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“Perception of the Curated Exhibit Narrative Essay”

“HALF A CENTURY LATER, SEGREGATION STILL PERSISTS IN CHICAGO”. As I first opened up the presentation, I was astounded by the creator’s decision to put this large, bolded text on the middle of the slide, but this format of the title page allowed me to clearly focus and draw my attention to the words. The font of the title showed that this exhibition was not a formal/ strict presentation about this topic. Most formal presentations and reports are written in clean, strict style fonts such as Times New Roman. However, this exhibit’s title was written in a much more relaxed, but still had the attitude of an informative presentation with a purpose and indication towards the audience like myself. When I read the title, it brought up many arguments in my head. I remember some friends who lived in Chicago, and I have never heard any bad things that went on in this city. Seeing this title made me feel as if the author of this exhibition had never lived or been to the city itself before claiming this statement in the title. The title touched on a very sensitive topic from the beginning of the exhibition, in which led me interested in what the creator of the exhibit was thinking about. Following the title, I looked around the background of the title page. The visual aspects of the title page had a strong structural format that enhanced its purpose in drawing me into the exhibition— the simple, yet disciplined, design of the first slide led my thoughts to contemplate about the issue that the exhibit focuses about. The negative white space around the centered title made the title jump out into my eyes. Observing the little details on this first wall, I realized that underneath the bolded

title, there is a fine, red line that separates the title and the creator of the exhibition. I believe that the author of the exhibit purposely structured this to make sure that viewers, like me, know that this exhibition is based on her point of view. This knowledge to the viewer ensures the perspective of the information and message of this exhibit, in which it could limit counterarguments that can be formed from the exhibition. The counterarguments that I had before when initially reading the title subsided as the author made sure that I knew that this exhibit was based on her point of view. Furthermore, the presentation was set to make the presentation as a virtual exhibition. The background of the slide made me feel as if I were in an actual exhibition. The bottom of the slide was a wooden floor, setting the viewer looking at a wall. The combination of the background and text structure formed a good environment for me to observe the exhibit. Based on content of this exhibition from the title, I became interested in learning more about this social problem in Chicago, so I clicked onto the right arrow to go to the next slide of the presentation. To highlight the transitions implemented in the exhibition, as the screen moved to the next slide, the author made the transitions in a way that I was in an actual exhibition. The transition was set to push the slide to the right as if I moved myself to the right of the wall.

The “next wall” read “**INTRODUCTION**” in bold and was centered on top of the paragraphs of the exhibit description. The first paragraph of the introduction stated: “Racial discrimination had a critical impact in segregating the white and black communities in Chicago since the mid-twentieth century.” When I read this first sentence, I was thrown back to this reality. I never knew that racial discrimination led to segregating Chicago into two communities, especially even today. Segregation in America was a long story that ended long ago, and what I see around my community does not reflect anything in segregating and discriminating others,

even now since Obama had become the first African American president of the United States. I was very surprised how the author started the introduction with a sensitive statement. She should have known that this would arise objections and criticize her for her view. However, based on her position as an author, I believe it was a good idea to do so because it really made me think why she made that statement. I wanted to read on into her exhibit to see her proofs for her thinking. The next sentence read: “Although many decades have passed and social values have changed within the society, Chicagoans resist to assimilate themselves into an integrated society as one harmonious group of residents.” Through this sentence, it made me contemplate about what the author was trying to say. Isn’t assimilation and integration the same thing? Furthermore, if the black and white communities are both living in the same area, Chicago, then are they not already integrated as a one community? I was confused on what the author was trying to say because I always thought of America as an integrated nation with many ethnicities and cultures assimilated to one group of people as Americans. Also, why would the Chicagoans “resist to assimilate”? It is the 21st century, and from left and right, we see people working with everyone no matter what race they are. There should be no reason of resisting. However, because the author specifically focused the topic in Chicago, I became even more interested in the topic. I have never been to Chicago, and I was wondering if Chicago was actually still influenced under the past idea of segregation and discrimination among its society. Is this what was happening in the North? Therefore, I continued to dig deeper into this exhibition. I read the rest of the introduction section, and the author states how her exhibition will go, along with her inspirations, a play called *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, that led her to create this exhibition. She included facts in the introduction in which I never heard or was aware of, and by this time, I became interested in learning a new situation that is occurring in our American society today. As

I read her goal for this exhibition, “to revive this issue back to the society to implement a change in the people's minds to support in making a better Chicago”, I wanted to read into her perspective in this issue and determine if I want to be involved in her notion by the end of the exhibit.

