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**FOR BEST RESULTS:**

**PARTICIPATE,  
REFLECT,  
AMEND  
AS NEEDED**

TOP THINKERS FROM 2011 FORUM ON  
WHAT KEEPS A DEMOCRACY HEALTHY

*The Islamic Center of Yuba City was destroyed by arson in 1994. Here, men in Yuba City pray at the rebuilt mosque. Photo courtesy of David Washburn.*



**“FREEDOM  
HAS ALWAYS  
TRUMPED  
EQUALITY AS  
A VALUE IN  
OUR COUNTRY.”**

JANE JUNN

Like a good parent, the U.S. Constitution is both authoritative and flexible, idealistic and pragmatic. Its exceptional power lies in its authors’ great foresight; they included explicit instructions to amend as needed.

The governing documents of the United States are as dynamic as our ongoing American democratic experiment. That experiment is being tested now

as much as ever by a rapidly shifting technological landscape; a fractured media environment; changing demographics; mounting economic pressures; and an increasingly complex global context. In addition, our public gathering places for discussion, learning, and debate—schools, universities, and libraries—are suffering cutbacks across California and the nation. Many of these challenges decrease political participation and civic engagement.

How can we engage with ideas and each other to best participate in a democracy that needs our attention and active participation to survive?

In response to this challenge, the California Council for the Humanities (CCH) will host a forum on democracy and the culture of civic conversation in March of 2011. The forum will kick off a two-year, state-wide initiative designed to

reinvigorate public discussion on the meaning of democracy. We asked two speakers from this upcoming forum—USC professor Jane Junn and author/commentator Gregory Rodriguez, both top thinkers and writers on political science, national and cultural identity, civic engagement, and social trends—to share their thoughts about key issues that will be addressed in the forum and throughout our democracy initiative.

**HOW DO YOU DEFINE  
DEMOCRACY?**

**Gregory Rodriguez (GR):** The belief in government of the people, by the people, for the people.

**Jane Junn (JJ):** Not every democracy in the world is set up the way ours is. Ours is a representative democracy in which we value and pursue the twin and sometimes conflicting ideals of freedom and equality.

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## WHAT’S PAST IS PROLOGUE: HOW HISTORY INFORMS THE CURRENT DEBATE OVER ISLAM

For years, Americans of Middle Eastern origin and Arab Americans have argued that the U.S. has been undercounting their communities.\*

Not anymore.

At a time when “Arab,” “Middle Eastern,” “Muslim,” and “terrorist” are confused, misused, and conflated by so many, relative invisibility can seem preferable to the alternative.

A representative on a Census advisory committee for many years, demographer Dr. Samia El-Badry has noted this new reticence to claim identity as many of the most vocal proponents

\* Checking the “White” or “Other” boxes on the race section of the U.S. Census form have been—and remain—the only options for Arab Americans and Americans of Middle Eastern origin.

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# DANGEROUS & REVOLUTIONARY

By Ralph Lewin, President and CEO



**Plato and Mandela, Jefferson and King, Mott and Tubman, Rousseau and Gandhi all wielded the humanities to bring about change in this world.**

For each, dangerous humanities ideas—ideas that threatened the status quo and presented old assumptions in a new light—served as a foundation and catalyst for change. Few among us may fill the shoes of such revolutionary thinkers and doers, but each of us can

embody and effect change. Each of us has the opportunity—the privilege and responsibility—to dance with the ideas that shaped these leaders. Daily acts by people like you, inspired and informed by the humanities, can tip the scale towards a more just, kind, and free world.

The humanities are dangerous to each of us as individuals because they can change us profoundly. I recently had the good fortune to talk with a group of scholars at UC Berkeley’s Townsend Center for the Humanities about the state of the humanities. Dr. Wendy Brown, a critical theorist, described the moment when a student or a reader is “awakened” by a new idea that changes the way they view the world and their place within it. Her words brought me back to the many awakening moments I’ve had: discussing segregation during my eleventh grade history class; trying to define a good life over dinner at a friend’s home; or reading a novel by Murakami, alone, and feeling my view of myself and others shifting and evolving. Insight can be disconcerting. These electric moments of epiphany bring about simultaneous clarity and disorientation, strength and vertigo. How exciting, painful, and jarring these crucial and defining moments can be.

