatories: American Indian Community House, Black Youth Project 100, South Asia Solidarity Initiative, Chinatown Art Brigade, Take Back the Bronx, The People's Cultural Plan

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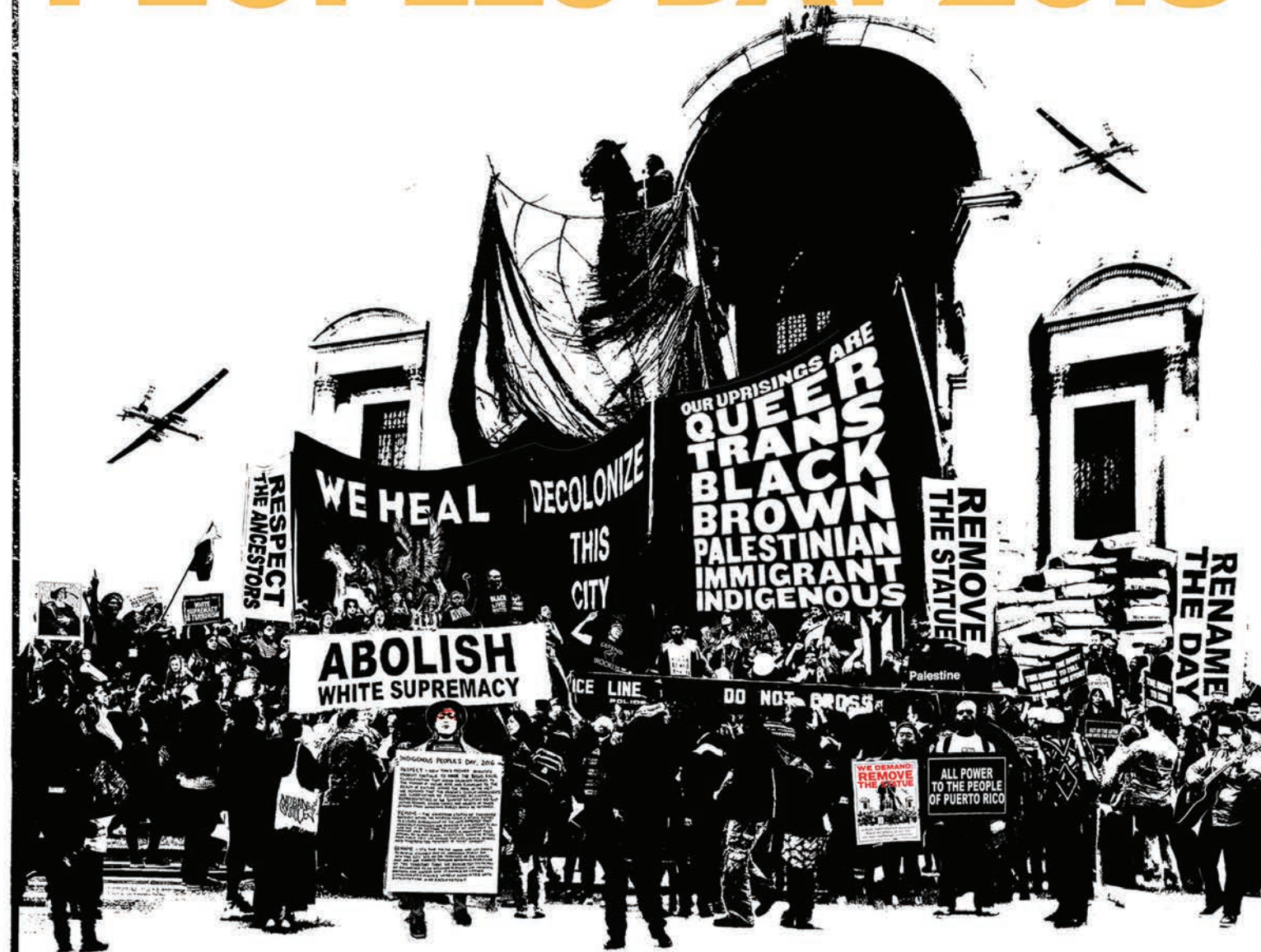
Decolonize This Place

NYC Stands with Standing Rock

Signatories: American Indian Community House, Black Youth Project 100, South Asia Solidarity Initiative, Chinatown Art Brigade, Take Back the Bronx, The People's Cultural Plan, Working Artists and the Greater Economy

#decolonizethisplace

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY 2018



DECOLONIZE! RECLAIM! REIMAGINE!