As the slide transitioned again to push the slide to the right, the slide reads, **“INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO NAVIGATE THROUGH THE VIRTUAL EXHIBIT”**. After reading this, I knew for sure that the author set the settings of the transitions and backgrounds on purpose in the presentation so that the viewers can easily go about the exhibit as a virtual exhibit. She kindly told simple directions in how to navigate through the virtual exhibit, ensuring that the viewer does not get lost during the presentation. I believe the author had a reason for the placement of this slide between the introduction and the details of the exhibition because she knew that after the viewer reads the introduction, the viewer will be for sure hooked into the exhibition. If the instructions were to be placed before the introduction, the viewer can be confused and overwhelmed by the instructions, possibly leading the viewer to disinterest in the exhibition due to “too many steps”. Additionally, I like this placement because it is used as a distractor after reading the introduction of the exhibit because it allowed me to take a breather from the bombarded, new information at me. I was set back to relax, and the author kindly communicated with me, a viewer, to enjoy the exhibition, in which it relaxed the tension and the mood that developed inside of me after reading the introduction.

After the break, I clicked to the right again, and now I saw another section bolded and centered on the wall with the words: **“HOUSING SEGREGATION”**. By this time, I realized that the author centered and bolded each group section with the same font, size, and format to indicate the individual groups that support her thesis/ statement. Her first group was housing

segregation that exists in Chicago. In her first sentence of the description of housing segregation, she indicates that housing segregation is one of the geographical condition that physically shows the segregation in Chicago. There is a saying that nothing can defeat what you can see. The author came about with her evidence very strong right from the beginning. She describes the horrific conditions that the African Americans have had to live in the Black Belt where they are gathered since the 1950s. Even up to now, because of industrialization in Chicago, those small-cramped homes are being broken down, causing many homeless residents to suffer even more than before and creating an overall social issue in the society. With this support tying into her message of the exhibition, she creates a strong point in convincing me to think about how not all societies in America was nice as I thought it to be. There are many things in the world that I was not aware about because it is so hidden. I thought about this as the silent segregation that exists in our nation, without many people realizing it happening. Right after the description of housing segregation (moving to the next wall), I was drawn toward the huge photographs that stretched across the wall. There were two pictures that related to each other. I liked how the author put the primary sources right next to the descriptions that states her research in Chicago's history. With the combination of her secondary sources and primary sources together right next to each other, it displayed a stronger stance and evidence to support her thesis. The first two pictures depicted similar pictures of Chicago's Black Belt in the 1940s and the 21st century. The author seemed to put these two pictures together so that viewers can compare the difference in the different time periods that shows the persisting housing segregation in Chicago. This comparison between the two different time periods was very mind-blowing for me. I never knew this similarity would still exist today. In order to read the descriptions of each photograph, I had to click onto the little white, description box on the right of the photographs that navigated me automatically to the

label and the information about the pictures (given in the instruction slide). When the slide transitioned into the descriptions, the slide zoomed into the description box as if I took a step closer to the wall in an actual exhibit. This was one of the other transition aspects that the author incorporated to make the exhibit realistic. The format of the presentation accurately set me in a setting of an exhibit right in front of my computer. I was glad that the author set the instructions before going into the exhibition topics because it was necessary to navigate and read the information of each picture in an orderly manner. The instructions allowed me to navigate gracefully through the exhibition. Going back to the informational portion of the exhibition, the descriptions of each photograph were placed to the right of the photograph in an easy, legible font size. It was easy for me to analyze the picture as I was reading the extensively described significance of the photograph in the respective time period. However, it contained information that pertained its relevance to support her main statement in the exhibition. I believe the author did a great job in tying back each of the photographs to its main purpose in the exhibition. She consistently reminded me of the message she is trying to get across, and as I went through each artifact, I was persuaded little by little to support her.