The humanities can also be dangerous to a society. According to government statistics, approximately 2 million of Iran’s 3.5 million university students study the humanities and social sciences—a healthy percentage of students that are curious about the world and the power of ideas. Iran’s recent history shows us that opposition to regimes often comes from the university, so it is perhaps not surprising to witness the recent crackdown on the humanities in Iran, where the government has begun limiting university-level teaching in philosophy and other courses “not in harmony with religious fundamentals.” Students who ask questions and are influenced by revolutionary and powerful humanities ideas pose a very real threat to Iran’s current government and its control. Of course, the government of Iran is not the only regime that has feared the danger posed by the humanities; this is true of ruling regimes in many places and many ages.

Both at home and abroad, the humanities are dangerous. They bring us together and enable us to understand one another, as pointed out in this publication’s article about Islam in the U.S. They give us new perspectives on the familiar, as discussed in the article about democracy. They have the power to change each of us. It is up to us to create places that nurture the humanities and thus transform lives, open doors, and shape a better future. Said Plato, “We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.”



**FOR BEST RESULTS:**

**PARTICIPATE,  
REFLECT,  
AMEND  
AS NEEDED**

(continued from page 1)

## WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF OUR DEMOCRACY?

**GR:** It’s still fundamentally healthy, but with the dual threats of incivility and disengagement looming.

**JJ:** Our democracy is inefficient and causes all kind of problems, yet it’s an extremely desirable form of government because it provides checks and balances to the power that human beings, by nature, want to exercise. Human beings can’t be trusted with power. We should put as much emphasis on evaluating the structures that encourage bad behavior and unfair policies as on scrutinizing the “ignorant voters” and “bad politicians.”

## WHEN AND HOW HAS DEMOCRACY SERVED US WELL? WHEN AND HOW HAS IT FAILED US?

**GR:** Democracy serves us well whenever it engenders the public’s sense of agency and capacity to alter their collective destiny. It fails when elections become mere proxy fights for beltway constituencies.

**JJ:** We’re a very stable regime, although we’ve only been in existence for 250 years, but we have terrible inequity in the US—more so today, in terms of income, than ever before. Freedom has always trumped equality as a value in our country. Because we have a capitalist democratic system, we’ve failed on equality. Capitalism is about equilibrium and liberty, not equality.

## HOW DOES INCIVILITY WORK FOR OR AGAINST US AS A SOCIETY AND IN POLITICS IN TERMS OF PARTICIPATION AND CHANGE?

**JJ:** This notion that we’re more uncivil now than we’ve been in the past is not true. The humanities provide a longer lens and help us understand that, while this might be an unpleasant time, it’s not necessarily an unusual time. When we’re experiencing a struggle for power and political polarization, we get discourse like this. That’s a problem

**“WHEN INCIVILITY  
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— GREGORY RODRIGUEZ

“THE ISSUE OF IMMIGRATION...IS ONE OF THE LARGEST CHALLENGES TO CIVILITY. IMMIGRATION DEBATES ARE ESSENTIALLY ABOUT WHO IS WORTHY TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS COUNTRY.”

— JANE JUNN

for democracy, but the humanities teach us that periods like this are followed by realignments.

**GR:** When incivility dominates, decency and reason hide. Democracy without decency and reason is a meaningless spectator sport.

**WHERE DO YOU SEE THE HUMANITIES FITTING INTO OUR IDEA OF GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE?**

**JJ:** They won’t allow us to forget who we are, where we came from, what we’re about—and what we have done to one another. The humanities are absolutely essential for us to understand ourselves and our history. Without the humanities, we as a nation would crumble.

**GR:** Democracy is not just about pulling a lever or punching a chad. At core, it’s a culture of deliberation that enables people to decide what’s best for themselves. It’s impossible to know what’s best for people without first having an understanding of the human condition.