#decolonizethisplace

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We begin today by acknowledging that we are standing on the homeland of the Lenape, which is, and always has been, a place of Indigenous movement. Our action today, at its most fundamental level, stands in solidarity with the Lenape and all Indigenous peoples, here and beyond, whose land was stolen to create settler states, and who continue to live under siege, surveillance, and colonial structural violence on their own occupied land. We stand with all those advancing Indigenous resurgence and decolonization in the face of colonial oppression. We stand in support of the return of their lands. This acknowledgement is a call to commit, and to take on the responsibility, to dismantle the ongoing effects of settler colonialism. This is where, together, we must begin and persist.

REMOVE THE STATUE · RENAME THE DAY · RESPECT THE ANCESTORS

THEODORE ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL HALL

Theodore Roosevelt viewed land, territories, animals and people as objects to be tamed, controlled and, at times, destroyed. As a "frontiersman" he proclaimed "I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indian is the dead Indian, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn't like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth." His devotion to conservation is celebrated in this hall, but his ethnically cleansed wilderness parks were conceived as places of refuge and recreation for elite White Anglo Saxon Protestants. As president, he expanded U.S. empire into the Caribbean and the Pacific with Big Stick diplomacy, and he advanced white supremacy in the domain of law, science and state power. His corrosive legacy haunts the AMNH, from the monument outside, with its vile, racializing stereotypes, to the adoration of his repellent ideals in the museum's Rotunda and Roosevelt Memorial Hall.

DIORAMA OF CHIEF ORATAM & PETER STUYVESANT

As a result of two years of pressure from Decolonize This Place and its allies, museum officials have begun to recontextualize select dioramas in the AMNH cultural halls. In the plaques around this diorama you will read a critique of colonial representation as it applies to the depiction of Lenape people in this purported meeting between the Chief Oratam and Dutch Governor Peter Stuyvesant in 1660. These are baby steps, but consider how easy they are to undertake--no more than the work of one afternoon. Imagine how quickly all of the exhibits in the cultural halls could be reconceived. Imagine how you would do it!

VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!

Roosevelt ascended politically as a General in the Spanish-American war. He was crucial in establishing the United States as a colonial overlord of Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii and Guam. Let us acknowledge the people of Puerto Rico, a colonial territory of the United States annexed by Roosevelt. And, let us honor their work of mutual relief and collective rebuilding in the wake of Hurricane Maria, and after the colonial government left them to fend for themselves. The resistance continues. Viva Puerto Rico Libre!

PLAQUE FOR HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN

Osborn, the most formative of the museum's presidents, was central to the community of eugenicists who met regularly within these walls to plot how to "save" the national gene pool from dilution by lesser breeds of men and women. A close associate of Roosevelt, Osborn's belief in the racial superiority of Nordic peoples helped to close the immigration "door" in 1924, and it has shaped the arrangement walls and display of the museum's collections down to this day.

PROGRAM

3:30

Welcome and Orientation / Meet in Theodore Roosevelt Hall

4:00

Self-Guided Walks / Follow the Pink on the Maps

5:00

Decolonial Gathering / Meet by The Grand Canoe



How to Contribute to the Snapchat Story!

1. Snap throughout Indigenous Peoples Day Action
2. Publicly post snaps to the Snap Map by sending snaps to "Our Story" and/or "Our Story: AMNH"
3. Wait. Snapchat will add all snaps to the Snap Map
4. After the action, open Snap Map + enjoy!

