

# INVESTIGATING THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY EXPERIENCE



Summer 2013

Interview Analysis and Summary

# Investigating the National Museum of American History Experience

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY

OFFICE OF POLICY AND ANALYSIS  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  
SUMMER 2013

Cover Image: *Rising Sun Quilt*, Mary “Betsy” Totten, 1825-1835, ID Number: TE\*T08153, National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center.

## ABSTRACT

The Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) conducted a study of visitors for the National Museum of American History (NMAH). This report is based on the analysis of 55 qualitative interviews, comprising just over 275 pages of transcriptions, with visitors throughout the museum over a multi-month period. The interviews focused on six themes: personal connection to American history, motivation to visit NMAH and expectations, experiences during the visit and responses to those, emotions associated with the visit, and benefits that accrue from visiting.

By analyzing these interviews the following conclusions were drawn. Visitors come to NMAH with varied levels of understanding of what the museum contains. Most visitors are inspired by the efforts of previous generations as seen at NMAH, and this provides them a sense of appreciation. Visitors see NMAH as a place of learning, for looking back and feeling pride in America, and a repository of important objects. The opportunity to see assorted historic objects allows visitors to enter the past in a personal and potent way. NMAH visitors see that this museum will provide a quality experience, and for many this experience can be fun and exciting.

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## PREFACE

The Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) was pleased to share in the National Museum of American History's (NMAH) enthusiasm for gaining a deeper understanding of its visitors. This investigation of the NMAH visitor experience is part of our continued collaboration with NMAH.

At NMAH, Howard Morrison met with the OP&A study team before interviewing started and shared his objectives for this investigation. As the study got underway, he provided comments on the protocol for the study.

In OP&A, Zahava D. Doering had primary responsibility for this study, coordinating the visitor interviewing, and overseeing the project as a whole. A combined team of OP&A and NMAH staff and interns conducted regular bi-weekly interview sessions during the Summer and Fall of 2011. The OP&A interview team included Andrew Pekarik, James Schreiber, Zahava Doering, Claire Eckert, Sarah Block, James Smith, Lance Costello, SoHyun Park, and Caitlin Stewart, and the NMAH team was comprised of Howard Morrison, Andrea Lowther, Megan Smith, Heather Paisley-Jones, Julia Garcia, and Elisabeth Kilday.

During 2012 the 10 hours of recorded interviews were transcribed by OP&A interns as time allowed. Kelly Richmond organized this undertaking. Once all 55 transcriptions were finished they were analyzed using NVivo software by Bridget Sandison and Mike Anderson, two OP&A interns, and Kelly Richmond. The enclosed report was written by Kelly Richmond and reviewed by Andy Pekarik and Zahava Doering. OP&A intern Guiliana Reynolds assisted with the organization and editing of the interview excerpts that are the bulk of this report.

This study could not have been completed without the effort of nearly every OP&A staff member and intern. I thank them all for their work.

Whitney Watriss  
Acting Director  
Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis

## INTRODUCTION

This report is a follow up to the Summary Report (Appendix A) submitted to the National Museum of American History (NMAH) by the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) in February 2012. Following a four month collection period from August to November 2011 in which combined teams of OP&A and NMAH staff members conducted bi-weekly, recorded interviews with NMAH visitors for an hour, and then immediately after the interviewing periods held note-taking sessions for an additional hour that allowed for interviewers and note-takers to document key comments heard during the interviews along with highlights from notes taken during the interviews. These recorded notes were then used as the basis for the summary workshop held in 2012.

When the February 2012 report was submitted, the actual interviews had not been transcribed due to limited time and resources. However, in the intervening months these 55 interviews<sup>1</sup> were transcribed, and then all the interviews were analyzed using NVivo software. In this analysis process the interviews were read and segmented to pull out relevant content based on the analytic summary diagram (Appendix B) created on the basis of the team notes and included in the OP&A Summary Report from February 2012. Therefore, interviewee statements were organized in relation to the category structure in the analytic summary diagram with the theme order being the same as this earlier report:

- Connection to History
  - History is fun
  - Inspiration, values, ideals
  - Lived history
  - Objects
  - Personal interest
  - Personal memories
- Motivations to Visit
  - Education
    - Practical for teachers, politicians, etc.
    - Understanding
  - Experience or wonder
    - American History lovers
    - DC tourism checklist
    - See the real stuff or material culture
  - Family
    - Children are the future
    - Not by choice
    - Social experience
  - Proud to be an American
- Expectations of NMAH Visit
  - Best
  - Connect to the past/future
  - Good experiences
  - High points
  - Symbolism

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<sup>1</sup> The February 2012 report referenced 52 interviews, but once these were sorted through for transcription and analysis, it was determined that there were 55 interviews in total.

- Things
- Experiences at NMAH
  - Imagination
  - Personal connection
  - Physical
    - Design
      - Atmosphere
    - Objects
      - Authentic
    - Sensory
  - Social connections or BIG ideas
    - Ex. Minority groups
    - Ex. War
  - Temporal
- Emotions from NMAH Visit
  - Nostalgia
  - Excitement/fascination
  - Pride/sadness
    - Sacrifice
  - No emotional response
- Benefits of NMAH Visit
  - Escape
  - Inspiration
  - Learning
    - Enculturation/education of children
  - NMAH is unique
  - Object experiences
  - Patriotism
  - Remembrance
    - Keep history alive
  - Something for everyone
  - Understanding the past
    - Learn lessons for the future
    - Deeper understanding
- Other Comments
  - Predispositions
    - History
    - Museum
    - Personal
  - Suggestions
    - Adult-only time
    - Exhibits
    - Hands on
    - Into the minds of others
    - Media
    - Sit down

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- Tours

As the present report was developed and all interviewee statements were considered in detail, new sub-categories were added to the above structure. These included the following new sub-sections:

#### Expectations

- Connect to past visits
- Connect to studies/learning
- No expectations
- Different expectations
  - More engagement/guidance
  - Not great for kids

#### Emotions category

- Overall emotions
- Thanks and appreciation

#### Benefits

- Overall benefits

See Appendix C for the complete final category structure.

## AIMS

This report seeks to provide the primary source data of visitor interviews in order to assist NMAH personnel with future activities by deepening their understanding of visitor motivations and experiences associated with the museum.

## DATA

A total of 55 interviews ranging from three minutes to 40 minutes in length were transcribed. This resulted in 278 pages of transcriptions ranging from one to 21 pages in length. The average interview was five pages in length and the median length of an interview was four pages. The OP&A study team categorized the transcriptions using NVivo software based on the structure discussed above. This review placed close to 500 references within the various categories and sub-categories.



## ANALYSIS

Upon reviewing the content of these 55 interview transcripts, the OP&A study team drew the following conclusions.

Some visitors came to the museum **without any sense of what it contains**, while others identified their **interest in seeing certain iconic content**, like the First Ladies' gowns or the Star-Spangled Banner.

Despite the **varying degrees of awareness prior to their visits**, the majority of visitors felt a **sense of inspiration** in conjunction with their visits. NMAH patrons referred to being **impressed by the efforts of previous generations** to bring the country to its current level of advancement. These efforts may be military engagements, creative endeavors, technical innovations, or a myriad of other **initiatives which combine sustained exertion with unflagging faith and possibly a spark of originality**. This sense of diligent gumption is a **touchstone of the American experience that resonated** with NMAH visitors and provided them a sense of appreciation.

Well, it's an appreciation of what people before us have gone through to get to where we are, and I enjoy that. I like to see that. I like to see how people lived and how they related to the issues of the world around them and what their problem-solving skills were at that time and how they were able to overcome these wild obstacles with certainly not the tools that we have today. Ingenuity and perseverance and all that kind of stuff, it's always quite interesting. I like to see that.

Interview 31

I think we've got a lot of Americans who just do amazing things.

Interview 30

In addition, it appears that **seeing various objects** that

- were owned or used by famous Americans,
- are tied to historic events or well-known settings, which can run the gamut from a Model T assembly line to a long-running television series or blockbuster movie,
- or simply conjure a strong personal memory or connection

allowed visitors to **enter the past in a personal and potent way**.

No, the original objects retain their power. Sometimes I'll find myself, if I'm short on time, I will skip to the things that I know are originals and not replicas just for the fact that there's something about seeing the actual thing that a photograph just doesn't completely capture.

Interview 13

Furthermore, most visitors considered the National Museum of American History to be...

**A PLACE OF LEARNING:**

Because we need to take advantage of what's available to us to learn about our heritage and our history. It's important and useful to know things rather than to just spout opinions.

Interview 34

- Some visitors found NMAH a good place to help them and/or their children become aware of America's past in a more tangible, object-based way, rather than learning through books.

Just to teach everyone what's happened and in a very interesting way, I suppose, instead of reading books.

Interview 25

- Some visitors wanted to be reminded of what they had learned in school.

I'm finding more and more that schools aren't teaching as much American history as they used to, and a lot of stuff here, you know, is stuff that I learned growing up, and so it's neat to be able to see the stuff and to actually, like, put it together with things that you've learned in your life.

Interview 15

**A PLACE FOR LOOKING BACK:**

I guess so we don't forget who we are and where we came from and all of the things that have happened to bring us to this point.

Interview 51

- Some visitors saw the viewing of historic events, stories, themes, and artifacts as a way to better understand the past and identify patterns that could point to future situations.

History is a record of how people lived and thought. And if we can't learn from that we might as well go back home and go to bed. And I think that particularly in this time period that our country and the world is confronting we all need to take a look back and learn.

Interview 40

- Some visitors felt the museum allowed a nostalgic trip back in time filled with personal memories.

**The modern day history. When I say modern day, I mean in my time, in my lifetime. I'm 68 years old, but...I said what happened in my lifetime, bring me up to date, so I can go back and reflect on my lifetime.**

**Interview 48**

**A PLACE TO FEEL PRIDE IN AMERICA:**

**They inspire you, inspire [you] to do more things and become more... I think it inspires pride too. I think it inspires a pride within you of being an American. A lot of people in the world don't know that; don't have that connection.**

**Interview 30**

- Some visitors determined the source of this pride as military sacrifices made to defend the country's freedom, so it is a patriotic sort of pride.

**The freedom that we have achieved, it was not free. It [Americans] paid their price in blood as that whole thing showed us. And we need to honor and respect that. I think that every American should be proud to be an American.**

**Interview 32**

- Some visitors spoke of American pride in terms of affording certain rights and freedoms that may not be available to others around the world.

**It makes you feel good, it makes you feel happy that you...you're proud that you can do all this, you're proud to live in an area, in a country that allows this type of thing.**

**Interview 35**

**A PLACE FILLED WITH IMPORTANT OBJECTS:**

We can learn from textbooks, but actually seeing things makes it more real.

Interview 2

- Some visitors spoke of specific objects that were the reason for their visit, as these crystallize and represent the essence of the American experience.

The Star Spangled Banner display, you know, I mean, that flag right there inspired one person to write what is now the National Anthem. And that's history in itself.

Interview 15

- Some visitors discussed the personal nature of particular objects on display and how these connected deeply to each visitor's own past and provided an opportunity to reflect and remember.

I love the automobile part of it, looking back at the different cars. And the ways of camping, I remember that as a youth. It's a way of looking back in your history and looking forward to history.

Interview 14

Lastly, NMAH visitors comprehended that this museum will **provide a quality experience** given that

- it's **part of the entire Smithsonian** Institution complex,
- it **contains prized artifacts** that deserve preservation and study,
- it provides a range of content from the weighty to the popular—there's **something for everyone**,

and for many this **experience can be fun and exciting**.

And we know a lot about these museums because they're very famous.

Interview 25

It lets me see the type of things that I would never be able to experience anywhere else.

Interview 7

**In a way it's a survey and a sketch, but yet it does go deeply into some stuff. And I think that's a way to generate interest in our minds to further explore our stuff. And because it introduces you to so much stuff that you're not aware of, it's bound to open some doors.**

**Interview 34**

**History is exciting and it's worth...you know, this is what you do when you have down time and for enjoyment. It's not something that you take in 11th grade and you never think about it again.**

**Interview 13**

## INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

The rest of this report contains items pulled from the 55 interviews and grouped under the category structure defined in Appendix C which was based on the February 2012 Analytic Summary diagram (Appendix B).

### Connection to American History

#### History is Fun

*Plus it's kind of fun to see how much they're worth. Also a C.F. Martin guitar there, and the gal there. You could see the work that she...you could see how much she had played that guitar.*

Interview 7

*And I guess, just as far as how that relates to me today, I still feel the same way. I'm here on business, and I had meetings all morning. I had Capitol Hill visits two hours ago. I got to go back to a reception in between. I throw off the suit and come here because I want to have a little bit of fun. This is still the entertaining part of my trip to me.*

Interview 13

*The numbers are really interesting. In just one year how many people came to Manhattan and everything. So, I think more figures and obviously huge figures of anything is just "Wow!" and that's what I've said to my boyfriend, come over and have a look, when it's just really unbelievable, yeah, more the facts and dot points.*

Interview 25

*I love museums and history of America is always fun to see, you know. Just walk down memory lane kind of. You get to learn things; you get to learn history, just... you know, fun to learn things.*

Interview 27

#### Inspirations, Values, Ideals

*I don't know that I am part of history, I was never really in service or anything like that, but I am American in the "fruit basket of the world" and it's all my history, I guess.*

Interview 1

*It's just where we gained our freedom, and knowing that, knowing that we gained our freedom at that time. our forefathers really had it together...they really had it together to be able to come over here, and you know, really roughing it, just them. And gain their, you know, freedom from Great Britain, and I just think it's awesome, I can't imagine how hard that would have been. As leaders of our country, you know, they set up the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and those things are still, you know, very valid today.*

Interview 7

*Basically where our roots started, you know? How we become, I guess, a superpower. How we become...or what we moved from, to what we have become, you know? And this is basically the history of how we did that.*

Interview 9

*There are so many things that you learn about in history. If you're a student of history or if you read of these things or study of these things, it makes it tangible when you actually have the actual object that can tie you to a certain period of time whether it's a bayonet that ties you to a particular battle or clothing that ties you to Abraham Lincoln, it makes him a real person, it's not just something in a book, it's something more tangible. I just came from the National Archives before I got here and you're looking at the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and these are not the copies you have in your home or you've read in textbooks. That's the real deal, the real signatures, and there's just a power to that, that, you know, it really is, it's kind of surreal.*

Interview 13

Well, I think it's an unfolding of our history; it's a telling of the American story, and I think all the museums have a great deal to do with helping children understand our nation, which is very important.