**IMAGINE OUR DEMOCRACY IN 2025. HOW WILL PEOPLE PARTICIPATE AND CONVERSE? WHAT WILL BE OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE AS A NATION?**

**JJ:** The issue of immigration—of population transformation—is one of the largest challenges to civility. Immigration debates are essentially about who is worthy to participate in this country.

Go back in history and look at whom—and how—Americans have hated. Around 1910, we experienced one of our peak periods of movement and immigration. Tensions about “drunken Irish,” “mobster Italians,” and “greedy Jews” ran so high that in 1924 we essentially shut down our borders with the National Origins Act. The period we reflect on as our most civil period is remembered that way because, from 1924-1965, we had virtually no immigration. We got a very white looking society—and a black society that was separate. Now tensions are running high around immigration again. Well, talk to your grandparents. They were probably not born here.

**GR:** Current trends suggest that by 2025, we’ll all be voting alone by smart phone without a powerful belief—let alone consensus—about the common good. I’m assuming we can avoid that fate.

**WHAT BOOK DO YOU RECOMMEND TO INSPIRE THINKING ABOUT DEMOCRACY?**

**JJ:** The news coverage of the Chilean miners who were rescued after being trapped underground for so long made me recall a 1980 book by John Gaventa called *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. He asks why, when miners suffer horrible conditions and subjugation and deprivation, is there no rebellion? Power isn’t just about resources. It’s about thought control and who gets to set political agendas, as well. We in the U.S. have the largest income gap of any industrialized nation in the world and the largest we’ve had in our nation’s history. Why are we not experiencing rebellion?

**GR:** There’s a wonderful passage in “Rip Van Winkle” that says volumes about the culture of democracy. Having slept through the War of Independence, Van Winkle was taken aback by how different things were down at the Village Inn. The passage reads: “The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquility.”

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The speakers interviewed here and many others will be featured in our upcoming forum on democracy and the culture of civic conversation to be held March 4, 2011 at the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy and adjacent Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. For the forum, the Council will bring together an array of scholars, intellectuals, educators, journalists, and members of the public to discuss democracy in America and explore what it means to be part of an informed and engaged society. The forum on democracy will employ a variety of media tools—including live streaming, real-time participant feeds, social networking, and more—to allow people from across California and the nation to participate in the event.

“The health of our democracy and the richness of our civic and intellectual lives depends upon us—the people,” said Ralph Lewin, President and CEO of California Council for the Humanities. “We are excited to announce our plans for this forum because we believe that in order for our ideals concerning democracy and pluralism to survive, we must remain thoughtful, curious, and energetically engaged on the topic of democracy.”

The forum is a keystone to a larger two-year, theme-based initiative focused upon democracy and involving a range of public humanities programs that will lead up to the elections in 2012. Activities will include: California Story Fund grants supporting story-based explorations of democracy; public dialogues throughout the state; a statewide, library-based reading and discussion program; and in-school and youth-focused programs.

Through these humanities-inspired activities, the Council and its partners will work to strengthen understanding of democracy and the civic realm, discuss our roles and responsibilities, inspire civic participation, and gain a better grasp of what’s needed to sustain a healthy democracy in an increasingly interdependent world.

*The California Council for the Humanities was awarded a \$250,000 grant in support of the forum and related activities from the Bridging Cultures initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities—one of eight grant recipients nationally. The Council is honored to be partnering with a wide array of institutions and organizations to develop and implement this initiative.*

*For more on the topics introduced here, the upcoming forum, and our partners—or to nominate a democracy-related book for our statewide read—visit [www.calhum.org](http://www.calhum.org).*



**JANE JUNN**, Professor of Political Science at USC, has published three books on political participation in the U.S. Her first book, *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America* (with Norman H. Nie and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry), won the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award for the best book published in political science. She has published numerous research articles on political identity and behavior, racial and ethnic politics, and the politics of immigration. Junn is a former Fulbright Senior Scholar and former member of the Social Science Research Council National Research Commission on Elections and Voting. She recently served as Vice President of the American Political Science Association.