On the last photograph of housing segregation, the top left corner had a text that said, "Next Group". When I clicked onto the words, it directed me to the next section of the exhibition, which was similarly formatted as the Housing Segregation group. The title "**SEGREGATION IN EDUCATION**" was bolded and centered with the description of her claim to support her thesis. When I read the first sentence of the description, I was surprised when she states that the segregation in education today was affected by the segregation Chicago had in the 1950s. She mentions other contributing factors that prevented education to improve over the years such as financial fund issues for the African American school communities, which

is gravely problematic in the segregation in education that exists in Chicago. In order to prove her point and show that this subject is a continuing problem today, she provides photographs (in the same format as the last group) that displays the segregation in the 1950s and 21st century. The one thing I noticed when she provided the photographs of the different time periods is that the ones in the 1900s (the picture on the left of the slide) were in black and white, and the ones in the 2000s (the picture on the right of the slide) were in color. Just by looking at the photographs without reading the information on the label, it was obvious to my eye that these pictures were comparing one another. However, on the third photograph of this section by John Gress/ Reuters shows that protests against the inequality in education is a concerning issue in Chicago. For this photograph, it was different from the all the artifacts I had seen so far in that this photograph was not used to compare different time periods. This was its own picture on the slide that demonstrated that people are taking action in Chicago right now. Because of this problem does not concern too much with the whole nation, these demonstrations in Chicago are not heard of in the areas of the South, where I was currently reading this exhibit. The author incorporated a lot of different mediums, in which really strengthened her exhibit.

The next section of the exhibition was structured in the same format as the other two groups. The title “**IDENTITY**” was bolded and centered with the description of the tensions of identity in the community. In the content, the author centralizes the idea of de facto segregation that is currently still dividing the Chicago community. As the author explains that the split between the white and black communities became a “social norm” in the Chicagoan culture, it was a huge shock for me. How can Americans restrict themselves to integrate and accept each other’s cultures and appreciate them for who they are? America is a nation where people from all over the world come together and work together to become strong as a multiethnic whole. I did

not understand or believe the statement that the author had said. However, as I kept reading the text, hoping for a shift in her stance, I instead began to understand where she got the idea of her stance. As people do not stand up for their beliefs and do not have the power to make a difference in these strong-minded communities, there would be no changes implemented in the daily lives of these people, but rather become embedded into their lives. For many decades, these people went through the life of segregation. I began to understand why this segregation cemented into their culture. By the end of the text, I was persuaded into her stance and agree with the claim that she presented since the beginning of this exhibit: the segregation that still persists “that arose from the historical discrimination that permanently engraved in its past and to its present”.

As I went onto the next slide, expecting another photograph or artifact to make her stance more solid than before, I was surprised by the new medium that she provided as the last part of the exhibition that tied everything nicely together. The exhibition ends with an interview with a researcher named Alan Anderson who combines and summarizes all the factors that the author explains in the exhibition that involves explaining the segregation in Chicago. After watching this video, I was fully convinced with the creator’s opinion in Chicago’s persistence in segregation because Alan Anderson is a person who researched and studied about segregation and inequality in the American society for many years. He explains the de facto segregation that was heavily incorporated in Chicago’s community, and with his detailed reasoning and research in Chicago’s society, he gathered up all the exhibition together and let me realize the severity of the problem that resides in Chicago today.

I would like to thank the author for opening this sensitive but important issue in Chicago and letting me have the motivation to make a difference and bring about her purpose into our community to implement a change in the people’s minds to support in making a better Chicago.

The overall flow and the structure of the exhibition had a huge part in accept the harsh reality that happens in America. Many people, like me in the beginning of this exhibition, believe that segregation and racism was something part of the past that could not be present today because they tend to relate the things they see around them and pertain them to the entire nation. In a suburban community that I live in, segregation is not significantly seen because the working class has to work together to succeed. As long as one has the skills, he or she gets the job. With that kind of mindset, I never had a thought in the beginning that such segregation among races in Chicago existed in the known-to-be hardworking, equal American society. The author slowly developed her points and message in me, and by the end of the exhibition, I accepted her stance and gave me the notion to become involved in more racial support campaigns such as Black Lives Matter. The simple structure itself allowed me to only focus on the topic of her exhibition, allowing me to stay readily focused from the beginning to the end. The unique and specific details and explanations that she implemented in the presentation brought an overall, strong impact throughout the exhibition, succeeding in bring me a closer look at the society of a city on the opposite side of the nation.