#DECOLONIZETHISPLACE
#DECOLONIZETHISMUSEUM



@decolonizethisplace



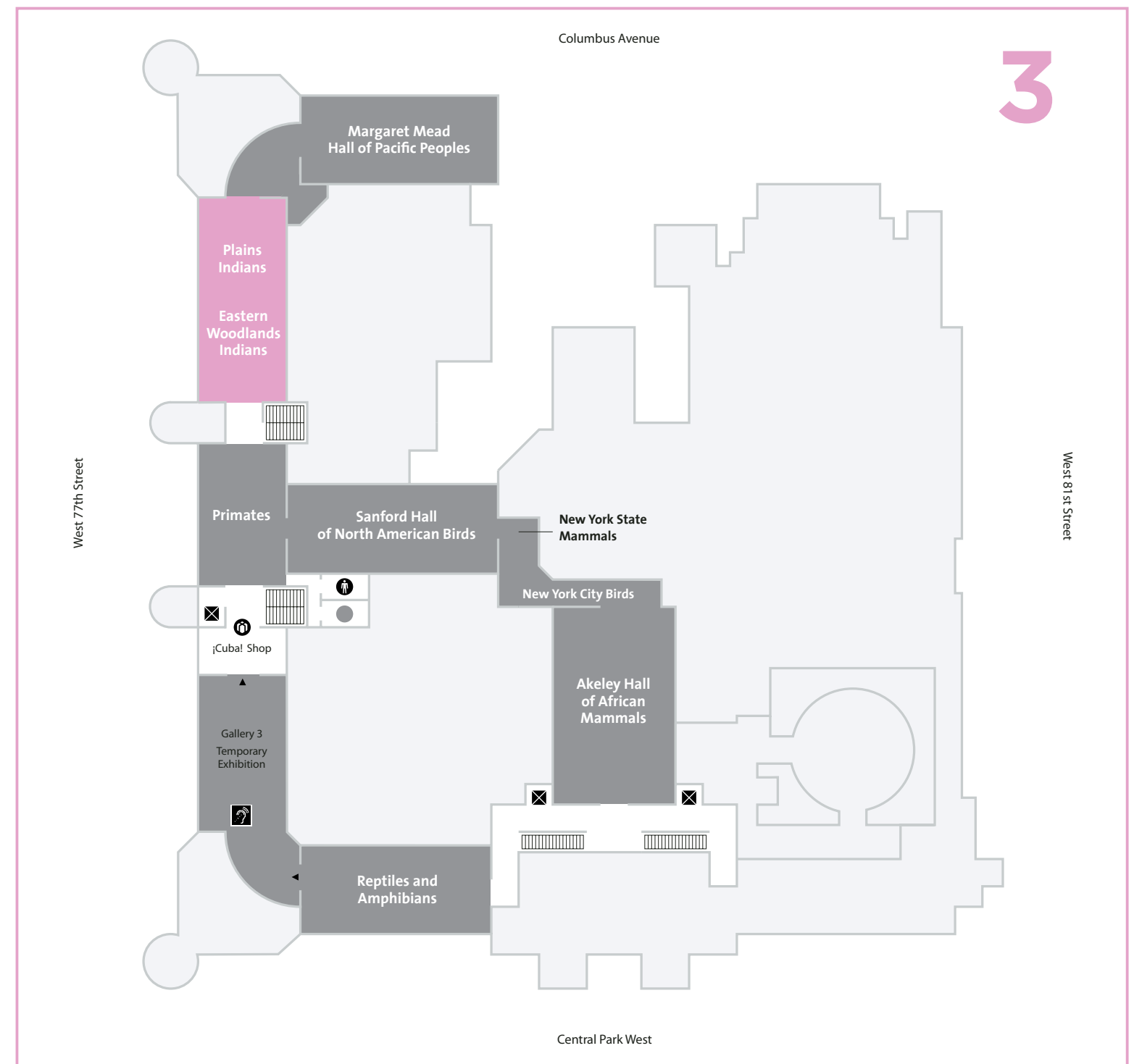
@decolonize_this



@decolonizethisplace

Actions Throughout the Day

- Distribution of the "Guide to Indigenous Land and Territorial Acknowledgements for Cultural Institutions" begins a process for committing museums, archives, libraries, and universities to recognizing and respecting Indigenous homelands, inherent sovereignty, and ongoing survivance. Access the guide at <http://landacknowledgements.org/>
- Liberation Drum Circles will perform songs of resistance and collective liberation produced in community workshop at the steps of the museum.
- Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.) will intervene in the liquid space of the museum's finances, demanding decolonization on monetary terms.



3

Hall of Mexico and Central America The Semillas Collective

The Semillas Collective will host a collective action of healing through movement and sound. They will honor ancestors by invoking bone and blood memory through motion, and decolonize body and language through song and trauma release.