**GREGORY RODRIGUEZ**, founder and executive director of Zócalo Public Square, is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation. He has written widely on issues of national identity, assimilation, race relations, religion, immigration, civic engagement, and political trends in such publications as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, *Newsweek*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, where he is an op-ed columnist. Rodriguez is the author of *Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans and Vagabonds: Mexican Immigration and the Future of Race in America*, which *The Washington Post* listed among the “Best Books of 2007.” He is currently at work on a new book on the American cult of hope.



Clockwise from top left: The Islamic Center of Yuba City was destroyed by arson in 1994; Muslim American farmers work within view of Yuba City’s mosque. Bottom middle and left: Sebastopol’s Enmanji Temple during a 1934 dedication ceremony; the Gerboths, standing in front of their church circa 1946, protected Enmanji temple from arson and vandalism. Inset: Portrait of a Japanese American family, the Sugiyamas, taken during WWII. Photos from An American Mosque courtesy of Saleem Shah Khan and David Washburn. Photos from Leap of Faith courtesy of Lina Hoshino.

of changing the Census form have grown silent. “Given the present stance on terrorism...and the uneducated fear of the Muslim religion, this is not a time for us to have an Arab American category on any government form,” she stated in a previous interview. “Arab Americans fear being rounded up.”

But Alia Malek—author of *A Country Called Amreeka: U.S. History Retold Through Arab-American Lives*—believes that “protecting

Christian) first began coming here in significant numbers “around the 1870s, along with many other immigrant groups.” Long before then, people of Middle Eastern origin—of various religious faiths, many of whom were not part of the Arab world—began immigrating to North America.

After September 11, 2001, the California Council for the Humanities created a special 9/11 Community Dialogue Fund to foster conversation and understanding in the

“dialogue brought more understanding, comfort, and ease to all.”

Our work in this area is far from finished, however.

**Times That Test Our Values (and Words That Test Our Patience)**

According to a September New York Times opinion piece by Nicholas D. Kristof, the backlash that one would have expected post-9/11 was forestalled, largely by President George W. Bush, and we’re now in the throes of “one of those times that test our values, a bit like the shameful interning of Japanese-Americans during World War II, or the disgraceful refusal to accept Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe.” Islam in the U.S. has become the hottest of hot-button topics. According to the Washington Post, 49 percent of all Americans say they have generally unfavorable opinions of Islam.

The firing of NPR analyst Juan Williams for controversial comments he made about Muslims on the Fox News show *The O’Reilly Factor* added fuel to an already-raging debate about journalistic standards, free speech, and all things Islam-related.

What has come to be known as the “ground zero debate”—a heated public conversation around a proposed Muslim community center, which includes a mosque and a memorial to the victims of 9/11, to be built near the site of the former Twin Towers—has turned out hundreds of vocal supporters, vehement opposition, and everything between. Those arguing for religious tolerance cite constitutional rights and clash with those who say that the proposed building is an insult to the memory of those who died in the terrorist attacks. On the extreme end, some protesters call Islam an “evil” religion, equate the proposed mosque supporters with Nazis, and claim that Muslims want Sharia law to extend across the U.S.

This year, Christian Pastor Terry Jones of a non-denominational

church in Florida planned an “International Burn a Quran Day” on the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks. As Kristof noted in his Op-Ed, however, extreme anti-Muslim sentiment can be found at the center of our public debate, not just on the fringes. He wrote that the discourse around Islam in this country has become so “venomous and debased” that “a prominent American commentator, in a magazine long associated with tolerance, ponders whether Muslims should be afforded constitutional freedoms.” He referred to Martin Peretz, editor of *The New Republic*, who blogged for the magazine: “I wonder whether I need honor these people and pretend that they are worthy of the privileges of the First Amendment, which I have in my gut the sense that they will abuse.”

Our much-beloved First Amendment rights are limited by law; those who use hate speech to incite violence against a group can be held legally responsible. History reminds us that speech leads to actions—and actions, of one kind or another, can speak loudest of all.

**Lessons from History**

An in-progress documentary film recently funded by the Council tells the story of a mosque destroyed by arson in Yuba City’s Muslim farming community. The film explores the resulting emotional and physical devastation and extrapolates big lessons from a small town story, exploring questions of which religious traditions and sanctuaries, which family and community histories are considered part of our national history, landscape, and identity.