Interview 14

Well, when you look at the history of our nation, it's a history of a people that were striving for new ideals, for individualism, to break away from the old and forge forth in the new. And when you look at the sacrifices that a lot of people have paid for that, in order for us to worship in freedom, and to have our own religious faith and to respect the faiths of others, it's probably the only nation in the world that really affords that.

Interview 14

I think anytime you can tell the story of a people so that future generations can see what went before and what assured them of what they had at that time, that's a good thing.

Interview 14

Or the "American Heroes Fallen"...I don't know the name of it...you know, that shows how America's evolved through war and hard times to become a better country, and even the section over here with all the pop and culture, that defines us, and what makes America unique.

Interview 15

You get to grasp that concept how we didn't even belong to ourselves. And then, as America started to, through the wars, you know, the Revolutionary War, started to shape itself and its foundation.

Interview 15

When you look at the history of our nation, it's a history of people that were striving for new ideals, for individualism, to break away from the old and forge forth in the new. And when you look at the sacrifices that a lot of people would pay for that in order for us to worship in freedom and have our own religious faith and the respect the faiths of others. It's probably the only nation of the world that really forged that.

Interview 21

I started bringing my son and daughter down here when they were two and three years old. And then we come back, not every year, but at least every other year. And I think that what they've taken out of it; and what I've taken out by coming down and that's part of the reasons why I always enjoy when I'm hosting somebody, they want to see something that I've never seen before or it's been years since I've seen it. So I think just the story that's continued forward, that evolves, you know, things are different today, than what they were before.

Interview 22

It just the real understanding of how we arrived at what we have today. Young people today running around looking at somebody that's black, don't understand what these people went through in their lifetime, their heritage. It's like looking at the Indian. And they don't understand. They don't understand how they arrived at the position, they arrived... Why were they suppressed? Why were they suppressed? Why all of the sudden now do they have the same freedoms as we do, why? I mean, who explains that to them? Very few people understand that. I know my grandchildren, for god sakes, oftentimes we talk about it. And we drive through the inner city and they look at the inner city and it's so depressed and it's so...now this is somebody who is 9 years old, you know, "Grandpa, why do they live with all the papers and all the trash on the ground?" and it very difficult to explain to them in reference to it, and they don't get it. And as an adult a lot of time, I don't get it myself. But I understand they have the same rights; they're human beings. They're the same as all of us, and for god sakes, we ought to treat them that way. Unfortunately we don't in a lot of circumstances.

Interview 26

I think they're all interesting. I think you look at them all as a whole, they're all interwoven. You know, any one individual can change the course of history, good or bad. Being a great leader or a terrible leader. Hitler

*changed the face of the planet and will go down in infamy as one of the most recognizable people for centuries to come and not for a good thing. The man was an evil, evil S.O.B. But then some of the things like technology that have come out of Germany because of all the money that was put into the war program, all that technology and things like that. You look at all the scientists to come out of there, 10 years later were responsible for building the Saturn 5, which put man on the moon. There are a lot of steps in that chain, a lot of links in that chain but it is there. One of the things that did come out of World War Two was the advancement of the American rocket program which led to space. That came from one of the bloodiest conflicts in human history. And also mass genocide, which is just a terrible thing. Good and bad are all interwoven and that's curious to me. I kind of like that sometimes even the most terrible nasty things where there's so much pain and suffering that there can be something that can be something to come out of it that's truly wonderful, that wouldn't exist if it wasn't for that.*

Interview 37

### **Lived History**

*When I do things like this it just reminds me how much more I have to do to educate myself on things, and it also reminds you of how little we actually know of things. We can learn from textbooks, but actually seeing things makes it more real.*

Interview 2

*That just has a spot for me, but I think it is because of my age. I liked the stories, and I liked the costumes. I liked the re-creations.*

Interview 4

*I'm a Veteran, so seeing the military things, you know, all the tools and the equipment that they used back in the 1800s, all the way up to now, and then I was be able to show my daughter down there...she was born after the Twin Towers fell, but, you know, they have a little part of over there with Iraq and Afghanistan, and I'd be like, "This is why I went over to Iraq, and this is why I do, what I do."*

Interview 15

*I guess, you know, like our founding fathers, I guess, for the first...when you go through the wars, what it took to get our freedom. My brother's serving in Afghanistan right now, and so this war history is really important, I think to us to just see where we've come and why we fight for what we fight for. For freedom.*

Interview 20

*It was amazing just to see the personal artifacts. Peoples personal items and see some who've lived and some who haven't. It's a pretty raw, emotional experience. But also a big one for myself personally was the door from the fire truck. Because every day when I go to work I open the door, get in the truck, close the door and off I go. To see the damage that happened to it and also the damage that happened to the New York Fire Department, the amount of guys they lost, it's a massive hole to fill. It certainly gets you in the middle, hits you in the heart. But it was a wonderful exhibit. I thought it was great. Because it's rare to see something like that where you can really get up close to an event of such a nature.*

Interview 37

### **Objects**

*The Star Spangled Banner...I've seen it before...but just to look at it and realize how the people felt after the war; that made them united now against someone that we declared war on.*

Interview 3

*I do! I primarily read nonfiction when I have time to read, nonfiction historical works, biographies, military history, I enjoy. So it's nice to be able to come here, see the stories I've read about displayed in sort of an interactive fashion, if you will, as opposed to just taking it off the written page. I enjoy that.*



Interview 9

*And I never tire of certain things, you know, seeing Lincoln's hat or you know, that just can't be beat, I don't care how many times you see it; it's still impressive.*

Interview 13

*Fascination. Imagination. You know a lot of times you can lose yourself in the objects, or reading the texts, or, you know, paint a picture in your mind of when you're at certain exhibits to sort of place yourself back in that timeframe. It gives you some perspective. There are markers everywhere there, so that you know that on this particular spot, this event happened, on this particular day and the time this person fell dead right here in this spot. It allows you to visualize it.*

Interview 13

*The Star Spangled Banner display, you know, I mean, that flag right there inspired one person to write what is now the National Anthem. And that's history in itself.*

Interview 15

*You get to see these icons, American icons, you know, George Washington, Martin Luther King, Lincoln, all these great icons. And you get to see this not necessarily what they did, but the stuff that they used and what they had to do with and that's an interesting fact. I mean, we take for granted the tools that we have these days, you know, cars and telephones and what not, and they didn't have that ability, and so it kind of makes you appreciate what you do have and, I mean, overall just to be able to see it, is better than hearing about it. I see it as "you're seeing things"...you know, because you don't want to damage, you want to be able to preserve it.*

Interview 15

*Yeah, the prisoners of war. I like how...the statues of people and how...I just kind of like looking at how the history was out instead of just, like, reading about it. I mean, I like reading about it, but I kind of like to see how it really was. I think seeing it too, rather than just reading*

Interview 20

*The same way with this one, even the Star Spangled Banner and to actually see the actual, original flag is awesome. And the whole thing is just impressive. It's beyond my expectations to be honest with you. Some of the historical things that are on exhibit are just unbelievable; it really is. I didn't think that we'd go back that far in time and discover these things and then present them and be able to show these things to people. It's amazing.*

Interview 26

*George Washington's uniform, the Price of Freedom. That whole area is just absolutely incredible. I'm a huge Audie Murphy fan as well. I think it's incredible to have such a hero like Audie Murphy and I wanted to see his uniform and also the ruby slippers. My daughter's a huge fan of Wizard of Oz. I mean, from the age of 3, she wore Dorothy dresses and red slippers. So that was another thing that was really neat. The first ladies exhibit is absolutely incredible. To see such beautiful dresses from inaugural balls and Martha Washington's dress and Mary Todd Lincoln's dress and the scandalous dress of the flappers dresses. It's just an absolutely gorgeous flapper dress. It's just "Wow". To Obama's inauguration dress. I mean, just absolutely gorgeous to see those things.*

Interview 30

*The other thing that really sort of captured my attention was the little log book that the chief recorded every day, recorded all the flights. Everything went on it. It was obviously just scorched and smashed and barely held together. It's just such a uniquely personal item. It's not like an official book or anything like that; it's her own personal thing. She obviously didn't survive and her husband decided to donate along which I'm sure would have been very difficult for him to pass on her personal items.*

Interview 37

**Personal Interest**

*I know, like, as a child, I did not appreciate history, now I am absolutely fascinated by it. That's what I'm hoping to spark in my own children, actually seeing the real things. That's why I think that will remain with my kids a lot than what they read in a textbook or what they have to memorize for a test.*

Interview 2

*Yes, I think we need to very badly remember history and how it's affected history and how we tend to repeat ourselves and not learn much as we go along*

Interview 8

*It's kind of nice to know where, I guess, everything came from, to realize, I don't know, how far we've come. Just because I don't hear a lot about it, and I find it interesting that woman, us women, actually did a lot during World War II, but that doesn't, that part doesn't get brought up, just kind of the "Rosie the Riveter" portion of it, but not the fact that we ferried planes and had more pilots able to fly, you know, all the ones with bombs and stuff.*

Interview 11

*American History Museum is the one we came in first because I think it is a good foundation for the whole start off where we live, why we are, who we are, where we are...like our founding it's call the first, you know, let me go through the wars, what took to get our freedom. My brother is serving in Afghanistan right now and so this war history is really important thing that leads us to see where we've come in, why we fight and what we fight for, for freedoms. I just kind of like looking at how the history without instead of just like reading about, I mean, I like reading about it but I kind of like to see how it really was like over there was the statue of the guy. I really, I like it.*

Interview 12

*You know, in a lot of ways, I'd say that more than changing, I'm kind of always fascinated by the fact of what doesn't change. In the sense that, I know some people maybe would be like, "You've been how many times? Well, haven't you already seen that?" Well, yes, but it's, you know, it's not like I go and look at it and go, "Ehhhhh, you know I've probably been here enough. I'm ready." Each time I come I'm still fascinated, a lot of times by seeing the exact same objects, so to me, it doesn't get old, even if it doesn't change. To some people, you know, maybe it's one of those things you mark off your list, "Go, Ok, I've been there; I've done that. It was neat, or I'll liked it or I didn't like it, whatever, but I've done it." But to me coming back and even seeing the same things, or the same exhibit, or reading the same things over again doesn't lose its fascination. I still have that same sense of wonder when I'm looking at the mummies at the Natural History museum, or the Magna Carta over at the Natural (National) Archives, same for any of the exhibits here. Some of those things to me you can see of hundreds times and it still doesn't make it less fascinating.*

Interview 13

*My daughter...she's eight, so they don't really, she hasn't gotten to the point history where they're teaching about more modern times, so to show her the pictures of the Twin Towers that they have there as they're being struck by the airplanes is...you know...and her being able to visualize it. She's able to grasp the concept and she's...the whole museum's been able to do that to her.*

Interview 15

*She knew about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, but to actually see their history unfolded in front of her like that, she's able to grasp the ideas and grasp what Abraham Lincoln stood for and why he was assassinated...you know...and that, yeah, it was a terrible moment in history that somebody decided to do that, but what he stood for was a great thing, and she understands that...these icons and learning, like...the Kennedy...you know, we took her to the Kennedys' burial site over at Arlington and she had no idea who Kennedy*

was. But then we told her who Kennedy was and then brought her here, and then we showed her Kennedy in the presidential area and she's able to grasp and say OK, and put the concepts...put the two places together and now she's understanding that Kennedy was a president and as a president these are some of things that he was accomplishing and what he stood for and why the American people did and didn't like him, and so she's able to put those concepts together and make it, instead of that was a Kennedy thing and this is a Kennedy thing, now it's one.

Interview 15

It's a way of looking back in your history and looking forward to history. Both my sons have been marines I feel very honored that they can serve for the country.

Interview 21

And my sons, I want to inspire them that they can do anything. And I really want Audie Murphy to be an example for them that they can do whatever they want. They're going to be little guys. They're pretty small, so we want them to know that they are big on the inside.

Interview 30

### **Personal Memories**

History wasn't, because of the way I was raised and because my father's love of history, history wasn't something you had to do. It wasn't like, "Oh, it's just something in a book or it's a class you have to take." It was also entertainment. As I said, if we traveled, you know, even if it was to the beach or to, you know, amusement park or whatever, there was always, for my dad, some sort of historical stop we would make, so I grew up at a very young age tying the two together, that, "It's not history is boring. History is exciting. It's fun. It's the same as Disney World, only different. It's entertaining in its own way to learn these things.

Interview 13

That's still the, you know, that same sense I had when I was that age, I guess instilled in me by my dad, it's still the same.

Interview 13

Love of history, son of a history teacher, and so from a very young age it was instilled into me how important history was. Vacations were never just Disney World; it was Monticello, Mount Vernon, Manassas. I've always had a love of history and have developed that as I've aged and still want to come here; every time I'm in town, I find myself here.

Interview 13

I love the automobile part of it, looking back at the different cars. And the ways of camping, I remember that as a youth. It's a way of looking back in your history and looking forward to history.

Interview 14

I started bringing my son and daughter down here when they were two and three years old. And then we come back, not every year, but at least every other year. And I think that what they've taken out of it; and what I've taken out by coming down and that's part of the reasons why I always enjoy when I'm hosting somebody, they want to see something that I've never seen before or it's been years since I've seen it. So I think just the story that's continued forward, that evolves, you know, things are different today, than what they were before.

Interview 22

It just the real understanding of how we arrived at what we have today. Young people today running around looking at somebody that's black, don't understand what these people went through in their lifetime, their heritage. It's like looking at the Indian. And they don't understand. They don't understand how they arrived at the position, they arrived... Why were they suppressed? Why were they suppressed? Why all of the sudden now do

they have the same freedoms as we do, why? I mean, who explains that to them? Very few people understand that. I know my grandchildren, for god sakes, oftentimes we talk about it. And we drive through the inner city and they look at the inner city and it's so depressed and it's so...now this is somebody who is 9 years old, you know, "Grandpa, why do they live with all the papers and all the trash on the ground?" and it very difficult to explain to them in reference to it, and they don't get it. And as an adult a lot of time, I don't get it myself. But I understand they have the same rights; they're human beings. They're the same as all of us, and for god sakes, we ought to treat them that way. Unfortunately we don't in a lot of circumstances.