Hall of South America

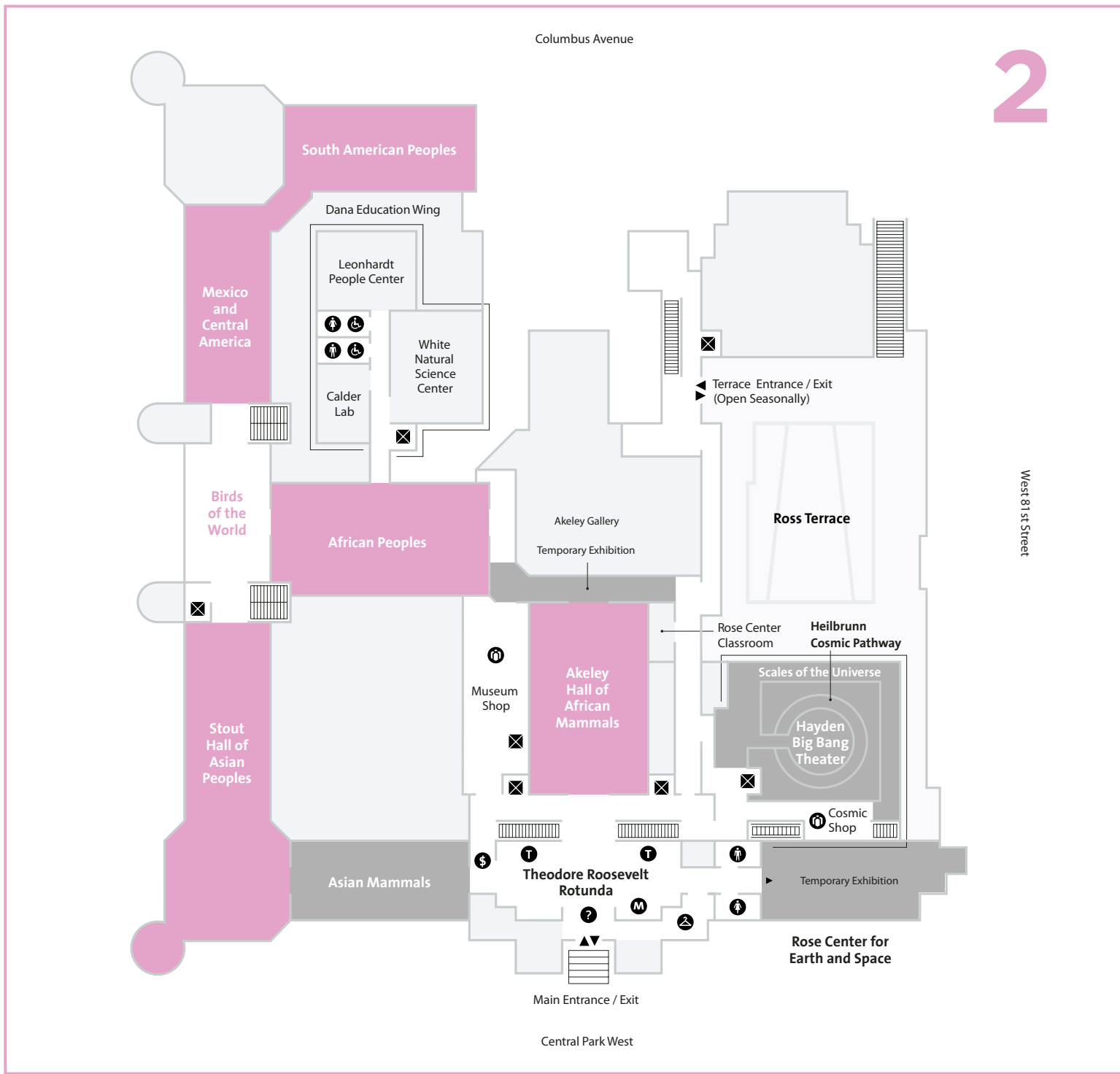
Condor Canta Ceremony by NYC Andinx Community
Sudax and Shuar Community of NYC will be holding a ceremony dedicated to Andinx Womxn who led and continue to lead the struggle to protect and decolonize the land and the people. We call upon others to join us in remembering the spirit of our Ancestors on Indigenous People's Day

through cleanse, song, a people's history, sharing of our current struggles, and ritual.

THIRD FLOOR

Hall of Eastern Woodlands Indians Nishnaabekwewag Negamonid

Members of the Anishinaabe women's hand drumming group, Nishnaabekwewag Negamonid, will be joined by native and non-native women-identified accomplices in the Hall of Eastern Woodland Indians. Together they will use movement, language, and sound to disrupt the colonial space of the museum and speak to prior, persisting Indigenous presences.