While David Washburn’s documentary, *An American Mosque*, reminds us of a fire that happened in 1994, mosques in Texas, Missouri, Tennessee, California, and many other states have been vandalized and marked with graffiti, threats, and racial slurs in recent years. Many of these occurrences have taken place since the debate over



the homeland against the lasting damage threatened by today’s bigotry requires making Arab- and Muslim-American communities visible in US society”—by illuminating and making familiar “their history, lives, and experiences.”

Malek, the editor of a forthcoming book of post-9/11, first-person oral histories in the Voice of Witness series, wrote in an October article published by *The Nation* that “the skewed reality” of “today’s Islamophobic rapture” has been “fueled by the invisibility of Arab- and Muslim-Americans in the nation’s consciousness, coupled with a mostly negative hyper-visibility of Arabs and Muslims abroad.” In a recent phone interview, she said, “We have a false, ahistorical notion about Arab Americans not being part of U.S. society; Arab Americans” (most of whom were

wake of the terrorist attacks. The Council awarded \$50,000 in grants to 35 groups across California as part of this program. Project activities included panel discussions with scholars, film screenings, or readings—followed by lively and extended Q-and-A sessions with audiences of 100 or more. Some programs focused directly on dispelling myths about Islam, while others opened up free-form dialogues in an attempt to share and heal fractured communities. Some had a distinctly local community focus; others were national in scope; some focused on democracy.

As one project director noted, the support of this program was “crucial in such desperate times when people needed to come together and try to shed light on this tragedy.” Another said that the

“the ground zero mosque” got underway.

“The story of the Yuba City arson reminds us that people can react violently when they get worked up and are ignorant of the ‘Other.’ The current rhetoric has been used in the past; Islam has been vilified before,” said Washburn. “What’s different now is the intensity, the McCarthy-like questioning of Muslim American loyalty, and the outright religious intolerance. It is important to tell Muslim American stories that turn the current conversation on its head.”

Filmmaker Lina Hoshino agrees that these are trying but not unfamiliar times, and that lessons from history should inform our perspectives, words, and actions. Hoshino’s Council-supported documentary film, *Leap of Faith—How Enmanji Temple was Saved*, tells the story of a historic Buddhist temple, once the center of the Japanese community in Sonoma County, that was locked up during World War II as feelings of fear and prejudice against the Japanese ran high. White, Christian youths from the community stood guard and protected Enmanji Temple from being destroyed by arson or vandalism.

“If you are part of a community already under attack, it is difficult and sometimes even dangerous to respond publicly [to threats], so the voices of allies become critical,” Hoshino pointed out.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Buddhist temples were vandalized and over 120,000 Japanese Americans—many of whom had lived for generations in the U.S., two-thirds of whom were citizens—were sent to internment camps. Buddhist and Shinto leaders across the country were deemed threats to national security and arrested. In the late 1980s, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation which apologized for the internment and characterized the government’s actions as based on “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.”

“Misinformation and hateful rhetoric against Muslims seems to be spreading like wild fire,” Hoshino said. “In a different time, similar incidents of hate and intolerance swept across our nation. Our government violated our constitutional rights.”

“Why do we need generations to pass before we acknowledge that what we’re doing is damaging?” asked Malek. “When one group is singled out and targeted, it’s bad for all of us, for our society.”

**Living in Two Americas?**  
In another New York Times Op-Ed published one month prior to Kristof’s, Ross Douthat wrote about “Islam in Two Americas”—one in which “allegiance to the Constitution trumps ethnic difference, language barriers and religious divides” and another that “understands itself as a distinctive culture, rather than just a set of political

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Clockwise from top right: Poster for *Everyday Sunshine*; Rosie, one of the young subjects of *GOING ON 13*; the Alliance for the Mentally Ill marches in *When Medicine Got it Wrong*.