Interview 26

I suppose it did. I like hearing his stories, he knows a lot about it and our family has been here since before the revolution. So there's a lot of history of our family. He was making fun of me this morning. We were kind of Forest Gump's family. There's been a (family name) that's fought and died in every war. It's history.

Interview 30

My dad kind of lived history. He was an aide to Senator Hruska from Nebraska from, I believe '64 to '68. And he was a top aide and I was actually born here in Silver Spring. And so this is the first time I've ever been back. We moved back to Nebraska when was 1. But that was during Vietnam, Civil Rights March, the race riots. My dad actually helped write part of the Civil rights amendment. And also he has some pens on some other laws that were signed by LBJ

Interview 30

## Motivations to Visit NMAH

### Overall Motivations

It's really neat, but I'd sure recommend this to anyone that comes here.

Interview 1

I think it is primarily because I wanted to come.

Interview 9

I usually come once a year probably, I found myself in DC a lot for work. So usually when I have down time I'll come.

Interview 14

I knew that the First Ladies' gown exhibit was also here.

Interview 16

I wanted to see the exhibit here, "The Remembrance and Reflection on September 11<sup>th</sup>"

Interview 16

So today I want to see something besides fine art.

Interview 17

To this museum? Oh, I'd just heard good things from friends.

Interview 36

We'd been told through friends that this is probably the one, this, and the Castle, were the two to see.

Interview 38

*I just knew they had an exhibit so I came and check it out...And actually this is my boyfriend and he works for TSA. He was the one that told me originally about the exhibit.*

Interview 42

## **Education**

*We came because the school starts, he's soon in seventh and she's soon in fifth and I heard the good opportunity for them to learn about American history and culture and we're going to actually try to have many Smithsonian museums as we can...it's really educational to come here*

Interview 12

*I was a history major at the university.*

Interview 17

*I'm hosting three people from Germany. Well, we have been, when we came down we went from Jefferson to Lincoln Memorial to the Capitol to the Air and Space to the American History. This was the one they wanted to spend the most time in. Two of them have never been to the States. And I think it's just a matter that we spend a good bit of time in the presidential area. And now they're interested in the military, so...*

Interview 22

*We're visiting from New Mexico and we're visiting the museums in the area. To bring the kids, so, you know, they get to see the exhibits.*

Interview 24

*So kids like to see things. Kids are very visual, and they like to see things, so I look for things that I've experienced, and that I can take back to them and talk about, because then they're more interested in it.*

Interview 44

*Because I could identify with a lot of stuff in it. And I thought it might be more interesting for them because it's not, we have fifteen year olds, like the Declaration of Independence, all the kind of the very political stuff and I thought this might be a bit lighter.*

Interview 47

## **Practical for teachers, politicians, etc.**

*I wanted to see museums and I chose a few that I wanted to see first, because I'm interested in history. I teach, so...Well, I'm looking to enhance my lesson plans.*

Interview 44

*Teachers always learn, their whole lives, so this is all part of that.*

Interview 44

## **Understanding**

*I am with a group who is studying the trails and the battles of the War of 1812...We came to American History to see the Star Spangled Banner, and we just went upstairs to see part of the Freedom exhibit, specifically the War of 1812*

Interview 3

*Just learn a little bit about the history in the place you are. Well, yeah, just general history...you know we're here and, you know, experiencing the city and stuff. So it's nice to come in and see what it used to*

be like.

Interview 5

*This is part of US history. I mean, it's something I haven't seen up to this point; I wanted to see some of it. That's the reason why.*

Interview 9

*Well, I think it's an unfolding of our history; it's a telling of the American story, and I think all the museums have a great deal to do with helping children understand our nation, which is very important.*

Interview 14

*Just anything that has to do military, now I'm in the military and I've always been a history enthusiast.*

Interview 33

*So, if you're going to see any, you should see these. So, some movie memorabilia here that sort of tweaked their interest, I think and I think that's kind of why we headed in here.*

Interview 38

*But this is what America's all about and everybody needs to know and understand what it's all about, and there are people who really don't appreciate it because they hadn't looked backwards.*

Interview 41

*I think it's important to remember the history of the country and, I think, for them, they're so young, to teach them the things that happened, so won't repeat themselves and why people do these things...I enjoy seeing things from history and things that happened and just to remember actual facts from history.*

Interview 42

*The most important country, it must be interesting, what made this country and what her history (is).*

Interview 54

### **Experience or wonder**

*Well, I had actually been through here with my cousin a few days ago and my wife wasn't able to come, so we wanted to see things like the Price of Freedom, and the pop culture as well.*

Interview 3

*I heard they restored it, so I just wanted to see how different it looked because it was set up differently last time I saw it...We just wanted to see the whole thing and go revisit some of the exhibits we've seen before and see how they've changed them up, around.*

Interview 11

*And I guess, just as far as how that relates to me today, I still feel the same way. I'm here on business, and I had meetings all morning. I had Capitol Hill visits two hours ago. I got to go back to a reception in between. I throw off the suit and come here because I want to have a little bit of fun. This is still, this is the entertaining part of my trip to me.*

Interview 13

*I'm here with a friend of mine but also I'm a fire fighter with New South Wales Fire Fighters from Sydney, Australia. We've come over for the World Police Fire Games which was held in New York in the previous two weeks. We'll be heading back down for 9/11 tomorrow. We'll be back there for a few of the services with New York Fire Fighters.*

Interview 37

Well, I guess I was just interested in the history of it. The modern day history. When I say modern day, I mean in my time, in my life time. I'm 68 years old, but...I said what happened in my life time, bring me up to date, so I can go back and reflect on my lifetime.

Interview 48

### American History lovers

All of us are involved in politics in some way so we just wanted to come here on a trip, and we just hadn't made it yet. This is the number one part, number one thing we wanted to see.

Interview 4

I want to see things that I've studied, things I'm interested in, how the desire for follow but as well I do learn something new. I want to feed my thirst from more history knowledge and be more educated. So I can go back and actually act like I know something with my wife.

Interview 4

This is part of US history. I mean, it's something I haven't seen up to this point; I wanted to see some of it. That's the reason why.

Interview 9

And we just decided that we wanted to come to this one, because we wanted to see the American History.

Interview 16

I didn't know that there were 19, and this is more probably the general, and we want to know about American History before we go anywhere else.

Interview 25

The biggest reason we came was just to go see the flag. I guess to just kind of say that I've been there and seen that. Like I said, being able to say that I've seen little bits of history in whatever museum it is.

Interview 28

### DC tourism checklist

Today it was the plan to into the American history museum.

Interview 1

We're trying to get in as much of Washington as we can. This was next on our list.

Interview 2

Because it's part of the Smithsonian and because it's part of the museums on the mall.

Interview 4

Well, we're just in Washington, and you look on the map and see the museums, so thought we'd just pop in and see what it's like. Well, yeah, just general history...you know we're here and, you know, experiencing the city and stuff. So it's nice to come in and see what it used to be like.

Interview 5

Well, we've always been interested in the Smithsonian and the amount of buildings that it has. And last year we came and we visited the across the street the Air and Space Museum and the Botanical Garden. And this year we planned on coming here, this one, and the historical one which is next door. And we'll probably go to Arlington for another visit around the area.

Interview 26

*It's just, you know, it's the "Nation's capital"... just, you know, it's neat to be here and go see everything you can...It wasn't specifically a trip to go to the Smithsonian. You know, come and I actually met with friends over here from Colorado yesterday and some friends from Idaho today...It was easy to get to by Metro and all that because we didn't have to park our car down here and everything, so... And it was newly open, so we wanted to go see what they had done.*

Interview 27

*Really just see exhibits...we are on a mission for the next four days to hit as many museums as we can.*

Interview 32

*We took the town trolley and this was in, you know, one of the stops so got a kind of general idea where everything's laid out and I just felt like we should get off and get into a museum because it was a week day before, you know, it got too crowded on a weekend.*

Interview 32

*I mean if we're traveling somewhere and we can see something, we'll take advantage, but we don't take a special trip, this is probably the first time I mean this is DC history, so this whole trip is history. We've never made just a special trip for a museum, but DC itself is a museum.*

Interview 33

*We're visiting Washington for a week and going to the museums and this was the first on the list. So we are going to go here first and then go others.*

Interview 34

*We're here for several days and we wanted to do a few museums, and we actually did part of it yesterday and ran out of time, so we decided to come back. We are going to try to do many of them as we can while we're here.*

Interview 35

*So they said, "If you ever want to see the capital with a guide, come on out and see us, before he might get reassigned," so that's what we did. We arrived yesterday...Well, we wanted to see as much as we could of the different Smithsonian museums.*

Interview 55

### **See the real stuff or material culture**

*I think we just wanted to learn more about our country and heritage and obviously this is a major museum for establishment of where we are today.*

Interview 4

*We just wanted to look at all the art that the Smithsonian had...we saw it on the map and decided to come check out some more. It was along the way...just to learn about...more about American history...to see the different exhibits and stuff, you know, just knew that they'd be high quality. Here, there's so much to see, so it kind of...we figured that we definitely didn't want to miss that.*

Interview 7

*Well, it's obviously shaped everything that I'm a part of, so. I'd like to see where it all comes from, and it's also in a museum like this, it's neat to see the original artifacts. It's kind of cool to see that, but also just to learn about it.*

Interview 36



## Family

*Probably my sons would like all the war things and some of the science stuff too. My husband he'd be more into agriculture, more into Western things, so this probably isn't something he would enjoy as much. But, he would enjoy the Civil War display and the Presidential display. He's very into the government stuff.*

Interview 1

*We brought our 16 year-old grand-daughter back for her sixteenth birthday present, and this was one of her choices. So she's in the exhibit with my wife while I'm waiting for them*

Interview 14

*My daughter for the history of the museum. We told her we coming here, we told her about all the museums, and this is one that she picked out, so we kind of all picked out a museum, and she picked out American History.*

Interview 15

*The kids go for the interactive, anything interactive.*

Interview 22

*Here to visit family, so, while we're in Washington we're looking at places of interest; places we'd like to see.*

Interview 53

## Children are our future

*And my sons, I want to inspire them that they can do anything. And I really want Audie Murphy to be an example for them that they can do whatever they want. They're going to be little guys. They're pretty small, so we want them to know that they are big on the inside.*

Interview 3

*We wanted to come and see what was here...When you come this far, you want to see it all...Mostly we came for the children*

Interview 6

*It's really educational to come here before school start.*

Interview 20

*I think it will get them, especially, more curious, more interested in world events, you know, maybe hopefully make them want to pursue an education and get more involved with media*

Interview 20

## Not by choice

*So it was choosing one that we thought was more special. My husband's really into history. So, he's really enjoying this.*

Interview 8

*Well, it's interesting and stuff, but I don't naturally get into all the wars and that kind of stuff like he does. Yeah, he's into it, big time. So that's what he's doing. He's going around on the floor above us because he knows we're not going to get as interested as he is.*

Interview 8

*I haven't been here in a while and my husband wanted to see it.*

---

Interview 11

*Because my wife wanted to come.*

Interview 49

### **Social experience**

*We mainly came to bring them out here, because we live in the area and they were visiting us, so I thought we'd bring them out here. We haven't been to the museum either in a while...*

Interview 11

*The Smithsonian has been a part of our family again because of my mom, that that was kind of the core of what we wanted to do. That's why we're doing as much of that as we can while we're here.*

Interview 35

*We came to the museum today because we had been here yesterday and my friend said she didn't get a chance to see everything she wanted to see. So we came back.*

Interview 51

*And my friend is very interested in this, so we saw that yesterday, but she wanted to go back again today and see if she missed anything.*

Interview 51

### **Proud to be an American**

*I thought it would be a good opportunity for them to learn about American history and culture and all that. I think it was a good foundation for the whole start of where we live and why we are, who we are and where we are.*

Interview 2

*Well, I think it's an unfolding of our history; it's a telling of the American story, and I think all the museums have a great deal to do with helping children understand our nation, which is very important.*

Interview 14

*Well, first of all, the nation's capital is, I think, the most important city in the nation, and I think every young person ought to visit here.*

Interview 14

*This country and this city is unique to the world, and I think it's very important for our young people to see the White House, see the Capitol, go through these museums, walk the Mall... We went to the Lincoln, Martin Luther King, and World War II exhibit last night, at night. There's a magic here.*

Interview 14

*You've got a larger scope of history and not just, in those particular places I mentioned it's centered solely on what happened on those spots but this is sort of the repository for all of American history that's why I find it always worth the visit*

Interview 14

*We knew we wanted to come here...We decided that we were most interested in the American history portion of it, just for being Americans and just all of the interesting items here...I think we came to the city mainly to explore American history too. I think that's the main attraction, so. It seemed like the most appropriate museum to go first.*

Interview 19

Well, being born and raised in America I thought that it would probably be an interesting place. You've heard stories as you grow up about what's here, and then my mom travels a bit and she comes to Virginia every year and she...that's what she does is comes to the Smithsonian when they come here, so... She's been telling me stories about it for 12 years.

Interview 35

## Expectations for NMAH Visit

### Best/favorite/high quality

See the different exhibits and stuff, you know, just knew that they'd be high quality.

Interview 7

They've done a heck of a job. I've traveled all over the world, and I've seen the way that different countries have presented history, and they've done a good job,

Interview 9

Again American history is sort of a passion of mine, so this one is my favorite one on the Mall, so this one always means more to me if I have a little bit of time, I'll make sure I spend it here, if I have a lot of time, I'll spend all of it here until I'm done, and then if I have a few moments to catch another attraction, I would.

Interview 13

I typically go to a couple, but this is my favorite one.

Interview 13

Well, we have been, when we came down we went from Jefferson to Lincoln Memorial to the Capitol to the Air and Space to the American History. This was the one they wanted to spend the most time in.

