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Our America SOC147
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The Museum of Chinese America

The Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) is a national cultural institution dedicated to telling the untold stories in the making of America through the lens of the Chinese immigrant experience. Founded in 1980, MOCA features 3 galleries for permanent and rotating exhibits on various topics such as food, music, fashion, history, design, and technology. MOCA also offers guided gallery and Chinatown walking tours, family festivals and activities, a children-friendly learning center, public programs, and the MOCA Shop by Pearl River. The beautiful facilities, designed by Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Maya Lin, offer versatile rental spaces for meetings, receptions, birthdays, weddings, private dinners, film shoots, and more.

The reason the MOCA was placed in NYC Chinatown; Co-Founders - Tchen and Lai noticed that Chinatown was going through a transformative period and wanted to preserve the history of the neighborhood before it disappeared. This prompted the two to establish the Center for Community Studies (colloquially known as the New York Chinatown History Project) in 1980. The center would grow and evolve into the MOCA you know today.

"My visit to MOCA was appalling to say the least. I was informed about the fire at its first location. So awful to learn about the fire and how it happened. I was speaking to another visitor who believed it was a financial reason; once again a hate crime. Great to hear people are already there to help, I was told by the assistant that was at the front that millions of dollars were donated to help rebuild.. There were protesters outside on the day I went they were shouting “ DO NOT GO INSIDE MOCA, THEY ARE STEALING THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ”… Yet, the admission was free on Sunday. I was surprised to learn it was free because the website said otherwise.

The most prominent among the museum's exhibits to me was I learned about the Chinese trade that made people rich due to “the latest porcelain, Teas, silks, and much more finding many enslaved and dispossessed. Also learning about “The Legacy of Exclusion ” The exclusion act created a two-tiered class structure in the Chinese American community: the exempt and excluded. Those who were exempted from exclusion— permitted to enter— had to carry identification papers and had no freedom to come and go as they wished. They could settle and have families. The Law drew a new color line across America’s democracy— “Aliens ineligible for citizenship.’ This treatment is beyond unfair and inhuman, The Chinese Question ” turned into a violent movement. Burning, explosions, and lynching were common. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Chester A.Arthur. I learned this was the first time a whole people were barred as a “race“ from entering America.

As for the question, do the staff represent the topic or group of people exhibiting at MOCA once again, my answer is no, I did not witness a staff representing Chinese culture or people of Chinese America. The most challenging for me was learning about families being separated. I learned about a family who had filed for citizenship for a few years already in America. She was denied permanent residency as a mother of three children who were born here, even though she was active, showing her concern for the community.. The shock to me was some women would deliberately train themselves not to remember certain things so it didn’t slip out of their mouth when being questioned by someone named Marcarthy. Being a mother myself this is extremely hard to take in, I cannot fathom the pain the Chinese culture has and still is experiencing. My prayers are with them all!