# COUNCIL LAUNCHES PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Projects Will Reach New Audiences around the State through Events & Strategic Partnerships

**DOCUMENTARY FILMS ARE BEING USED TO TACKLE SOME OF THE BIGGEST ISSUES IN OUR SOCIETY. NOW, THREE DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTIONS FUNDED BY THE CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES (CCH) ARE UTILIZING NEW APPROACHES AND UNIQUE PARTNERSHIPS TO INSPIRE DIFFICULT AND IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE, WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PRE-TEEN GIRL IN CALIFORNIA, AND HOW WE UNDERSTAND AND CARE FOR THE MENTALLY ILL.**

In an effort to broaden the reach, deepen the impact, and extend the life of its grant-supported, humanities-based media productions, CCH has awarded its first three California Documentary Project Public Engagement grants. These Public Engagement projects will increase public awareness and dialogue through community-based events, outreach campaigns, web resources, and strategic partnerships with public libraries, universities, health networks, educators, musicians, and youth organizations.

Chris Metzler, co-producer with Lev Anderson of *Everyday Sunshine: The Story of Fishbone*, said, “This grant allows us to treat the film as a tool for generating conversation rather than a product. It’s one thing for people to sit in a darkened

theater and experience a film; that’s great, but outreach grants like this give us the tools and the wherewithal to create interactive screening events, using our films as the catalyst for discussion and dialogue.”

“CCH is providing the critically needed funds and support to help us reach the broadest California audience,” said Dawn Valadez, co-director with Kristy Guevara-Flanagan of *GOING ON 13*. “We will work to engage families around the issues raised in the film, challenging what mainstream media would have us believe about pre-teen girls. These funds allow libraries in low income communities and communities of color to reach out to youth and families who are thirsty for independent media on a subject that directly affects their lives. ”

Katie Cadigan and Laura Murray’s film, *When Medicine Got it Wrong*, aired in 75% of the country last May during Mental Illness Awareness month. Said Cadigan, “Outreach grants like this are crucial to filmmakers. Many non-profit organizations have been contacting me with great ideas for screenings and events, and I haven’t been able to afford the copies they need.”

***Everyday Sunshine: The Story of Fishbone—Outreach Project***  
Narrated by Laurence Fishburne, this documentary film by Chris Metzler and Lev Anderson follows the Black punk/funk band Fishbone from their roots in South Central LA and explores the social and cultural influences that gave rise to the band’s hybridized musical style. The directors of *Everyday Sunshine* plan to reach out to new audiences interested in Black Studies, music, sociology, and the cultural history of Los Angeles. Proposed activities include screening and discussion events featuring humanities scholars, guest speakers, musicians, and authors in partnership with the Black Rock Coalition, cultural centers, and universities. Discussions will explore topics such as racial stereotyping in popular culture, contextualizing post-WWII African American cultural history in Los Angeles, and challenging myths about young Black men of urban America. Musical performances will follow many panel discussions. A forum for continued conversation and social networking, along with new video and educational content, will be added to the film’s website. This project was sponsored by Bay Area Video Coalition and received a CCH grant of \$10,000.

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“WHEN ONE GROUP IS SINGLED OUT AND TARGETED, IT’S BAD FOR ALL OF US, FOR OUR SOCIETY.”  
— ALIA MALEK

propositions.” This second America, he argued, speaks English, harkens back to Protestant Christianity, draws its social norms from Anglo-Saxon customs, and “expects new arrivals to assimilate themselves to these norms, and quickly.”

“These two understandings of America, one constitutional and one cultural, have been in tension throughout our history,” Douthat continued. “And they’re in tension again this summer, in the controversy over the Islamic mosque and cultural center scheduled to go up two blocks from ground zero.”

“Islamic teachings say ‘we believe in Islam but we won’t impose our beliefs on everybody else,’” said Dr. El-Badry. “At the same time, people who migrate to this country have to accept this country’s modus operandi and its traditions. You cannot reap the economic benefits of a country and ignore its cultural and social practices.”

**Bridging Cultures**  
Clearly, for some, tension exists between democracy in theory and practice, and between a commitment to pluralism and the pressure to assimilate to the current “mainstream” or dominant U.S. culture. This tension is complicated by the flexible and dynamic nature of our Constitution, the youth and diversity of this nation, and continuing population change. The progress and health of the American democratic experiment requires a broad, thoughtful, and ongoing civic conversation. The Council and its partners are committed to creating opportunities for such dialogue.