Interview 22

And we know a lot about these museums because they're very famous. I just know that they're very famous around the world.

Interview 25

It's user friendly and interactive. I think it's laid out quite well. Some of the ones that we've been to in London are quite staid, but it's quite modern, it's good.

Interview 50

I am not really much of a museum person, but, of all the museums in Washington I thought that this would be the most interesting.

Interview 50

### Connect to the past and the future

Look at it and realize how the people felt after the war

Interview 3

Basically where our roots started, you know? How we become, I guess, a superpower. How we become...or what we moved from, to what we have become, you know? And this is basically the history of how we did that.

Interview 9

*American History Museum is the one we came in first because I think it is a good foundation for the whole start-off where we live, why we are, who we are, where we are.*

Interview 12

*So this war history is really important thing that leads us to see where we've come in, why we fight and what we fight for, for freedoms.*

Interview 12

*We want to know about American History before we go anywhere else.*

Interview 25

*Everything that everybody did before us.*

Interview 33

*Where we are today is because of what was before us we live.*

Interview 33

*It's every decade for the last 60 years and you can go in and you can actually smell and feel and touch and get a feel for what it was like in 1920, 30, 40, whatever, and yeah, I'd go home and say "yeah, if you're in Washington, you've got to see that."*

Interview 38

*History is a record of how people lived and thought. And if we can't learn from that we might as well go back home and go to bed. And I think that particularly in this time period that our country and the world is confronting we all need to take a look back and learn.*

Interview 40

*Just to make people aware of where we're from, and what we've done, and who we were, and who we are. It's just important.*

Interview 41

**Good Experiences**

*It is my favorite museum, so it's hard to talk...when it is my favorite to think of something that I would do to improve it. I don't know how you could beat it, it's kind of all of American history and it's free to everyone, so, I mean, you know, you have all this great, fascinating stuff and it's accessible to anyone who wants to come. I don't know that it could get much better than that.*

Interview 13

*History wasn't, because of the way I was raised and because my father's love of history, history wasn't something you had to do. It wasn't like, "Oh, it's just something in a book or it's a class you have to take." It was also entertainment. As I said, if we traveled, you know, even if it was to the beach or to, you know, an amusement park or whatever, there was always, for my dad, some sort of historical stop we would make, so I grew up at a very young age tying the two together, that, "It's not history is boring. History is exciting. It's fun." It's the same as Disney World, only different. It's entertaining in its own way to learn these things.*

Interview 13

*That was one of the first things we saw obviously because it was the first thing we came into. Yeah, that was really, I didn't know that it was going to be that big when it was made so long ago. Yeah, and that was really good.*

Interview 25

*I mean, you can spend a year here and never get it all in.*

Interview 32

### **Connect to Past Visits**

*We have been in this museum before. This is our fourth trip to DC, so I have been here, so I knew what to expect.*

Interview 2

*We just wanted to see the whole thing and go revisit some of the exhibits we've seen before and see how they've changed them up, around.*

Interview 11

*I heard they restored it, so I just wanted to see how different it looked because it was set up differently last time I saw it*

Interview 11

*It's quite possible for me to start at ten and still be here when they're trying to kick me out. I try to just hit the highlights of the things that I always like seeing, but not until I check out something that may be new to me.*

Interview 13

*I haven't spent as much time over in the presidential area as I just did, and I've enjoyed that, now to walk around through the military. I haven't been through this stretch before. So I'm looking forward to walking around through here.*

Interview 22

*I'm not really at a stage in my life when I'm really trying to branch out and get a lot of new stuff. But I'm still willing to try.*

Interview 34

*I wanted to see the First Ladies' dresses again; I hadn't seen them in forty years and so... And I wanted to see the Civil War. I mean there isn't anything bad here to see; it's just awesome.*

Interview 41

### **Connect to Studies/Learning**

*To see what you learned in school.*

Interview 2

*I'm finding more and more that schools aren't teaching as much American history as they used to, and a lot of stuff here, you know, is stuff that I learned growing up, and so it's neat to be able to see the stuff and to actually, like, put it together with things that you've learned in your life.*

Interview 15

*I'm really just trying to look at things that are important. Mostly things that I have been interested in.*

Interview 34

*It's just interesting to me. History has always been interesting to me. And you hear and you study things as you grow up and sometimes coming to the museum is the way to see what that actually is other than seeing it in a book or seeing it on film or something.*

Interview 35

*I want to see things that I've studied, things I'm interested in...but as well I do want to learn something new. I want to feed my thirst from more history knowledge and be more educated. So I can go back and actually act like I know something with my wife.*

Interview 40

### **Symbolism**

*So, seeing the flag. That was one of the big things I came to see, you know, here.*

Interview 2

*You know the symbolism and the history*

Interview 45

### **Things (or Lack of Things)**

*So, seeing the flag. That was one of the big things I came to see, you know, here.*

Interview 2

*It's not filled up. It's like there is so much wasted space, it's just sort of... Maybe it's because I'm old-fashioned, you know... you go into the Natural History museum and everything is in your face. You go in here and it's sort of like you're trying to find something. You look and... try to find something...there's a lot of wasted space.*

Interview 4

*Coming to see the First Ladies for one. Really, mainly, to come and see that...*

Interview 5

*I wanted to see the flag. Because there's only one of it and this is the only place where you can find it.*

Interview 11

*To see history, I mean, to see the things that have inspired America to become what it has.*

Interview 15

*We can't wait to see everything;*

Interview 19

*The biggest reason we came was just to go see the flag. I mean I kind of like to see just some of the random pieces of Americana around the building. I thought that was kind of cool, but nothing that really jumped out at me.*

Interview 28

*I think the size of Star-Spangled Banner was surprising I had no idea how big it was and until you see it, you know, it's one thing you see pictures in a book and one thing to see it on television but until you actually see it in front you, the size was amazing.*

Interview 32

*I'm really just trying to look at things that are important. Mostly things that I have been interested in.*

Interview 34

*Things I could take back to my classroom. Information and first-hand, and I've been taking a lot of pictures. First-hand information that I can share with my students.*

Interview 44

*To be able to see things that I've talked to them about before. But things that I can show them in pictures that...these are things that we can really see.*

Interview 44

### **No Expectations**

*I didn't have any idea, so I was...I was very impressed. It's very nice... you've done a very nice job.*

Interview 1

*I don't know what you had here, all I saw were some picture of drawings so I don't know if you had the real gowns or what, but that would be interesting to see.*

Interview 1

*This is the last one we're coming to, and we wanted to see what was in there, what it was like.*

Interview 5

*We were just trying to understand what's here, really. We thought we'd just pop in and see.*

Interview 5

*No, I don't think so. I wasn't quite sure what to expect.*

Interview 8

*I didn't know what was going to be in here.*

Interview 25

*No, I guess I really didn't know what to expect, so I guess my expectations weren't...it wasn't anything that had to be met.*

Interview 28

*Not...well, just kind of...I know of the big things like the Declaration of Independence and some various things like that, but as far as what else is in the building, I have no idea.*

Interview 28

*I can't say I had expectations. I kind of knew it would be handled very well, I didn't expect the place in disrepair or anything else; the way the flag was handled in that exhibit was great. So really handled well and done beautifully. So, kind of met expectations or exceeded expectations.*

Interview 31

### **Different Expectations**

*I was first thinking of western, a lot of western stuff, you know with porch things, and there's not much of that here, but this has been very good.*

Interview 1

*I was thinking I was going to see Revolutionary War and things like that.*

Interview 4

*When I saw the first level I wasn't quite sure if there was enough there...substance.*

Interview 4

*I was just at the World War II thing, I was just looking for something about the W.A.S.P.s and there wasn't anything on it.*

Interview 11

*I'm interested in American political history and if there's anything about American architectural history in the museum, I'd like to find it, but... I don't know.*

Interview 19

*The evolution of electronics and things like that.*

Interview 29

*I like sports; I found that your snippets of sports was very short. I would like to see more of it. I would like to see more sports things.*

Interview 38

*I thought it was going to bigger, bigger on a grander scale, but it did bring back memories.*

Interview 42

*I like the area on popular culture. It's different. Different from anything I've seen before in a museum.*

Interview 50

*Because it kind of offers lots of different areas of interest, whereas some of them perhaps the ones focused on natural history I wouldn't be as interested.*

Interview 50

*I thought this wouldn't be so specific, it involves lots of different things.*

Interview 50

### **More Engagement/Guidance**

*They need to think about it and they need to engage people.*

Interview 17

*I mean there were some people, even those guards here, that were knowledgeable, that can, so, but not enough people showing them, guiding them around, taking them around. We've been to other museums where that's one of, you go to Rochester and you go to the Eastman museum. This is where photography first started. You walk in the doors and there's a guy, and he'll take five, six, two, four, it doesn't matter how many. He guides them through, to show you the start of photography. That's what it's all about*

Interview 26

### **Not Great for Kids**

*I don't know if we thought that, I mean, I didn't think it would be....I mean she's young enough to where I guess...I didn't think that there'd be a lot of kid activities that she would be able to participate in anyway. So, she's just kind of along for the ride.*

Interview 28

*Some people might think that they only want to take their kids some place where something that they are already like or they might not go to a particular thing and so maybe they might not come here.*

Interview 34



## Experiences during NMAH Visit

### Imagination

*You know there is a lot of stuff to look at. We came for the children, you know. And we wanted it to be good experience for them. He's down the hallway, looking at everything. He's really curious about everything. It's just great to be here.*

Interview 6

*It brings to mind quite freshly my first reactions when I heard the report on the news in Chicago of a, what appeared to be a light plane crashing into the building.*

Interview 16

*Like, it was amazing too to see it...like, we always study about it at school. When I do things like this it just reminds me how much more I have to do to educate myself on things, and it also reminds you of how little we actually know of things. That's what I'm hoping to spark in my own children, actually seeing the real things That's why I think that will remain with my kids a lot than what they read in a textbook or what they have to memorize for a test.*

Interview 20

### Personal Connections

*Winchester, the horse up here, in the Civil War part. That was fabulous. I knew that Robert E. Lee had Traveler, but I didn't know about Winchester. I maybe had read about him, but I had forgotten. So, that was neat to see him. I didn't have any idea, so I was...I was very impressed. It's very nice... you've done a very nice job. I would like to see a few more articles maybe of the Civil War things, but I realize there's not as much left...but the horse part...Winchester was great.*

Interview 1

*I loved Julia's kitchen. I'm a cook too, and so seeing all her kitchen, although I've watched a lot of her shows, re runs of them and stuff, but... So, that was neat too. There's just a lot here.*

Interview 1

*On the ship, the boat up there, the wooden boat that was sunk in Lake Champlain, is it or something, that they dug up here in the 1970's I believe? And that was interesting to see that because I'm a scuba diver, so I...That was kind of neat to see how they pulled that up and found that.*

Interview 1

*I think that the boats and stuff, definitely a lot of history there, because we've ridden on different boats and stuff, so...It's kind of neat to see what it was like back then.*

Interview 8

*There's so many events that happen in history where you can read books or see documentaries or movies or stories or whatever, but you can never actually... it's hard to get up close to a lot of the actual artifacts. Things that were peoples' personal items. Parts of the plane, parts of the buildings. Because so much of this has gone into history and you can only see it in memorials and monuments. To actually see it in the reality of the people that were there and how it affected people. You're too busy thinking about your job to think if that will ever happen to my truck. Or could it be my truck. It makes you confront your own mortality in a way.*

Interview 37

*It was a manageable snippet of artifacts. Obviously you have probably a warehouse full of artifact that, unless you had a 9/11 display, a 9/11 building dedicated only to that day in its own warehouse, that's about all you*

can do, and it brought back some memories. I remember that day very well, and it brought back, there are things there, there's nothing there that I've seen before. Nothing there really I've heard of before, to be quite honest with you, general, individual items. But the whole thing just brought back that day in vivid, living color and, so it was good to see, it was good to be a part of that kind of memorabilia.

Interview 38

## Physical

It's nice to be able to come here, see the stories I've read about displayed in sort of an interactive fashion, if you will, as opposed to just taking it off the written page.

Interview 9

I think that the youth gets a...it's like scouting, ok, it's like taking your kids out on a scouting trip, ok? If you let the boys be by themselves, or just wander around, run around. Now if you teach them how to make fire with a flint, ok, now that's an experience that he remembers. And if you teach them to whatever, how to set the tent up, that's an experience they are going to...because it's a hands on approach. Anything you do on a hands on approach, I think you remember better.

Interview 26

It's just easy to walk around and see things. My feet are killing me or I'd want...you know, we were just saying, "Can you rent wheelchairs here?"

Interview 27

## Design

The steam engines, the gas engines, the light bulbs; the war history is fantastic; the first ladies' dresses. Julia Child's kitchen, the World's Fair, the kitchen, that was great. We've seen a lot of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 items. I liked the costumes. Oh, yeah and the railroad train, the big train on the tracks...that's fantastic. I'm more of a...I need big things. It's larger than life. We studied it all, and I'm just getting a visual of it all so I can look it up when I get home. They can't help it if I'm not into light bulbs, Corliss engines, and things, but my husband would flip somersaults with that. I was appreciating it for him.

Interview 4

I don't think it necessarily has to focus on any one person. Yeah, sometimes a particular person will grab my attention, but for the most part, I think an overall, arching display showing as much as possible, that's what I prefer. They've done a heck of a job. I've traveled all over the world, and I've seen the way that different countries have presented history, and they've done a good job,

Interview 9

## Atmosphere

I saw that, but there wasn't anyone in there, so I didn't know if it was really open.

Interview 1

And everything is very well kept up. Everything's very clean. I've really been impressed with all the museums. How well they're taken care of.

Interview 8

## Objects

I'm really appreciative of all the school children who are here and maybe they don't quite understand everything that is going on, but at least they are getting some education here. That's great! That's why I

said about the kids I'm glad to see so many school kids here. There's probably more than they can absorb, but it's really neat. And a lot of hands on things for them to do too.

Interview 1

### **Authentic**

Oh, yeah. I love period rooms. We'd love to see that kind of stuff. That stuff is just vintage, you know. We just love that vintage. I don't know how people keep it in such great shape for all these years, you know what I mean? It's just amazing. The person I was looking for on those art exhibits for the guitars was who owned this and where did it come from.

