

I moved on to the next artifact, which was a black and white picture of a line of African Americans standing in front of a sign that reads “there’s no way like the American way”. This image seemed contradictory to me as well. Although the words “world’s highest standard of living” was written on the sign behind the line of people, the African Americans standing in the line did not seem to be happy at all. I asked myself, why did the curator include such a strange photo in this exhibition? The ID label of this artifact showed that the photographer, date and title of this photo were all unknown, but there was a hyperlink through which I could find the original website of the photo. After reading the captions, I found out that the curator had chosen this particular image because it showed the poor standards of living of African Americans in the 20th century compared to that of the white population. From this image, it was evident that although African Americans may have had the same American Dreams as other people, it was significantly harder for them to actually reach the goals because their lack of education, opportunity and jobs.

The artifact next to this one was also in black and white. The fact that these photos are all in black and white was also an evidence that these photos are taken in the mid-20th century, thus reflecting the theme of the exhibition. This image attracted me because on the photo, three African Americans were standing beside a stairwell with the large word “COLORED” on it. My first instinct was that the word “colored” correlated with the African American population. However, a question rose inside me, what was the point of printing the word on the stairwell? As I continued to read the ID label of this artifact beside the photo and the captions of it on the next slide, I figured that I was wrong from the start. This photo was taken outside of a movie theater showing the newest Tarzan movie. Although people did tend to associate the word

“colored” with African Americans, the word “colored” in this case meant no other than the fact that the film itself is in color. This clarification made me smile, and I felt guilty for directly relating the word to a race. Nevertheless, this contradictory image was another evidence of the fact that African Americans were distant from the white population in the society.