Conversation, critical thinking, and humanities insights are exactly what the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has prescribed with a new national initiative, Bridging Cultures, which seeks to bring people together through public programming around civil conversation and

around an understanding of contributions of the Muslim world to U.S. culture.

The Council recently applied for and received a grant from the NEH to plan and host a forum exploring key themes and issues in our democracy such as how we define and govern ourselves as a people and what represents a “common good.” (For more on the forum and our statewide democracy initiative, see article on page 1.)

As philosophers George Santayana and Edmund Burke—and, appropriately, others before them—have expressed in various ways and contexts, those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. The formation of a more perfect union requires us to learn from the past in order to better understand the present; we must continue to share our stories with our neighbors and partners in this great democratic experiment.

From left to right, photos from: Everyday Sunshine, GOING ON 13, Everyday Sunshine, and When Medicine Got it Wrong.



# COUNCIL LAUNCHES PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

(continued from page 5)

**GOING ON 13—California Library Tour**  
*GOING ON 13* explores the lives of four pre-teen girls from California cities as they become young women. Youth who have seen the film have told filmmakers Dawn Valadez and Kristy Guevara-Flanagan that its accurate portrayal of pre-teen girls has helped them feel less alone, while parents have shared that the film opened up conversations they did not know how to start with their children. The film has reached thousands through festivals, conferences, and public television airings; the filmmakers now plan to work with libraries across California to reach new intergenerational audiences who might not otherwise see the film. *GOING ON 13* will tour to 20 public libraries, providing screening packages that include a DVD copy of the film, a study guide, and skilled discussion facilitators. In partnership with community

leaders and local youth organizations such as Girls Inc., Boys and Girls Clubs, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the filmmakers will lead discussions about the film on topics such as girls’ health and development, self image, gender stereotypes, social and family life, empowerment, and cultural identity. This project was sponsored by San Francisco Film Society and received a CCH grant of \$10,000.

**When Medicine Got it Wrong—Statewide Screenings at NAMI Chapters**  
*When Medicine Got it Wrong* is a documentary about a group of California parents whose grassroots activism initiated a nationwide movement that challenged how psychiatry diagnoses, views, and treats schizophrenia. In partnership with filmmaker Katie Cadigan, the National Alliance on Mental Illness of California (NAMI-CA) and the California State Department of

Mental Health will feature the film as the centerpiece of the May 2011 Mental Health Awareness Month campaign, with screenings at each of NAMI-CA’s 76 affiliate chapters located across all 58 California counties. Panels of local speakers with firsthand knowledge of schizophrenia, mental health care, and the criminal justice system will lead post-screening discussions on how medical understanding of severe mental illnesses—and local mental health care—have changed in this country and how to achieve a better understanding of issues currently facing the mentally ill. NAMI-CA will also incorporate two excerpts of the film into existing statewide educational curricula on mental illness for law enforcement and families of those who are ill. This project was sponsored by the International Documentary Association and received a CCH grant of \$10,000.

As Cadigan pointed out, “There’s tremendous demand but little support in the field for getting the films out there once they’re done. It’s terrible to see good documentaries sit on a shelf.” The Council is proud to support these new outreach efforts, ensuring that great, thought-provoking work lives on, continuing to reach new audiences and spark new conversations. As Cadigan said, “The audience is there; it’s just a matter of getting the film and other materials for screenings and discussions into people’s hands.”

*The California Documentary Project (CDP) gives grant support to film, radio, and new media projects that document the California experience and explore issues of significance to Californians. Through the California Documentary Project, the Council has granted over \$2.3 million to more than 80 projects since 2002. Visit [www.calhum.org](http://www.calhum.org) for more information.*

# KINSEY COLLECTION DEBUTS AT THE SMITHSONIAN

One family documents and shares stories of African American triumph and struggle through their personal treasures



Top left: CCH President and CEO Ralph Lewin, Bernard and Shirley Kinsey, CCH Board members Ben Jealous and Bob Feyer, and CCH Board Chair Curt Shepard celebrate the Kinsey exhibition opening. Board member Kenya Davis-Hayes, not pictured, was also in attendance. Clockwise from top right: the Kinsey family and guests during opening weekend festivities. At bottom: pieces from the Kinsey Collection. Photos by Tony Leavell.