Interview 8

The authentic artifacts are more exciting, the audio/visual displays, you can sit down and watch a movie if you have time, that's nice too, but I'd prefer the real deal over replicas.

Interview 9

No, the original objects retain their power. Sometimes I'll find myself, if I'm short on time, I will skip to the things that I know are originals and not replicas just for the fact that there's something about seeing the actual thing that a photograph just doesn't completely capture.

Interview 13

### **Sensory**

I guess it was an exhibit around there. We just walked around outside, and it was nighttime and it was beautiful. So, yeah, we liked all those light boxes with the pictures So, it wasn't just like you were looking at photograph, but it was really like you were looking at IT, you know what I'm saying?

Interview 8

### **Social Connections or Big Ideas**

Well, the speaking ones. You pick a soldier, you pick an immigrant, and you hear about their lives and what they've done. Oh, and the Julia Child part was great, seeing the movies, videos of her.

Interview 1

It's kind of nice to know where, I guess, everything came from, to realize, I don't know, how far we've come. Just see a lot of things that other people don't get to see. I mean there are a lot of the bits of history that you're just not able to see everywhere else. It kind of just reminds me of the U.S. We've lived overseas before and it's just kind of the symbol of the U.S.

Interview 11

Will give you a broad understanding of what it's all about, how they arrived at their position, and why we're all equal no matter what it is. Young people don't understand that today.

Interview 26

There's so many events that happen in history where you can read books or see documentaries or movies or stories or whatever, but you can never actually... it's hard to get up close to a lot of the actual artifacts. Things that were people's personal items. Parts of the plane, parts of the buildings. Because so much of this has gone into history and you can only see it in memorials and monuments. To actually see it in the reality of the people that were there and how it affected people. You're too busy thinking about your job to think if that will ever happen to my truck. Or could it be my truck. It makes you confront your own mortality in a way.

Interview 37

## Temporal

*We just kind of got started in this one, but so far we like what we've seen. I love the Revolutionary War period. I mean...I like seeing...I wish I could see more of that. You can't see everything, so we're looking at the things that we would be interested in, so we're going to make sure we hit those things. We were having a little bit of trouble following that exactly where everything was probably just because I didn't take enough time to understand where everything was.*

Interview 7

*It doesn't necessarily have a linear, you know, from the beginning to the present, but it still does it in a way that it presents it that way, you know? It's kind of divided up into different sections, but it does, it starts from the beginning and each section kind of guides you through the stages that we've gone through. Last time I was here we didn't...you never have enough time in the day to see the entire museum, so it was an opportunity to show him the museum.*

Interview 9

*Yeah, you have theater, you know, you have stuff going on. I think that's great. We would enjoy doing that as time permitted for us.*

Interview 8

## Emotions Associated with NMAH Visit

### Overall Emotions

*And maybe things that I haven't thought about in a while, or maybe never thought about.*

Interview 2

*It's just...it's just...renewal.*

Interview 3

*I'm very happy with the way they are displaying or presenting it.*

Interview 9

*It's just comforting to know that it is in a very secured preserved location.*

Interview 32

*I enjoyed that African history studies exhibit. It was very relevant and moving kind of exhibit even though that isn't the larger one you will go to.*

Interview 34

*I guess it's a personal psychological response. It doesn't necessarily have anything to do with the exhibit. It's just with the recognition that you're at a point in your life where things are coming to an end, changing. So just brings up those feelings in me and that isn't really the museum.*

Interview 34

*But they are powerful enough exhibits and they appeal to, um, I think because the Smithsonian focuses on things that are pictorial and strong, that they connect to you emotionally. Whereas you might be just reading some academic thing about it and you don't get that experience. So you are immersed in the context of a place that is very direct.*

Interview 34

*Happy, interested, like I'm expanding my knowledge of things.*

Interview 36

*It's a pretty raw, emotional experience.*

Interview 37

*It certainly gets you in the middle, hits you in the heart.*

Interview 37

*I could feel his emotion on the newscast, it brings me back to my day of working and my day as a parent and my child... the world changed. It's different than World War II, it's different from everything. The whole thing has changed and I think we don't want to forget. We don't want our kids to forget. We look at the security now and we all roll our eyes when we go through security, like 'oh, what a pain in the neck,' (mumbles) but still, it's changed the world and I think Peter Jennings thing on how he just sits there with his emotions...that got me.*

Interview 38

*All aspects of it. You can't... that famous quote, if you forget history you're doomed to repeat it and just ... every aspect of seeing where we've been and kind of indicator of where we're going or have gone. I love every aspect about history.*

Interview 40

*In terms of what we thought, I thought it was very powerful. You all did a great job with that. It was great. It definitely was emotional but not over the top. People weren't coming out bawling, which is great. It was very tastefully done.*

Interview 40

*I mean I'm in an up mood and I didn't want to sadden myself. I'm enjoying my sons and our trip to DC, I just didn't want to bring myself down.*

Interview 40

### **Thanks and Appreciation**

*I'm amazed at how much people have done for us. People of the United States, I guess.*

Interview 1

*That's why when I see these artists that are left-handed and they're playing right-handed guitars, I can appreciate that. Just think it's awesome, I can't imagine how hard that would have been.*

Interview 7

*So you're walking through it, you hear the gun-shot in the fire, it's actually real clips, you know, because then you feel like you're actually part of it, wow, what these people went through.*

Interview 12

*I mean, we take for granted the tools that we have these days, you know, cars and telephones and what not, and they didn't have that ability, and so it kind of makes you appreciate what you do have and, I mean, overall just to be able to see it, is better than hearing about it.*

Interview 15

*I feel very fortunate to have been born in the United States.*

Interview 21

*They created it. It's awesome. Every aspect of it, that's the same feelings I get from it.*

Interview 26

*Well, it's an appreciation of what people before us have gone through to get to where we are, and I enjoy that. I like to see that. I like to see how people lived and how they related to the issues of the world around them and what their problem-solving skills were at that time, and how they were able to overcome these wild obstacles with certainly not the tools that we have today. Ingenuity and perseverance and all that kind of stuff, it's always quite interesting. I like to see that.*

Interview 31

*What they have there for the public to view and so they can get a little bit more personal feel, but again I appreciate at the very end how you can send your letters of apologies, send your feelings to those that have passed and your feelings to those that are affected. I definitely appreciated that, very nice.*

Interview 42

*Well, I've just always been thankful. Thankful for our country and I just...I hate to see that sometimes it might be, you know, people maybe don't share that so much anymore, I think.*

Interview 52

### **Evoked by Nostalgia**

*Maybe it needs a little bit more "corny-American", to make you feel American, a little corny something going through.*

Interview 4

*Love of history, son of a history teacher, and so from a very young age it was instilled into me how important history was. Vacations were never just Disney World; it was Monticello, Mount Vernon, Manassas. I've always had a love of history and have developed that as I've aged and still want to come here; every time I'm in town, I find myself here.*

Interview 13

*I have a man in my church who has the world's largest collection of Disney memorabilia. And it's written in his will that when he dies it's willed to Smithsonian...So some day that will all be here for children to see and marvel at Walt Disney's imagination at wanting to make children happy.*

Interview 14

*I love museums and the history of America is always fun to see, you know. Just walk down memory lane kind of.*

Interview 27

*I think it's that idea. Not everybody likes Michael Jackson music, not everybody likes Archie Bunker's chair, but everybody comes together for USA, even though they may not be pulling for him in the skates, it's the USA.*

Interview 33

*Probably more of the industrial age, I liked that era and then the Old West, obviously as a young boy you want to be a cowboy.*

Interview 35

### **Excitement or Fascination**

*It's thrilling, actually.*

Interview 4

*You just come here and you want to be excited. Now, those kinds of things get you all kind of pumped up.*

Interview 4

Those were the times I find most fascinating. The Lincoln exhibit is always fascinating for that reason, also.

Interview 13

Fascination. Imagination. You know a lot of times you can lose yourself in the objects, or reading the texts, or, you know, paint a picture in your mind of when you're at certain exhibits to sort of place yourself back in that timeframe. It gives you some perspective.

Interview 13

That's still the, you know, that same sense I had when I was that age, I guess instilled in me by my dad, it's still the same. History is exciting and it's worth..., you know, this is what you do when you have down time and for enjoyment. It's not something that you take in 11th grade and you never think about again.

Interview 13

History wasn't, because of the way I was raised and because my father's love of history, history wasn't something you had to do. It wasn't like, "Oh, it's just something in a book or it's a class you have to take." It was also entertainment. As I said, if we traveled, you know, even if it was to the beach or to, you know, amusement park or whatever, there was always, for my dad, some sort of historical stop we would make, so I grew up at a very young age tying the two together, that, "It's not history is boring. History is exciting. It's fun." It's the same as Disney World, only different. It's entertaining in its own way to learn these things.

Interview 13

So this still brings, you know, heart palpitations just thinking back about it.

Interview 16

Interviewer: Were you excited to see the slippers?

Respondent: I was.

Interview 23

The whole feature, every aspect of it makes me awestruck.

Interview 26

Yep, I was lit up.

Interview 28

I didn't even realize that the actual Star Spangled Banner was here. So that was something I got chills, when I walked through there, when I saw the Star Spangled Banner.

Interview 30

### **Pride or Sadness**

Sometimes I kind of feel sorry for them, you know, the fact that they were here...they had been living here for the longest time, and then we...you know, the Europeans or whatever...came over and that was pretty much the end of the American Indians.

Interview 7

Proud. Yeah. That would wrap it up.

Interview 15

They inspire you, inspire to do more things and become more... I think it inspires pride too. I just, I think it inspires a pride within you of being an American. A lot of people in the world don't know that, don't have that connection.

Interview 30

*The freedom that we have achieved, it was not free. It [Americans] paid their price in blood as that whole thing showed us. And we need to honor and respect that. I think that every American should be proud to be an American.*

Interview 32

*Pride.*

Interview 33

*It makes you feel good, it makes you feel happy that you...you're proud that you can do all this, you're proud to live in an area, in a country that allows this type of thing.*

Interview 35

*Oh yeah, that's definitely one of the emotional ingredients. It makes you feel like...irate, makes you feel like someone caused you bodily harm, it makes you very, very sad, and it makes you more of a patriot, at least I hope that's the reaction of people. Not necessarily all of those ingredients but at least the last one.*

Interview 40

*But it's awfully sad. It's awfully sad. It's so recent, it's sad, you know? When you go back 200 years, it's not painful.*

Interview 41

*Little bit of sadness, pride that you were part of that at one time, yeah, mixed emotions, sadness, pride, happiness.*

Interview 49

*Well, I think, sadness, shock at some of things, like I said. Especially when you read the figures, it sort of brings it all home. Even if you've heard it all before, just kind of seeing it again and seeing the films and things, kind of brings it home.*

Interview 50

*Pride. Amazement at a lot of these things that have been a part of our heritage, I don't know. You know, we've been in DC for three days, and it's just...everywhere you go it's amazing.*

Interview 51

*Um, pride. Pride of country, pride of our forefathers that founded the country, a lot of them died or were willing to die for freedom of the country. That's what I think of patriotism.*

Interview 52

## **Sacrifice**

*I feel very fortunate to have been born in the United States, both my sons have been Marines. I feel very honored that they could serve their country.*

Interview 14

*She...people realize the soldier's sacrifice, they don't realize the family's sacrifice, what the family sacrifices, too.*

Interview 33

*Because of the sacrifices that a lot of the young troops made and the sacrifices that my grandfather and his friends made.*

Interview 49



**No Emotional Response**

*I've seen it before, so I think I'm a little jaded.*

Interview 3

*It was sad...there was a group of teenagers that were opposite us, and as they approached, the one girl "What did you think?", "Oh, god. It was boring." You know, that's depressing. You know what I mean? You think of it; it's like a waste of time. What benefit did you get out of it?*

Interview 26

**Benefits of Visiting NMAH****Overall Benefits**

*No because well, for one thing they're all free so you're not worried about getting your money's worth.*

Interview 17

*Yes, and it's a credit to our heritage that these things are available without paying an entrance fee on. Because there's nothing in society today that when you go into a museum, even in our local area, we have museums and there's a fee for it, to go in to it. And this is no fee which is another thing that makes it wonderful.*

Interview 26

*Well, it's nice that it's free.*

Interview 27

*I guess to just kind of say that I've been there and seen that. Like I said, being able to say that I've seen little bits of history in whatever museum it is.*

Interview 28

*You know what I like the most about coming here right now? I didn't realize, but...all the foreigners. They're coming here to learn what America's about. They've heard a lot of things, you know.*

Interview 41

**Escape**

*I can just come and relate to some of the exhibits (not all of the exhibits), read the interpretation of the conservators, and just...um...it's just...it's just...renewal.*

Interview 3

*It's nice to be refreshed and see it, see it like a theater, a theatrical setting. It keeps it alive for me.*

Interview 4

*Besides just the entertainment factor of coming here is just the benefit of knowing our country better.*

Interview 40

**Inspiration**

*I also get a sense of the fact that one man gave a half million dollars, what a 150 years ago or so...and that all of these sprang out of that and all of the other thousands of people that have contributed.*

Interview 14

*And my sons, I want to inspire them that they can do anything. And I really want Audie Murphy to be an example for them that they can do whatever they want. They're going to be little guys. They're pretty small, so we want them to know that they are big on the inside.*

Interview 14

*When you look at the history of our nation, it's a history of people that were striving for new ideals, for individualism, to break away from the old and forge forth in the new. And when you look at the sacrifices that a lot of people would pay for that in order for us to worship in freedom and have our own religious faith and the respect the faiths of others. It's probably the only nation of the world that really forged that.*

Interview 21

*I think American history, being an American, you want to know about your history, where you came from and where you are going as well. But the other things are interesting as well. But I think, you know, when you see the saber that was given to Washington at the surrender of Yorktown is just, you're sort of inspired by the people that come before you.*

Interview 30

*They inspire you, inspire to do more things and become more... I think it inspires pride too. I just, I think it inspires a pride within you of being an American. A lot of people in the world don't know that, don't have that connection.*