SECOND FLOOR

Hall of African Peoples & Akeley Hall of African Mammals

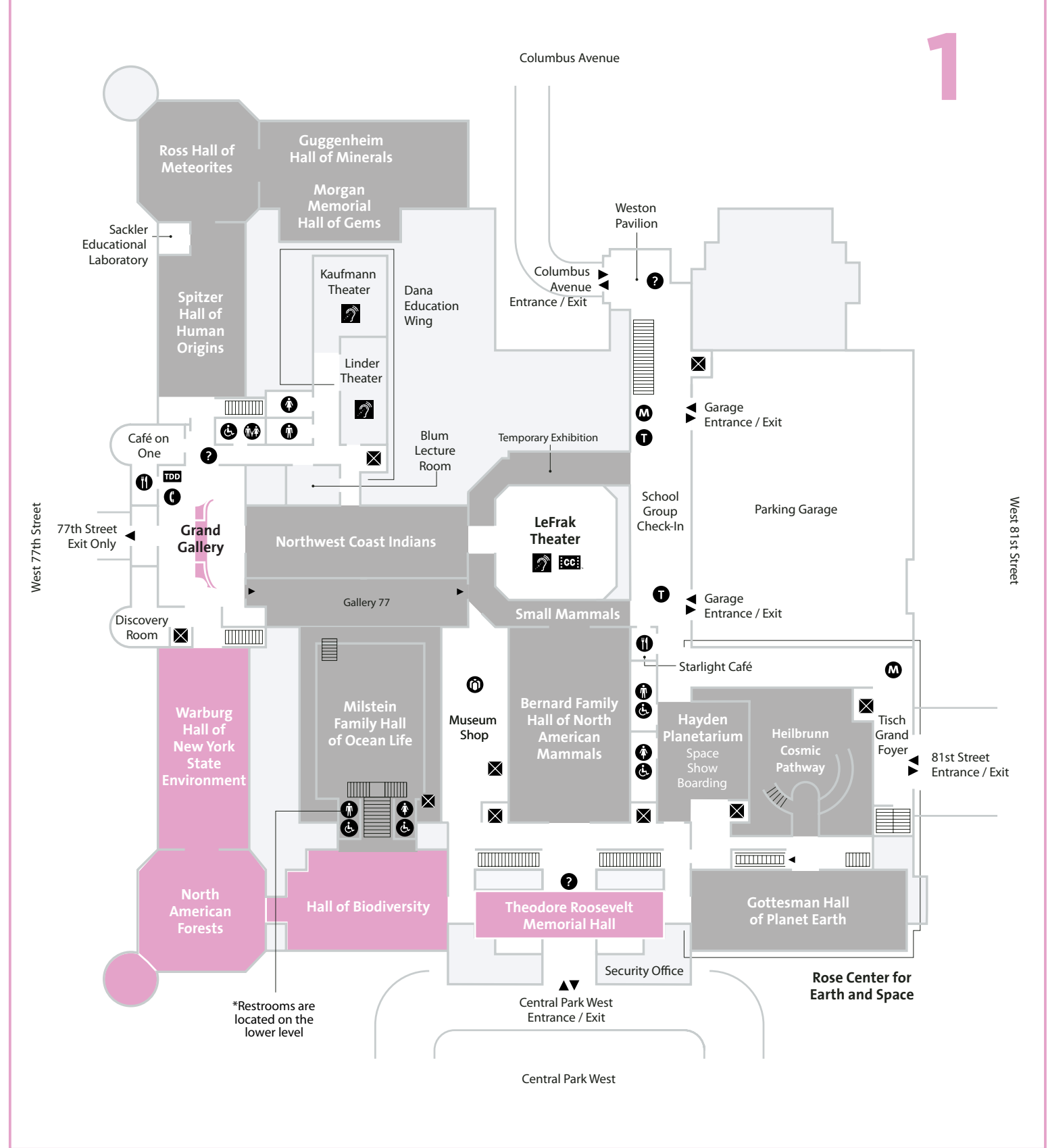
Black Youth Project 100
 BPP100 NYC will engage in a holistic turn up on the Hall of African Peoples and Hall of African Mammals. We will highlight the continuity between the halls' racialized and ahistorical displays and the oppression faced by Black peoples today. Calling attention to the violence perpetrated against Ota Benga by the AMNH we will create a space for healing and truth telling.

Hall of Asian Peoples
Chinatown Art Brigade & South Asia Solidarity Initiative

In an intervention that will transform the Hall of Asian Peoples, Chinatown Art Brigade and South Asia Solidarity Initiative will highlight the history of colonial occupation and violence in our homelands.

(Jews of Asia) Hall of Asian Peoples
All Your Genocides Are Connected

All Your Genocides Are Connected will haunt the museum and its archive of stolen human remains with ghosts, skulls and other creatures. They will lead you on the Genocide Trail from the Jews of Asia exhibit in the Hall of Asian Peoples around the Hall of Africa and the Americas.



FIRST FLOOR

Hall of Biodiversity
People's Cultural Plan

The People's Cultural Plan will dissect the roll-call of major AMNH funders (and 1910 Trustees) and show how connected these donors are, historically and in the present day, to slavery, imperialism, genocide, theft, worker exploitation, and fraud.

Hall of North American Forests
NYC Shut It Down

NYC Shut It Down will illustrate how deforestation and climate change are impacting endangered or extinct forest species and will bring awareness to the record of Missing Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). Noting how the land informs human embodiment, we will also call attention to the violence inflicted by fracking and other extractive processes.

OUR ANCESTORS ARE WATCHING



JUSTICE FOR OTA BENGA

THEY TRIED TO BURY US THEY DIDN'T KNOW WE WERE SEEDS



GENTRIFICATION CUTTING DOWN



COMMUNITIES LIKE SEQUOIA TREES

REPARATIONS AND REPATRIATION

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WE DEMAND: REMOVE THE STATUE



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NO NEW JAILS ON STOLEN LAND!