Council board member Bernard Kinsey and his wife Shirley have been passionate collectors of African American art, artifacts, and historical documents for more than 35 years. Inspired by a homework assignment for their son, Khalil, the Kinseys began a journey into their family history which evolved into their award-winning private collection.

The Kinsey Collection has received national awards, toured six cities, and been seen by over twenty thousand students across the United States; it opened this October at the Smithsonian.

The collection tells the story of African American triumph, struggle, and accomplishment from 1600 to the present through artifacts, artwork, and documents of historical and cultural significance. It includes such rarities as a tintype of an African American Union soldier, an early version of the Emancipation Proclamation, and a letter from Malcolm X to Alex Haley.

Numerous firsts are also represented, including a photograph of Hiram Rhodes Revels, who in 1870 became the first African American member of the U.S. Senate, and a first-edition copy of Phillis Wheatley's 1773 collection—widely regarded as the first book of poetry by an African American to be published in the United States.

Bernard Kinsey's connection to the collection is profoundly personal. A reproduction of a 1903 letter written by a relative of Kinsey's asks President Theodore Roosevelt to help reclaim her 14-year-old brother, who was taken under false pretenses and sold into slavery. Kinsey is connected, through his father, to another document—the signed decision from the Brown v. Board of Education case, which led to desegregation of public schools; Kinsey's father, a school principal, was involved in an earlier school suit that was also argued by Thurgood Marshall and paved the way for the historic 1954 decision.

The current exhibition, "The Kinsey Collection: Shared Treasures of Bernard and Shirley Kinsey," was organized by the National Museum of African American History and Culture and will be on display at the National Museum of American History, where an estimated 2.5 million visitors will see the collection before it closes on May 1, 2011.

Said Lonnie G. Bunch III, founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, "I have opened many exhibitions throughout my career but few have excited, challenged, and moved me as has the 'Kinsey Collection.' This exhibition is part of the way we thank collectors like Bernard and Shirley Kinsey who have worked mightily to save and make accessible an important part of America's history and culture."

For more on the collection, visit [www.thekinseycollection.com](http://www.thekinseycollection.com).

## GIVE CALIFORNIANS THE CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF IDEAS

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

In a recent convening of former California Story Fund grant recipients, one project director described an especially powerful interview. The interviewee talked about his experiences as a Japanese American in the WWII internment camps.

When asked why he previously hadn't shared his story, tears ran down his face as he said simply, "...because nobody asked me."

By creating opportunities for the untold stories like the one above to be gathered and shared, the California Council for the Humanities (CCH) is helping to build cultural bridges of understanding and respect. The projects and programs that we sponsor represent a wide range of experiences, capturing the full diversity of California through a humanities lens.

That is why we are asking for you to help us by supporting this important work.

**Please join us in stemming the erosion of our collective history and humanity by making a donation of \$100, \$75, or \$50 today.**

The humanities explore what it means to be human. Through the humanities—history, literature, philosophy, and more—we engage our most vital inheritance: the wisdom of our cultures, the experience of remarkable individuals, and the defining values that guide our lives as a people. The humanities invite us to partake in lifelong learning and to examine the world through different perspectives. CCH is dedicated to the creation of a state in which this cultural inheritance can be enjoyed by everyone, enabling us to fully develop our personal capacities, to appreciate our cultural diversity, and to pursue the common good we desire.

**Won't you consider partnering with us by donating today?**

**Please use the enclosed envelope and help us connect Californians to the power of ideas.**

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## Who We Are

California Council for the Humanities connects Californians to ideas and one another in order to understand our shared heritage and diverse cultures, inspire civic participation, and shape our future.

For more information, visit [www.calhum.org](http://www.calhum.org).

California Council for the Humanities is a partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Our newsletter is published three times a year and mailed to anyone who requests it.

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