Interview 30

*I think we've got a lot of Americans who just do amazing things.*

Interview 30

*And I like to see how smart the founders of this country were. It's just amazing. Our forefathers wrote the Declaration of Independence, the whole crew, all of them. They really are. It's quite amazing.*

Interview 31

*It kind of reenergizes you, too. Because in everyday life you go to work and go home, go to work, go home and then this kind of re-centers you and re-grounds you to where the country came from; in the Air Force we call it re-bluing.*

Interview 49

*Well, I kind of think the Industrial Revolution, I mean, everything that...all the inventions and everything that we enjoy today.*

Interview 52

*Their dedication just to make things easier for the next generation. I don't know. It's just been really interesting. We've enjoyed it a lot.*

Interview 52

*I mean when you start at the very beginning of our country, you just realize how much everybody put on the line for what we have today. Just appreciation for our country and all the memorials that we've gone to today...it's been real touching.*

Interview 52

*I know. I mean, it's amazing. I mean, a lot of times, you don't really realize where all that stuff came from. You know, we just take it for granted.*

Interview 52

## **Learning**

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<i>There's so much rich American history here.</i>	<u>Interview 19</u>
<i>Probably the history of America is kind of a more general one.</i>	<u>Interview 25</u>
<i>You get to learn things; you get to learn history, just... you know, fun to learn things.</i>	<u>Interview 27</u>
<i>It reminds you how much more is out there and how so little we know and so as I walk around I think, "I want to study more about that, and I want to buy some books on this topic." And maybe things that I haven't thought about in a while, or maybe never thought about.</i>	<u>Interview 2</u>
<i>I think self-education is a lot more important than formal education.</i>	<u>Interview 2</u>
<i>We, my husband and I, said that he would get more education from being in Washington these few days, than he will get sitting in a classroom. I truly believe that.</i>	<u>Interview 2</u>
<i>They stop and see one panel and to them it opens up a whole new view that they start talking to their friends about.</i>	<u>Interview 3</u>
<i>Just learn a little bit about the history in the place you are.</i>	<u>Interview 5</u>
<i>So they can see what's been going on in the country, to learn about the governmental system, and just learn about the country, have a better appreciation for it.</i>	<u>Interview 6</u>
<i>You know... to be able to learn...to see...</i>	<u>Interview 7</u>
<i>It explains things very well, all the different exhibits and stuff.</i>	<u>Interview 8</u>
<i>It's nice to be able to come here, see the stories I've read about displayed in sort of an interactive fashion, if you will, as opposed to just taking it off the written page.</i>	<u>Interview 9</u>
<i>It's really educational to come here.</i>	<u>Interview 12</u>
<i>More curious and more interested in where we live and maybe, hopefully, make them want to pursue education and get more involved with media.</i>	<u>Interview 12</u>
<i>If I have a lot of time, which I usually do not, but if I have a lot of time I do read almost every word. That's why it ends up taking so long in the exhibits I'm particularly interested in; I'll read about every word.</i>	<u>Interview 13</u>

*Stuff like this ... get people out and maybe expand their views and gives them a new idea about something, something that they haven't thought about before.*

Interview 17

*Well, it's a great chance for them to see and learn other than just reading and seeing it in the magazine.*

Interview 24

*Just to teach everyone what's happened and in a very interesting way, I suppose, instead of reading books.*

Interview 25

*Because we need to take advantage of what's available to us to learn about our heritage and our history. It's important and useful to know things rather than to just spout opinions.*

Interview 34

*To learn things and if you go to things that you haven't already seen or already liked then yeah, sure, you will learn something.*

Interview 34

*Well, you probably are just reinforcing stuff that's already in your mind. I mean, that's the normal course of things. But then when you're old like me, you forget things.*

Interview 34

*Well, it's obviously shaped everything that I'm a part of, so. I'd like to see where it all comes from, and it's also in a museum like this, it's neat to see the original artifacts. It's kind of cool to see that, but also just to learn about it.*

Interview 36

*I just like to know things. I'm curious about things.*

Interview 37

*Just leaving here with more knowledge of how our country was founded, the struggles we endured, I'd say that knowledge is power.*

Interview 40

*I think the overwhelming benefit is knowledge.*

Interview 40

*Yeah, I think you get richer. You get richer every time you learn something. You just become more fulfilled.*

Interview 41

*Knowledge.*

Interview 41

*Learning, going back, thinking, seeing how people functioned in their time period. It's just awesome. Just the people, and how we evolved and what we learned and...*

Interview 41

*Ah, it's something that I always liked. I'm a teacher. So I always like to... and actually I've been taking pictures of certain things that I'm going over, things in my classroom.*

Interview 42

*Teachers always learn, their whole lives, so this is all part of that.*

Interview 44

*I suppose being from England it's kind of fascinating to see it from the different perspectives. Because obviously England was at war as well and the history is focused on the Royal Family, but it's interesting to see how it works in America.*

Interview 50**Enculturation or Education of Children**

*That's what I'm hoping to spark in my own children, actually seeing the real things.*

Interview 2

*I guess it's fun for me because I get to see it all new through her eyes or through my son because they don't remember it...so...*

Interview 2

*Look around and see all the kids.*

Interview 3

*Be able to expose my grandchildren to all of this.*

Interview 6

*It's good for teaching young women that they can be scientists too—this museum. That's what it's good for. Not for me, but for them. Show the girls that, "Yeah, they can do it."*

Interview 4

*It's wonderful to see kids excited about different things here because in the Midwest we don't get this opportunity.*

Interview 8

*She's just ten, and she's not going to get into it as deeply as maybe if she were twelve, you know. But it keeps her mind occupied, and she does pick up something here and there, and that's good.*

Interview 8

*You know, I've noticed that and there's, I guess in general, more interaction in some of the exhibits than I'd seen when I first started coming when I was a kid, and I think a lot of that probably is particularly good when you're younger, for kids particularly I noticed a lot more interactive exhibits that would maybe be more at their level to get them more engaged, then...I know at a certain age you're probably not as likely to want to read long bits of text and so, I think the interactive exhibits in that respect are very good, particularly for the younger audience.*

Interview 13

*Well, I think it's an unfolding of our history; it's a telling of the American story, and I think all the museums have a great deal to do with helping children understand our nation, which is very important.*

Interview 14

*I think anytime you can tell the story of a people so that future generations can see what went before and what assured them of what they had at that time, that's a good thing.*

Interview 14

*I was able to show my daughter down there...she was born after the Twin Towers fell, but, you know, they have a little part over there with Iraq and Afghanistan, and I'd be like, "This is why I went over to Iraq, and this is why I do, what I do."*

Interview 15

*My daughter...she's eight, so they don't really, she hasn't gotten to the point with history where they're teaching about more modern times, so to show her the pictures of the Twin Towers that they have there as they're being struck by the airplanes is...you know...and her being able to visualize it. She's able to grasp the concept and she's...the whole museum's been able to do that to her.*

Interview 15

*And she's able to grasp ahold of that concept, when she goes back to school now, and they start talking about Lincoln, she's going to be able to explain even further to her friends and fellow students on the story behind Lincoln, and as far as...you know...Martin Luther King and so many other icons in American history.*

Interview 15

*I think the Smithsonian-I mean, look at all these kids-I don't know how engaged they are now, but perhaps at a later time. If you start now maybe you have an audience later.*

Interview 17

*Well, I mean, especially for the kids, it's just one place you can go and learn about every aspect of American history.*

Interview 23

*Absolutely, positively. Especially, in the age frame of a teenager, someone that's around 12 to 16, in that timeframe, I think they would appreciate it more. My grandchildren are only 6 and 9. My daughter is a teacher, so she goes through a lot of effort to explain it to them, and they do remember it because oftentimes when we are sitting at home, I reflect back and I'm like, "What did you get out of this, Brady?" I say, "Can you tell me anything about it?" and the surprising part is, "Yeah, he has a lot of references." Whatever impressed him, ok, the most. And take my word for it the flag will be one of the first things that he'll remember*

Interview 26

*With kids now, if it isn't moving like this (snaps fingers) and I say 'You know what? You need to go back.' Maybe that would be one thing that I think. I don't know if they have it but I haven't seen it. Well, that would be really interesting. I would encourage young kids to have a class start off that way so that they can appreciate how much faster everything is.*

Interview 29

*Well, I mean, they don't understand the differences between yesterday, tomorrow and today, really.*

Interview 30

*I just I love this country and I love what it stands for and I just want the young people to take a history lesson.*

Interview 32

*I think our sons are more comfortable with history, than other people's kids are because of us.*

Interview 41

## **NMAH Is Unique**

*It lets me see the type of things that I would never be able to experience anywhere else.*

Interview 7

*Because there's only one of it and this is the only place where you can find it.*

Interview 11

*Just see a lot of things that other people don't get to see. I mean there's a lot of the bits of history that you're just not able to see everywhere else.*

Interview 11

*A lot of the exhibits are the same, but you know, they will often change out exhibits and I always find it interesting to see what's new. And I never tire of certain things, you know, seeing Lincoln's hat or you know, that just can't be beat, I don't care how many times you see it; it's still impressive.*

Interview 13

*Certainly better than any other museum I've ever been to.*

Interview 13

*You've got a larger scope of history and not just, in those particular places I mentioned it's centered solely on what happened on those spots but this is sort of the repository for all of American history that's why I find it always worth the visit.*

Interview 13

*This country and this city is unique to the world, and I think it's very important for our young people to see the White House, see the Capitol, go through these museums, walk the Mall... We went to the Lincoln, Martin Luther King, and World War II exhibit last night, at night. There's a magic here.*

Interview 14

*But this is all real and every time I come I see something different.*

Interview 17

*I started bringing my son and daughter down here when they were two and three years old. And then we come back, not every year, but at least every other year. And I think that what they've taken out of it; and what I've taken out by coming down and that's part of the reasons why I always enjoy when I'm hosting somebody, they want to see something that I've never seen before or it's been years since I've seen it. So I think just the story that's continued forward, that evolves, you know, things are different today, than what they were before.*

Interview 22

*It's part of our nation's history, I mean, we're in our nation's capital. I don't know better place to come than the Smithsonian to look at that stuff.*

Interview 30

*I mean, that's amazing that they are even in existence... it's just amazing. Someone has kept track of these things all through time and this is the only place.*

Interview 30

*There again, it's the uniqueness of the items.*

Interview 37

*There were some things, certain exhibits I think that we were hoping to see, but mainly we are all hoping to see vital parts of American history that we had not seen personally before... up close and personal, true grit of Americana that you just can't get anywhere else, at least personally.*

Interview 40

*It's just not things you can see anywhere else. Like Michael Jackson's hat. It's a bit of fun, really, isn't it? Just something different that's only here.*

Interview 50

### **Object Experiences**

*That is true. To see the real things.*

Interview 2

*I like to see the objects really.*

Interview 5

*The benefits are to see everything that's here.*

Interview 6

*It's cooler. It's like woo, I saw that and it's cool*

Interview 12

*There are so many things that you learn about in history. If you're a student of history or if you read of these things or study of these things, it makes it tangible when you actually have the actual object that can tie you to a certain period of time whether it's a bayonet that ties you to a particular battle or clothing that ties you to Abraham Lincoln, it makes him a real person, it's not just something in a book, it's something more tangible.*

Interview 13

*No, the original objects retain their power. Sometimes I'll find myself, if I'm short on time, I will skip to the things that I know are originals and not replicas just for the fact that there's something about seeing the actual thing that a photograph just doesn't completely capture.*

Interview 13

*I'm a Veteran, so seeing the military things, you know, all the tools and the equipment that they used back in the 1800s, all the way up to now.*

Interview 15

*History is history and to see history is a lot more fun, than hearing about it.*

Interview 15

*You get to see these icons, American icons, you know, George Washington, Martin Luther King, Lincoln, all these great icons. And you get to see this not necessarily what they did, but the stuff that they used and what they had to do with and that's an interesting fact.*

Interview 15

*I mean, we take for granted the tools that we have these days, you know, cars and telephones and what not, and they didn't have that ability, and so it kind of makes you appreciate what you do have and, I mean, overall just to be able to see it, is better than hearing about it.*

Interview 15

*And because it's all in one place and big, you get to see a lot of the little things, where if it were just a smaller place, you'd just get highlights only.*

Interview 23

*But we got to see the flag. They couldn't believe it. It was huge.*

Interview 24



Seeing things that... I guess I've always just enjoyed seeing historical things, so I enjoy seeing stuff from, you know, the Civil War, Revolutionary War, just different pieces of history from our country

Interview 28

George Washington's uniform, the Price of Freedom. That whole area is just absolutely incredible. I'm a huge Audie Murphy fan as well. I think it's incredible to have such a hero like Audie Murphy and I wanted to see his uniform and also the ruby slippers. My daughter's a huge fan of Wizard of Oz. I mean, from the age of 3, she wore Dorothy dresses and red slippers. So that was another thing that was really neat. The First ladies exhibit is absolutely incredible. To see such beautiful dresses from inaugural balls and Martha Washington's dress and Mary Todd Lincoln's dress and the scandalous dress of the flappers dresses. It's just an absolutely gorgeous flapper dress. It's just "Wow". To Obama's inauguration dress. I mean, just absolutely gorgeous to see those things.

Interview 30

We saw the painting that was in there. In both of those books, we saw that, so I'm taking these pictures for her saying "This exists. This is not just in a book. It's not in a story. It's real. It's out there. You can find it. It's here somewhere."

Interview 30

I don't know about day-to-day life but they're touchstones, you know, that's why we have visuals, that's why we have flags that represent certain things

Interview 32

It was amazing just to see the personal artifacts. People's personal items and see some who've lived and some who've haven't.

Interview 37

It was a manageable snippet of artifacts. Obviously you have probably a warehouse full of artifacts that, unless you had a 9/11 display, a 9/11 building dedicated only to that day in its own warehouse, that's about all you can do...it was good to be a part of that kind of memorabilia.

Interview 38

You've got to have some love for this stuff. You've got to understand its value.

Interview 41

So kids like to see things. Kids are very visual, and they like to see things, so I look for things that I've experienced, and that I can take back to them and talk about, because then they're more interested in it. Some of the art pieces that you can tell just took a long time and a lot of work and effort and skill to put together.