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY



OCTOBER 14TH

4TH ANTI-COLUMBUS DAY TOUR

DECOLONIZE THIS MUSEUM

DECOLONIZE THIS CITY

#decolonizethisplace

WELCOME TO THE FOURTH ANTI-COLUMBUS DAY TOUR

It has been four years since our communities converged at this museum. Then, we put forth the following demands: Rename the Day, Respect the Ancestors, Remove the Statue. After three annual gatherings, none of these demands have been met. The museum remains silent about calls for the replacement of Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day, which has been enacted by dozens of cities and states around the country. The museum is annotating some of its displays, but it uses these as token gestures to insulate itself from calls to overhaul the framework of the museum as a whole. The museum has claimed it has no jurisdiction over the Roosevelt monument. Yet it has installed an educational plaque on the structure asking its viewers to consider "both sides" of the genocidal history it represents, perfectly in keeping with the recommendations by the city's Monument Commission, which voted to re-sanctify both the Roosevelt monument and the widely despised Columbus monument at 59th street. This museum is maintained largely by taxpayers and it stands on "public" land, which we know is occupied ancestral territory of the Lenape. Yet the institution has failed to respond to the concerns voiced by the diverse communities of the city that it claims to represent and serve.

On this Indigenous People's Day, we declare our intent to intensify the crisis of legitimacy faced by this institution. We now highlight the presence on the board of figures like Richard Lefrak, one of the wealthiest real-estate predators in New York, and a donor to the 2020 campaign of Donald Trump; Rebekah Mercer, a primary architect of the ascendancy of Trump in 2016; Jacklyn Bezos, mother of Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, and even the great-grandson of Theodore Roosevelt himself. Whether conservative or liberal in their political outlook, those profiting from genocide, displacement, dispossession, and incarceration should fear our movement as it grows. Decolonization, Abolition, Anti-Imperialism, and Anti-Capitalism inform our work and animate our desires, which point far beyond the museum and extend to the structures of power and wealth at the city at large.

CHANTS: DECOLONIZE...RETURN THE LAND...ABOLITION NOW! // WHAT'S UNDER THE CITY?...THE LAND! // NO NEW JAILS ON STOLEN LAND...ABOLITION NOW! // KILL THAT SHIT...CAPITALISM...KILL THAT SHIT NOW!

DECOLONIZATION: WE WEREN'T MEANT TO KNOW EACH OTHER

We gather together in the spirit of the Guales Indians and enslaved Africans who, in 1526, converged in present-day South Carolina, joining forces to extirpate the Spanish colonizers. This was the first successful anti-colonial slave revolt and Indigenous uprising on the continent. In the aftermath, the self-emancipated Africans and their Indigenous comrades, lived with the land without dispossessing, displacing, or eliminating. Today, we honor this origin story of Black and Indigenous liberation, recognizing that there is a reason why this history is not taught in schools and why it is erased from textbooks. We weren't meant to know each other. But, today, we refuse the divide and conquer strategies of the settler state and reclaim our histories of co-resistance and revolution.

For the colonial-capitalist state, the most frightening collaboration is that between the Indigenous people from whom this land was stolen, and the stolen Indigenous Africans who were brought here to work that land. We must remember the centrality of liberating land to the liberation of our peoples. Without the destruction of the colonial-capitalist state, our labor, knowledges and culture will continue to be stolen, and this land will continue to be used as an endless extraction ground, from from Bronx to Brooklyn, Ecuador to Chiapas, and beyond.

ABOLITION: NO NEW JAILS ON STOLEN LAND

Decolonization necessitates abolition. All jails are monuments to violence. All prisons are exhibits to the legacy of this state's bloody plunder. The traumatic legacy leading from US settler colonialism to the modern Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and mass incarceration is clear. We can follow it in history from the genocide of indigenous people and chattel slavery to the war on drugs and migrant detention. Here, on stolen land, prisons and jails are direct offspring of slave plantations.

Right now, abolitionists are engaged in an effort to end the era of jail-building in New York City and beyond. The No New Jails movement is the continuation of abolitionist efforts in NYC to shut down notoriously violent jail Rikers Island without building new jails. In the latest iteration of this fight, Mayor Bill De Blasio and the billionaire-backed Lippman Commission, along with a handful of major foundations such as the Ford Foundation and Open Society, are pushing forward a land-use process to build 4 new jails with a price tag of eleven billion dollars.

Here alongside our Indigenous comrades, we maintain that no one has the right to build a single jail on stolen Lenape land. No one has the right to evict and displace people on land that was taken from the original occupants of Turtle Island. The No New Jails abolitionist framework not only calls for divestment of the carceral state, decolonization of urban land, and massive reinvestment in communities--on our own terms. The jail building era is over.

ANTI-GENTRIFICATION: LAND, LIFE, HOUSING

Land is life. Community control of land leads to stabilized housing, and protected communities. NYC residents have understood the gravity of gentrification for many years, we have seen corporate greed destabilize communities with no remorse.

"Rezoning" and "economic development" in Harlem and other communities throughout the city are just political tools to administer land grabs in an "official" capacity. We cannot let landlords, elected officials, and local sellouts off the hook for participating in the destruction of Harlem. It's no secret that when land value increases, a new wave of upper-middle class white residents feel comfortable enough to to make homes and live out their dream lives in Harlem. We understand that this symptom of gentrification plagues black and brown neighborhoods across NYC, targeting lower-income tenants. Now, the city seeks to continue their campaign against our communities with the proposed building of 4 new jails, which will serve to cage the most vulnerable in our community: our youth and those who have been squeezed out of their homes but cannot relocate. They have removed us from our lands for centuries; seeking to destroy our connection to each other, our connection to the earth, and our connection to ourselves.

Detention and incarceration is a prime tool of the white settler state which administers the continual genocide of black and brown people in it's never ending campaign of theft, greed, and consumption. Our communities, cultures, and livelihoods have been under attack since the advent of colonization. We understand that gentrification is the state's repackaged campaign to keep us in the grips of destruction, and we will fight it with every tool at our disposal.

ANTI-IMPERIALISM: SOLIDARITY WITH PEOPLE, NOT NATION-STATES

The United States operates as not only an internal settler-colony, but an external empire to facilitate capitalist accumulation in concert with the other imperial powers and multilateral agencies like the IMF, however tumultuous those relations may sometimes become in the age of Trump. The aim is to enforce favorable conditions for capital and to suppress popular movements that threaten the system and its local representatives. The two largest recipients of U.S. military aid are Israel, engaged in a continuous project of genocide against Palestinians, and Egypt, whose military regime was reconsolidated following the democratic revolution of Tahrir Square. India, Turkey, Brazil, Philippines, Haiti, Ecuador, Peru, and even Mexico with its nominally progressive government...the ruling classes of all these nations benefit as clients of the United States, and receive explicit or implicit sanction for attacks on their people, especially Indigenous peoples, immigrants, racialized minorities, women, and LGBTQ folks. The projects of demilitarization and anti-imperialism do not denounce U.S. policy in the abstract or speak out into a void of global public opinion: they call for building resistance on the ground here in the belly of the beast, including amongst our diasporic communities with ties to the places where war and empire are happening on the ground. When we speak of anti-imperialism, we mean solidarity with people and movements, not the nation-states and governments that claim to represent them. Free Puerto Rico, Palestine, Kashmir, Rojava, and beyond.

1) ROOSEVELT MONUMENT

Colonialist historians and their apologists on the NYC Monuments Commission plead for us to view this statue in its historical context, and to celebrate Roosevelt the statesman, Roosevelt the conservationist and Roosevelt the advocate of national parks. But even in his time, he was known as an imperialist, as a eugenicist, and as an elitist. A former NYPD commissioner and "hero" of the conquest of Cuba, Roosevelt wrote about whites as "the forward race," about the only good Indians being dead Indians, and about Blacks as inferior. There are not "two sides" to genocide and white supremacy. The plaque attached by the museum to the structure makes a mockery of our history and our communities. It only strengthens our determination to uproot this violent object no matter how many NYPD officers are called upon to protect it.

2) SENECA VILLAGE

Commissioned by city elites as a picturesque landscape for ruling class leisure and "passive recreation" for the white working classes, Central Park was founded on a dual history of displacement: first, the removal of the Lenape caretakers of Manahatta during the initial period of settler-colonization; and second, the eviction of the Black community that took up residency in what was known as Seneca Village between 82th and 89th streets starting in 1825. In the first large-scale usage of eminent domain in the history of New York, the city evicted all of the residents of the settlement in 1857 to make way for park construction, allowing Frederick Law Olmsted to engineer an artificial "nature" of lawns, rambles, and vistas on the erased grounds of the community. Anticipating later projects of Urban Renewal, park advocates described Seneca Village as a "shantytown" and the residents there as "squatters" and "vagabonds and scoundrels". Egbert Viele, a former officer in the Mexican-American war and the park's first engineer, wrote a report about the "refuge of squatters" living on the future site of Central Park, and criticized them as having "very little knowledge of the English language, and with very little respect for the law." Seneca villagers fought back against the evictions, but the "green" vision of Olmsted was prioritized over the survival of the community.

NYC NOT FOR SALE: THE PEOPLES HOUSING PLAN

1. End homelessness in New York City. Immediate housing for all homeless people through new construction or seizure of vacant "warehoused" properties. Citywide moratorium on evictions.
2. Universal rent control. Apply rent control laws to all rental properties in New York City. Institute an immediate rent freeze, and phased rollback of rents to 20% of tenant income.
3. Transfer distressed buildings to tenant ownership. Transfer properties using the 7A receivership process or eminent domain. Tenant ownership in the form of cooperatives, mutual housing associations, or community land trusts.
4. Repair and expand high-quality public housing. Full funding for the NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) and full repairs and enhancements for all NYCHA properties. Begin construction of new, high quality public housing with community centers and art spaces. Provide free language services for all NYCHA residents.
5. Democratize development. Institute direct election of community boards with veto power over development decisions. Expand public input into the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). Moratorium on upzoning until these reforms are completed.