Interview 44

So, isn't there the kitchen of a famous cook, and I can't remember what her name is, but it'll come to me, but I think it's here. Yeah, and isn't Dorothy's shoes here? You know there are a few things I know about, people know about it, that if time allows I'll go search for them. And I think you have some dresses from, I think I've seen those, from all the presidents, the first ladies, so I thought that was kind of cool, just, you know, it kind of documents America, you know, documents who we are.

Interview 46

I mean, it's amazing. A lot of times you don't really realize where all that stuff came from. You know, we just take it for granted.

Interview 52

**Patriotism**

*It makes you proud of your country.*

Interview 4

*It kind of just reminds me of the U.S. We've lived overseas before and it's just kind of the symbol of the U.S.*

Interview 11

*Well, when you look at the history of our nation, it's a history of a people that were striving for new ideals, for individualism, to break away from the old and forge forth in the new. And when you look at the sacrifices that a lot of people have paid for that, in order for us to worship in freedom, and to have our own religious faith and to respect the faiths of others, it's probably the only nation in the world that really affords that.*

Interview 14

*Well, first of all, the nation's capital is, I think, the most important city in the nation, and I think every young person ought to visit here.*

Interview 14

*I feel very fortunate to have been born in the United States, both my sons have been Marines. I feel very honored that they could serve their country.*

Interview 14

*I think American history, being an American, you want to know about your history, where you came from and where you are going as well. I mean, we're the majority of us are Americans; to see that, that history of people who did extraordinary things.*

Interview 30

*The freedom that we have achieved, it was not free. It [Americans] paid their price in blood as that whole thing showed us. And we need to honor and respect that. I think that every American should be proud to be an American.*

Interview 32

*You know the flag is a symbol to us, to me that's like our first flag, the Star-Spangled Banner. You know, we sing it on every baseball game and swim meet that we go to and it's going to have a little more meaning when I sing the Star-Spangled Banner now that I actually saw it.*

Interview 32

*It's a symbol of our country, it's a symbol of freedom and it's a symbol of really the independence that America stands for and our freedoms.*

Interview 32

*And we have a country where they can protest and be against that. That's another aspect of living in a free country.*

Interview 32

*It makes you feel good, it makes you feel happy that you...you're proud that you can do all this, you're proud to live in an area, in a country that allows this type of thing.*

Interview 35

*Well, yeah, I think so because you take a pride in their accomplishments and things.*

Interview 41

*And, you know, I'm a patriot so I want to know everything about this country that I can know. I mean, that's...I love it.*

Interview 41

*Um, pride. Pride of country, pride of our forefathers that founded the country, a lot of them died or were willing to die for freedom of the country. That's what I think of patriotism.*

Interview 52

### **Remembrance**

*Well, I think what it is, truly a lot of Americans getting back to our roots and getting back to what makes America such a unique and wonderful country.*

Interview 32

*To see the damage that happened to it and also the damage that happened to the New York Fire Department, the amount of guys they lost, it's a massive hole to fill. It certainly gets you in the middle, hits you in the heart. But it was a wonderful exhibit. I thought it was great. Because it's rare to see something like that where you can really get up close to an event of such a nature.*

Interview 37

*...and it brought back some memories. I remember that day very well, and it brought back, there's things there, there's nothing there that I've seen before. Nothing there really I've heard of before, to be quite honest with you, general, individual items. But the whole thing just brought back that day in vivid, living color and, so it was good to see, it was good to be a part of that kind of memorabilia.*

Interview 38

*I don't think I would change my behaviors. I think I've already got my thoughts of and just kind of like I said, re-grounds you or kind of get you back focused in your everyday work and be impactful of what you have.*

Interview 49

*I guess so we don't forget who we are and where we came from and all of the things that have happened to bring us to this point.*

Interview 51

### **Keep History Alive**

*It's nice to be refreshed and see it, see it like a theater, a theatrical setting. It keeps it alive for me.*

Interview 4

*I think because when you see it firsthand, rather than on TV, it actually becomes more real. It comes alive to you.*

Interview 12

*I just think that they are very important speeches, and I just kind of wanted to feel like I was more living it.*

Interview 23

*It was good. It was, actually to read it and to try to feel like what they would have to had done, a little bit.*

Interview 23

*That's what people don't realize, I mean we're living our lives now; like it's not history. It's history in the making just like they were history.*

Interview 33

*It helps realize it's history in the making when you see stuff that you've seen on TV in a museum.*

Interview 33

*It keeps history alive. Particularly for people who are much younger than I am, like you see all the kids, this is going to be their only way to know about some of the past.*

Interview 35

### **Something for Everyone**

*Whatever era of history that you're into, you're going to be able to find something that piques your fantasy.*

Interview 13

*It's very engaging. And it engages people at all ages, I think. Really I think there is something here for everybody, whatever it is they're interested in.*

Interview 17

*A bit of everything. Everything's really interesting, so far.*

Interview 25

*I think it's that idea. Not everybody likes Michael Jackson music, not everybody likes Archie Bunker's chair, but everybody comes together for USA, even though they may not be pulling for him in the skating, it's the USA.*

Interview 33

### **Understanding the Past**

*Seeing how people have progressed...maybe? Maybe...digressed through wars.*

Interview 1

*To understand our history. To see where our roots were; how things have progressed. I'm sure our ancestors would be flabbergasted at what we've got now! (laughs) But, yeah, it's a step back in history.*

Interview 8

*We're all taught American history growing up, social studies and what not, but when you come to this, and you actually grab hold...you get to see it and you're able to grasp the concept of the early days before we were actually American, we were still the colonies of Britain. You get to grasp that concept how we didn't even belong to ourselves. And then, as America started to, through the wars, you know, the Revolutionary War, started to shape itself and its foundation.*

Interview 15

*Well, I mean, they don't understand the differences between yesterday, tomorrow, and today, really. I mean, they will say "you remember yesterday when we went to the fair" and it might have been two months ago. They just know yesterday ...*

Interview 30

*I would go to domestic history that we've said which is right over here. Because it's kind of a beginning, it takes you through. We all kind of live in the present and it takes you through, it's kind of interesting to take yourself through what people were going through in the past, and the way they lived and the way we live today is quite a different scenario. So I appreciate stuff like that...*

Interview 31

No other civilization in the world has experienced the plan that our forefathers planted, the seeds that they planted. And I think we need to get back to that because we need to preserve it just like we need to preserve the Star-Spangled Banner flag as a symbol.

Interview 32

History is where we've been. I don't know how we know who we are, unless we know where we've been, did Truman say that?

Interview 41

I think it's honest. I mean it points out there's things we did like what we did to the Indians, that wasn't good. But it also points out that there were things that were good...so...

Interview 41

I think people should see where all the things we enjoy came from and the people that had the brains to do it.

Interview 52

### Lessons for the Future

Yes, I think we need to very badly remember history and how it's affected history and how we tend to repeat ourselves and not learn much as we go along

Interview 8

I think anytime you can tell the story of a people so that future generations can see what went before and what assured them of what they had at that time, that's a good thing.

Interview 14

I think each American should learn our country's histories and what we were fighting for because I think when you start veering away from that, you allow thoughts like socialism, communism, other types of forms of government. I'm not saying they are good or bad, what I'm saying is for other countries in the world that have gone that route, we can learn from history what their demise was.

Interview 32

We wouldn't have the present if we didn't have the history... where we are today is because of what was before us...everything that everybody did before us.

Interview 33

That's a valuable thing to be able to do is to not to use history simply as an interesting topic or something to know what people did before, but to tie particular histories into what is going to happen and to see existence in that way...

Interview 34

I think it's affected everyone who was alive at that point. Not just our daily lives, but everybody remembers it, remembers how we felt, remembers whatever. It's one of those things, a recent lesson that we learned from that could prevent something like it in the future.

Interview 40

I'd like to add, just taking that knowledge and applying that knowledge. Applying it, using it for future decisions, obviously you want to take something away that stays with you forever. How we've all changed, how we come from different backgrounds, different countries, just remembering that in our everyday lives.

Interview 40

Just the people, and how we evolved and what we learned and...

Interview 41

*I think it's important to remember the history of the country and, I think, for them, they're so young, to teach them the things that happened, so they won't repeat themselves and why people do these things.*

Interview 42

*Ah, history is amazing to me. I just love to see where we came from and how we got where we are.*

Interview 43**Deeper Understanding**

*I don't know why that stuff is important to me, you know, it just gives me additional information, you know, about what I'm looking at, just how valuable it is...um...or maybe, how long it took to make.*

Interview 7

*Each time I come I'm still fascinated, a lot of times by seeing the exact same objects, so to me, it doesn't get old, even if it doesn't change. To some people, you know, maybe it's one of those things you mark off your list, "Go, Ok, I've been there; I've done that. It was neat, or I'll liked it or I didn't like it, whatever, but I've done it." But to me coming back and even seeing the same things, or the same exhibit, or reading the same things over again doesn't lose its fascination.*

Interview 13

*...put the two places together and now she's understanding that Kennedy was a president and as a president these are some of things that he was accomplishing and what he stood for and why the American people did and didn't like him, and so she's able to put those concepts together and make it, instead of that was a Kennedy thing and this is a Kennedy thing, now it's one.*

Interview 15

*I'm a Veteran, so seeing the military things, you know, all the tools and the equipment that they used back in the 1800s, all the way up to now, and then I was be able to show my daughter down there...she was born after the Twin Towers fell, but, you know, they have a little part of it over there with Iraq and Afghanistan, and I'd be like, "This is why I went over to Iraq, and this is why I do, what I do."*

Interview 15

*In a way it's a survey and a sketch, but yet it does go deeply in to some stuff. And I think that's a way to generate interest in our minds to further explore our stuff. And because it introduces you to so much stuff that you're not aware of, it's bound to open some doors...in even a non-fertile brain is bound to gather some freshness out of it.*

Interview 34

*I think that it tries to express everything rather than have any perspective which is ideal, and its educational aspect—that it isn't trying to sway anybody's views any particular way. It's giving us an educational opportunity which is ideal. I think that if somebody comes here and really pays attention than it should be a really good balance to some other political and social stuff that's going on in our times. Dichotomies and it's either this way or no way and that kind of stuff. And this place doesn't have ... I don't think it has an intentional political viewpoint. It's just trying to give us information and stuff. So in that sense, I think it does represent my ideal verses somebody who just wants to show their particular view of history. It doesn't specifically show my view and that's good.*

Interview 34

*I think they're all interesting. I think you look at them all as a whole, they're all interwoven.... I kind of like that sometimes even the most terrible nasty things where there's so much pain and suffering that there*

can be something that can be something to come out of it that's truly wonderful, that wouldn't exist if it wasn't for that.

Interview 37

## Other Comments

They need to think about it and they need to engage people.

Interview 17

It's probably easier to get here today, than it was for a while, but 3 years ago, 4 years ago, you could drive down here and park. You can't do that today; you can't do that today. But with Metro the way it is, it's very easy to get in here.

Interview 22

It's giving us educational opportunity which is ideal. I think that if somebody comes here and really pays attention than it should be a really good balance to some other political and social stuff that's going on in our times. Dichotomies and it's either this way or no way and that kind of stuff. And this place doesn't have ... I don't think it has an intentional political view point. It's just trying to give us information and stuff. So in that sense, I think it does represent my ideal verses somebody who just wants to show their particular view of history. It doesn't specifically show my view and that's good.

Interview 34

## Predispositions

As a pastor I see religion in everything. I see my faith revealed in everything. I see the unfolding of faith revealed in just about everything that happens in our nation because we're a nation of a very diversified religious backgrounds with basically one god. So, yeah, I don't know that I would be critically interested in a religious museum. I've been to Israel several times, I've seen that, but, this, I mean, this whole complex of museums under the Smithsonian is, I think, revealing a great deal about our history as a people of faith. I wouldn't have the faintest idea I would leave that to the professional historians and the museum personnel. I think whoever has designed all of these museums has done an amazing job of reaching out to the people and giving us something very, very important. I wouldn't even have the faintest idea

Interview 14

## History

Love of history, son of a history teacher, and so from a very young age it was instilled into me how important history was. Vacations were never just Disney World; it was Monticello, Mount Vernon, Manassas. I've always had a love of history and have developed that as I've aged and still want to come here; every time I'm in town, I find myself here.

Interview 13

## Museum

I'm more geared to the Hirshhorn Museum or the art museums, and so forth...the Hirshhorn is more my personality. It just appeals to me.

Interview 4

I like those things in the science labs where I can look up and touch things and play things. You know when we did the airplane one. I like to have my hands on. I can't read all this, I get like, you know, if I see a skeleton, after 10 skeletons, I'm done. I just look at it and I don't read, unless I'm particularly interested in a certain zebra or something like that. But if I can put my hands on it, if I'm more interactive, or build something, I can do that.

Interview 38

## Personal

*I prefer auditory as opposed to reading, but it's a problem that I have. I'm more of an auditory learner anyway. So, that's, honestly, if I have to learn something about that, I prefer auditory over visual.*

Interview 9

*Just because I don't hear a lot about it, and I find it interesting that woman, us women, actually did a lot during World War II, but that doesn't, that part doesn't get brought up, just kind of the "Rosie the Riveter" portion of it, but not the fact that we ferried planes and had more pilots able to fly, you know, all the ones with bombs and stuff.*

Interview 11

*It is my favorite museum, so it's hard to talk...when it is my favorite to think of something that I would do to improve it. I don't know how you could beat it, it's kind of all of American history and it's free to everyone, so, I mean, you know, you have all this great, fascinating stuff and it's accessible to anyone who wants to come. I don't know that it could get much better than that.*

Interview 13

*No, I mean, it's neat. It's an awesome statue but you know, you don't want to see your presidents naked.*

Interview 30

## Suggestions

*We talked about this yesterday, maybe the Smithsonian should charge one buck for a week's pass or something.*

Interview 38

## Adult only time

*I think traffic...crowd control could be a little different but I wouldn't know how to solve that problem. And there's lots and lots and lots of kids and I think it would be a shame, maybe this is something you do and I just don't know about it, but have more of an adult, adult night, say 7 to 1 you...no one under...and I have nieces and nephews and I love them dearly and one of them is sitting over there, but it would be kind of nice to do some of this without all the kids around. Not knocking the kids, don't get me wrong.*

Interview 35

## Exhibits

*I would like a bigger first ladies area too...Things that the first ladies did. Larger displays of all the things they did for their country. Activities they did—just trying to find some words right now—projects.*

Interview 4

*I'll give you something I liked from previous lives, years back. And I noticed there's an exhibit, a very small exhibit, on the old Muppets. And you know the TV was such a huge thing between the late forties and current and you guys had a M.A.S.H. exhibit for a number of years and just things that take back to that, those things that were so much of what we did. Now I, as an engineer, always appreciate the civil engineering part of it. So that to me is important to see how that changed through the years, but so, it's probably those kinds of things. I think television; you've got a computer section now. That is very interesting. But the television has been such a force with particularly those of us who grew up through the fifties and sixties...I do miss the pendulum, though.*

Interview 22

## Hands-on



*I think that it would definitely be a better thing for the kids, especially today's kids. I think it'd be a better draw for them. I think that they would find it more interesting, and I think that they would learn more if it was more interactive. As far as me, myself, I think it's fine, maybe more audio/visual type stuff. But interaction for the kids, I think is very important. I mean it would draw my interest simply because I would like to know what's happening in the future, possible technologies coming out, things like that. That's going to draw my attention, absolutely.*

Interview 9

*You know, I've noticed that and there's a, I guess, in general more interaction in some of the exhibits than I'd seen when I first started coming when I was a kid, and I think a lot of that probably is particularly good when you're younger, for kids particularly I noticed a lot more interactive exhibits that would maybe be more at their level to get them more engaged, then...I know at a certain age you're probably not as likely to want to read long bits of text and so, I think the interactive exhibits in that respect are very good, particularly for the younger audience. Yeah, I find myself not necessarily...*

Interview 13

*The other thing that would be nice would be to do more with senses. Like, do more with touch, but also do more with smell. You could have more...*

Interview 38

*You could have a dial telephone, which can't compete with a touch. A day of school at a desk, and they could touch it or whatever. Then a teenager or whatever it is, a young adult working in a kitchen. The things now that we have, you know there's those finger-press washing-machines, then going back, you know, 2 years or something like that. You're emulating old things, you know, Bartonville, Barnaby Lake.*

Interview 38

*...like some of the hands on, interactive things. And you have a couple that do need repairing, it has to be said. Yeah, I must say for the house thing it would have been nice for us to walk through the house. More tactile things. You probably know how heavy an old iron was, but to pick up an iron that somebody would use to iron the weekly wash, for example. And, you could do a century, not try to do it all in one go, but you could pick a particular century and lift things from that and have a house in that period. Then remodel it further along the lines just to see how things evolve.*

Interview 53

### **Into the minds of others**

*I mean like if you go through the section where it talks about presidential assassination attempts, it's fairly detailed on, you know, this is how the country mourned, and here's examples of artifacts that people created to deal with the grief that they were feeling collectively, so I think there are things like that that do make you capable at least of relating to not just the event itself, but the aftermath of the event and the general feel of the country in response to the events, and all that I think is done well enough that you do inspire that imagination and able to put yourself there.*

Interview 13

*My only selfish concern, this is a very selfish concern, is there might have been a fourth table, a fourth area that's commemorating, I'll say fire, but also police and EMS personal and security personal that were in the building who were affected by the tragedy. There might have been one more area that was sort of dedicated to people like me.*

Interview 38

...but I'm talking about a teenager or child. A six year old, going to their first day of school at a turn of the century, 19, so they saw what they had to do, put their clothes on and stuff like that, I'm just thinking. Stuff like that.

Interview 38

### Tours

I would appreciate it more if they had people that, standing here, okay?, gathering a group of people and then guiding them through and explaining the exhibits. They don't have to spend a lot of time, but to give them the basic knowledge. To let these people stand around and read it, it's boring.

Interview 26

That's part of our history, and yet there are so many people today that don't really understand it, don't understand how it came about. And that aspect of it is shown to you. But I think it would be better appreciated if you actually told the people what it was about.

Interview 26

Now don't you think they would benefit more if there was a guide that was taking them as a group, and entering into every one of these rooms and telling them what it's about. Rather than let them just, they wander around, half of them don't read anything about it, don't even understand...Just the only thing that it lacks in my estimation is more hands on and touring.

Interview 26

As far as, you bring up the point of reading to kids, could you do the headset thing where you've rented or bought a headset for kids under 10, people from 10- 20, people over 60 or whatever, so that they've got that headset on.

Interview 38

### Media

I don't do a lot of reading. What I check out is usually media through like a TV.

Interview 7

I think seeing it too, rather than just reading. I was thinking like if you were walking down one of the halls and you had the whole wall, like a movie? So you're walking through it and hear the gunshots and the fire and it's actually real clips, you know? Then, you'd feel like you're actually a part of it. And then, "Wow, what these people went through."

Interview 20

The pop culture, I think, it's something that they would really connect with. You got the Muppets. They know who Michael Jackson was.

Interview 30

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## APPENDIX A

February 7, 2012

### INVESTIGATING THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY EXPERIENCE

#### Summary Report

Between August and December 2011, a team comprised of staff from the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) and the National Museum of American History's Department of Education and Interpretation and Department of Visitor Services (NMAH) conducted an interview study of visitors in the museum. (Team members are listed at the end of this document.)

**Aims:** To enhance understanding of visitor motivations and experiences in ways that might benefit the planning of the renovated areas for which new kinds of visitor engagement are under consideration.

**Method:** Every other week teams of interviewers (from OP&A) and notetakers (from NMAH) engaged with visitors in the museum. The interviews focused on six themes:

- **Personal connection** to American history
- **Motivation** to visit NMAH and expectations
- **Experiences** so far during the visit
- **Responses** to those experiences
- **Emotions** associated with the visit
- **Benefits** that accrue from visiting

After an hour of interviewing selected visitors, the full team gathered for an additional hour to make notes on their interviews from memory. Notes were titled according to the six themes and each note referred to just one remembered idea, remark, or exchange. In November the full team met in a workshop to analyze the notes. In December the full team met again to brainstorm ideas inspired by the interviews that might be useful to planning.

**Data:** Altogether 52 interviews were conducted with individuals and groups. Interviews range from 3 minutes to 40 minutes in length. All interviews were recorded and constitute 10 hours of recordings.

**Analysis:** Full transcription of the recordings was not done due to time and resource limitations. Notes made by team members were transcribed (Appendix A), and team analysis of these notes led to a summary diagram (Appendix B).

**Idea Workshop:** The full team discussed why innovation was needed (to exceed visitors' expectations); what features the team wished to change (engagement of visitors with things/ideas/people); and what functions those features accomplish (quests, surprise, connection to memory, "re-bluing" - a renewed sense of American identity, value transfer, bonding, learning). The team then worked in rotating round-robin pairs to come up with alternative functions.

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**Concluding themes:** The Idea Workshop produced a wide range of ideas that coalesced around the following themes:

***Engaging***

***Customizing***

- Identifying what exactly fits for a visitor (what size tool is needed)
- Providing an exact-fit experience – “It is me”
- Personalizing history – finding what’s important to you!
- Helping you construct a “history of you”
- Put you on the timeline
- Charm bracelet of “my history”
- Investigation of personal interests
- Awareness of individuality/ability to create and recreate individual identity
- “Finding Your Stories” – a prep area where visitors can be coached or helped to find information on the history that connects to them within the exhibits

***Linking***

- Matchmaking – provide linkages to other museums/historical sites, etc.
- Connectivity with the world – connectedness to the rest of the world, e.g., loss of allies in wars
- New connection to place
- Timeline connections with events in the rest of the world
- Connect the present and the past – more relevant for visitors

***Arousing feelings***

- Delivering knowledge from a distance to the same degree as if you were close to it
- Surprise people
- Get people who think they don’t like history to like history
- Relevant to daily life/current day
- The museum visit will resonate with the visitor instead of being reflective
- Mourning of loss. Loss of individuals.

***Respecting***

- Include visitors in the process
- Create long-term relationships with visitors
- Capture people with short attention spans
- Non-traditional museum experience – engage people who don’t generally like museums or are here socially
- Provide a sense of ownership
- Let visitors know we care about them
- Feeling like museum staff – with no restrictions to access

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### ***Sharing***

#### ***On-site with one another***

- Providing a safe place to discuss events/issues or to explain how you feel
- Providing an open forum, a "soap box," or foster debate and exchanges
- Places to express ranges of emotions in response to the content of history – empathy, joy to sorrow
- Be a trusted, objective forum for respectful left-right dialogue on historical and contemporary controversies.
- Get visitors who don't know each other to talk to each other
- Create community/facilitate connections between visitors, utilizing existing affinity groups
- Space for debates with other visitors (not in your group)

#### ***For the record***

- Engaging visitors in oral history interviews to share their thoughts on what it is to be an American.
- Providing options for entering your story into the historical record

#### ***With staff***

- Expand "talks with an expert"

### ***Imagining***

- Activities where visitors – especially children – can put themselves in the shoes of others, to feel empathy for others
- More things like "Within These Walls" = immersive, interactive, visceral; not just intellectual understanding
- Humanization of historic figures. Seeing heroes/icons as full people with interests (hunting trophies of Teddy Roosevelt) and personalities (Silent Calls – "you lose" story)
- Immersion in extreme experiences that highlight dangerous experiences
- History maze where you have to take on a historical figure's identity and make choices to get out

### ***Doing***

- Physical experiences where visitors can do things that help them imagine the lives of others and feel what it would be like under certain circumstances (e.g., writing with ink and a quill pen by candlelight)
- Opportunity for visitors to physically build something that they can leave or take home
- Engage people in physical play
- Immersive experience – getting all senses involved

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### *Questioning*

- Give alternative histories a presence – not necessarily coming from historians
- Variation in the sources of the stories/interpretations, especially from diverse people – even if their opinions are conflicting
- The museum should encourage visitors to form their OWN opinions, not feed them a “national” interpretation
- Museum should EXPLICITLY challenge visitors’ preconceptions (both left and right)
- Don’t allow people to get off the hook about historical issues not continuing in the present day
- Provoke visitors more explicitly with ideas/objects/people that they don’t think should be there, or that challenge their preconceptions
- Challenge, don’t just affirm – have an experimental gallery of history in the making, Bring in newsmakers and challenge visitors to think about what might have the greatest impact
- Upset all people

### *Helping*

- Give museum visitors better tools to use the rest of the museum
- Orient visitors to the rest of the museum – prepare them for museum visit
- Ease of selecting type of experience to have at NMAH
- Need clearer, more coherent overall thematic organization for the museum as a whole
- Make connections across the museum more explicit
- Provide people with new ways of looking at everyday objects

### *Informing*

- Better understanding of cause and effect of historical events – because A happens, the conditions were set up for B, eventually leading to C, etc.
- Previews of possible content – better understanding of organization of the museum, especially exhibitions
- Illustrating the unfolding of proto-history TODAY (e.g., Tea Party vs. Occupy Wall Street)
- Understanding progress
- Awareness/realization that everybody makes history and that one person can play a role

### *Exclusivity*

- A one-day-only opportunity, the “chance of a lifetime”
- Give visitors a reason to come back – i.e., the knowledge that things will change

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**Comfort**

- Keep people in one place for an extended period of time
- Place to sit down (not just a bench to rest, but a seated experience)
- Provide space to reflect/process
- Food
  - Destination food
  - Historically accurate food (as they were prepared in the past)
- Multi-lingual interpretation
- Make it simple, continuous, elegant – only the essential. Experience the essence of American History

**Opportunity:** The data gathered through these interviews and the learning that took place among the very collaborative and productive study team can be leveraged in two ways, if so desired:

- A. The ten hours of interviews could be transcribed and analyzed as part of an initial research effort
- B. The collaborative team could be reassembled to continue their work by taking on the challenge of creating specific features that would link to the themes outlined above.

**Team members:**

**OP&A:** Andrew Pekarik, James Schreiber, Zahava Doering, Claire Eckert, Sarah Block, James Smith, Lance Costello, Caitlin Stewart

**NMAH:** Howard Morrison, Andrea Lowther, Megan Smith, Heather Paisley-Jones, Julia Garcia, Elisabeth Kilday





## APPENDIX C

- Connection to History
  - History is fun
  - Inspiration, values, ideals
  - Lived history
  - Objects
  - Personal interest
  - Personal memories
- Motivations to Visit
  - Education
    - Practical for teachers, politicians, etc.
    - Understanding
  - Experience or wonder
    - American History lovers
    - DC tourism checklist
    - See the real stuff or material culture
  - Family
    - Children are the future
    - Not by choice
    - Social experience
  - Proud to be an American
- Expectations of NMAH Visit
  - Best/favorite/high quality
  - Connect to the past/future
  - Connect to past visits
  - Connect to studies/learning
  - Good experiences
  - High points
  - Symbolism
  - Things (or lack of things)
  - No expectations
  - Different expectations
    - More engagement/guidance
    - Not great for kids
- Experiences at NMAH
  - Imagination
  - Personal Connection
  - Physical
    - Design
      - Atmosphere
    - Objects
      - Authentic
    - Sensory
  - Social connections or BIG ideas
    - Ex. Minority groups

- Ex. War
  - Temporal
- Emotions from NMAH Visit
  - Overall emotions
  - Evoked by nostalgia
  - Excitement and fascination
  - Pride and sadness
    - Sacrifice
  - Thanks and appreciation
  - No emotional response
- Benefits of NMAH Visit
  - Overall benefits
  - Escape
  - Inspiration
  - Learning
    - Enculturation/education of children
  - NMAH is unique
  - Object experiences
  - Patriotism
  - Remembrance
    - Keep history alive
  - Something for everyone
  - Understanding the past
    - Learn lessons for the future
    - Deeper understanding
- Other Comments
  - Predispositions
    - History
    - Museum
    - Personal
  - Suggestions
    - Adult-only time
    - Exhibits
    - Hands on
    - Into the minds of others
    - Media
    - Sit down
    - Tours