3) THE GREAT LAWN

Following the eviction of Seneca village and the construction of Central Park, this area of the city soon became an aesthetic amenity attractive to real-estate developers, who filled the urban grid on either side of the park with luxury housing for the wealthy. From the so-called Great Lawn, one sees to the east and west the skyline of early 20th-century aristocratic townhouses; in the 1930s, as the rich looked out of their windows, they would have seen on this spot Hoovervilles, self-organized encampments of precarious and homeless workers demanding housing and public support. Looking to the south, we now see the construction sky-scraping residential towers of the 1% in upper midtown. This ultra-luxury city-scape is a harbinger of developers' plans for the northern frontier of the park in Harlem. Another kind of tower haunts this entire urban panorama: the De Blasio administration's plan to install its new jails on the top of commercial high-rises throughout the boroughs.

While initially designed as an aesthetic amenity primarily for the wealthy, the unavoidable presence of poor people in the park has always provoked hatred and paranoia by white elites. The image of the park as a place of racialized disorder has persisted since the 1970s, making it a space of intensive surveillance and criminalization, attested to by the massive NYPD floodlights stored just adjacent to the Great Lawn.

4) CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE

Dating to the reign of Thutmose III in 1185 BCE, this obelisk is one of three such objects bearing the same name. The other two are located in the imperial capitols of London and Paris respectively. In a process initiated by the US consul to Egypt, the object was presented as a "gift" to the United States from the Egyptian Khedive (the local tributary of the Ottoman empire) in 1879 in exchange for securing a trade agreement and diplomatic alliance favorable to the interests of the Egyptian comprador elite. It was removed from the seashore of Alexandria in 1881 by Arab laborers under command of a U.S. naval officer tasked with transporting it to New York.. The costs of removal, transportation, and re-installation in Central Park were born by the oligarch William Vanderbilt, who worked closely with the head of the New York City Parks conservancy to secure a location for it. Seeking to align itself with the mystique of "Eastern" antiquity as well as to mimic the trophy-taking of its geopolitical contenders Britain and France, the United States campaign to acquire this object is itself a monument to imperial plunder, geopolitical manipulation, and oligarchic philanthropy. In this respect, it closely mirrors the histories of wealth, power, and exploitation crystallized by the Metropolitan Museum just behind it.

MASKS

Today, we have invited people to mask up, if they feel the spirit. For some it is to avoid identification by the state and in the media. For others, it is to identify with ancestral traditions, militant histories and communities of resistance. Whatever the reason, we know that our masks unsettle the settler-capitalist order. They fear what they cannot see.

ANTI-CAPITALISM: FROM THE MUSEUM TO THE CITY

Now we are here at the Met, presided over by Daniel Brodsky, a member of the Real Estate Board of New York and leading oligarch of the city overall. Since Warren Kanders was removed from the Whitney, we have heard, over and over, "who is next?" From Brodsky, to Larry Fink at MoMA, to Darren Walker at the Ford Foundation, no museum, no board member, no philanthropist, no member of the ruling class should feel safe right now, because our communities have been unsafe for 500 years. We are opening new fronts, and our struggle will not cease until our city is safe for everyone. We are fighting back and building power, using a diversity of tactics ranging from assemblies and protests to creative forms of sabotage: strikes, de-occupations, blockades, shut-downs, home-visits... We are here to say that our IBPOC movements are anti-capitalist, that we aim to create discomfort and fear among the most wealthy, and that invite those who understand this historical moment to join us as traitors against capitalism and white supremacy.

No New Jails and New Sanctuary Coalition are calling on museums and their board members not only to divest from prisons, but to reinvest in communities--on the terms of communities themselves. Among the urgent forms of reinvestment we imagine are in The Peoples Housing Plan, and measures of Indigenous land restitution that are the necessary condition for climate justice. Even as we present this new incentive to stand on the right side, our scrutiny and pressure on museum board members will only continue to intensify: arms dealers, prison investors, climate criminals, real-estate developers, union busters, drug profiteers, school privatizers, advocates of state terror and colonial occupation. As the city burns and the waters rise, the forces of decolonization, abolition, anti-capitalism, and anti-imperialism are coalescing into a city-wide front that unsettles the very ground on which the institutions of culture, education, and power stand. We have come to collect a debt owed to our peoples since Columbus arrived in Ayiti in 1492.

EVENTS: October 16/17 No New Jails // October 18: MoMA // October 24: City-wide anti-gentrification

This brochure and action is the work of many groups in the city.

WE DEMAND: REMOVE THE STATUE



*white supremacist monuments
have no place in our city
or our cultural institutions*

#decolonizethisplace