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“The Exhibit That Took Me On a Journey”

What exactly is a journey? Does it have to be a physical journey to be considered one? Not knowing what to expect, I walked in to see an exhibit. In front of me, was a very simple white page containing nothing more than some black lines put together. This did not mean much to me. Nothing about it stood out nor did it interest me. However, the incomplete rectangle gave this exhibit purpose. Inside it, it read, “Biracial Identity Complications During the Civil Rights Movement”. I felt that the creator of this exhibit intentionally meant to do this – he/she wanted the audience to focus solely on what matters, the title. From the title, I was able to start seeing where this was headed towards. I started visualizing and imagining the possibilities, which was setting me up for a journey, or perhaps a movie, a 4D movie.

As I began asking questions to myself in order to satisfy my curious mind, I decided to move on to the next step. This took me to a whole new page that felt similar, but looked different. Meaning, the creator of this exhibit is striving for a simple and clear-cut look that allows me to focus on the words and the content only. This page, similar to the previous one, was again, a bunch of black lines put together. At least that was what it looked like to me. Though as I mentioned before, nothing about the physical appearance of this page attracted me personally. However, one thing that I noticed was that there was one thick black line that ran through vertically on the left side of this second white page. It was interesting to see this line randomly placed on this page because it did not really seem to do much in terms of telling the story that the exhibit was intended for. Reading through the large body of text, I

began noticing that the black line was making me feel that I was leaning towards the right. The thick black line somehow feels like a wall forcing me to keep going down. So without hesitation or thought, my instinct was to just continue reading. It was easy for the eyes since the black text stood out from the white background.

This first body of text, followed by the word, “Introduction” in big bold letters, began by stating the obvious. It provided a statement of shared knowledge, “Racial and gender alienation triggered cultural difficulties for many, which caused people to feel out of place.” In order to capture the understanding of the audience, I knew that the creator of this exhibit intentionally started the story off with an obvious statement. From there on, it was all idea development and the known-new chain. The creator explained where a sense of belonging comes from, which was what people lacked due to the complications with race and gender. Then he/she goes on into talking about Sarah, the main character from *Funnyhouse of a Negro* by Adrienne Kennedy, who represents the author of the play. In that same sentence, followed by an important detail, it read, “...Sarah, the main character, was discriminated during the Civil Rights Movement simply for being an African American and a woman. To be more specific, she was biracial, meaning that she was both white and black, which made it more difficult for her to find her identity.” This was when I clearly understood where the creator of this exhibit was getting at. Even with this much information, I was able to foresee what was to come in the upcoming pages. Along with details about Sarah and the hardships she faced, the last sentence confirmed that I was thinking in the correct direction. “This exhibit will portray the hardships and adversity, such as discrimination and inequality, that African Americans, women, African American women, and biracial individuals had to overcome.” This was my “a-ha” moment.

After having moved on to the next page of the exhibit, the creator was beginning to provide much more about the story. This was where he/she intended to start telling the actual story. What I saw as soon as I opened this page was, again, the thick black line. There was nothing different about this line here. “Huh,” I said. “This exhibit looks a lot like a timeline.” The thick black line continuously runs through every page providing text in order. Not necessarily in order of when the events took place, but in order of importance to the creator in telling the story. In order to confirm this, I looked through every page of the exhibit first. I was most certainly right; it was in order of importance. Anyhow, other than the thick black line, the black and white image caught my attention. It was evident just from the image that African Americans were protesting and trying to raise awareness of their unequal rights. There was no confusion there, so I kept reading. And there it was, the description of the photo. I felt that the creator of this exhibit was trying to convey the idea that African Americans were going this far in order to gain their equal rights. “Just as the posters state, they want to be able to vote, have the same opportunities with jobs, be paid equally, and end segregated rules in public schools.” Discrimination against these people seemed detrimental for individuals and families, which shows the complications of African Americans. The introduction was spot on; it specifically stated what it was planning on presenting, which was what it exactly did.

Then the story continues. As I looked into the next slide, I noticed once again that this timeline was very straight forward. Each page of this exhibit looked like a portion of an extended portfolio that was organized to give off a timeline-like feel. This made it so much simpler to not only understand, but also to view. Oh, and I just found many components here in common with the previous page... the image, the formatting, and most importantly, the label adjacent to the photo that summarized the origin of the photo. The only difference in

this page was that it discussed issues women had with gender inequality instead of racial discrimination against African Americans. Right when I read the title of this image, I was able to connect the dots to this story. Perhaps all of these complications are leading up to the issues that Sarah had to experience? From my understanding, Sarah was just like any other victim in this photo. That is what I thought the creator wanted to express – the idea that Sarah had to be a part of all of these complications due to her identity. At this point, I was curious to find out more about Sarah. Although the past two pages did not refer to Sarah, I knew from the introduction that it was all going to lead up to her.

Before moving on to the next chapter of the story, I took a glimpse at the next one. First of all, it looked boring. The previous two pages consisted of a photo on the top left, a label on its side, and a body of text below the photo running all the way through the page from left to right. However, this one had no images nor did it have a label; all it had was a big body of text and a title referencing “African American Women”. Though it may seem boring, I knew the formatting and placement of each of these components had a purpose. The physical appearance of this exhibit did not really affect my interest of the exhibit at this point anyway. So, I decided to read on to find out more. Again, nothing exceeded my expectations. Each page acted as a building block in creating and introducing Sarah. So far, the topics of African Americans and women were discussed, but now it is a mix of both. The creator now wanted to discuss the issues for those who were both. I am guessing that he/she will list some instances and events in the next few pages?

“I did not expect this,” I whispered to myself.

I was surprised to see a hyperlink at the very top of the page. So what did I do? My first reaction was to click on the link, which brought me back in time. I was interviewing Eleanor Holmes Norton, a delegate to the United States Congress. Even before being able to

figure out what was going on, she went on about her experiences and views on segregation and inequality. I just sat there speechless. I started feeling as if I was there back in her time. From what I have seen, it was engaging because this person knows all about the experiences and troubles. It truly was interesting to listen to somebody speak about what it was actually like, not just reading about the story written.

Without hesitation, I moved on to the next slide as soon as the interview was over. I just had to look over the rest of the exhibit, which was when I found a few more slides. The next three were continuing to share instances and complications African American women had to deal with. The one thing in common with these three were that they were all either results or consequences of fighting for power and equality with hope and justice. The order in which these three artifacts were placed stood out to me. I was wondering why it was ordered the way it was, but it shows the cause and effect of African American women fighting back. To be more specific, the first one shows a black woman shouting something through a microphone in a group of people, then the second photo shows another black woman being led away by two white police men, and the third photo shows a propaganda-looking poster that looks to send out a message and raise awareness of the unresolved issue of African American Feminism complications.

Every artifact other than this poster so far were black and white. Although it could have been coincidence, that caused the poster to stand out from the rest of the artifacts. The bright red and patterns drawn with a combination of bright yellow felt very strong. I was able to feel the passion and urgency from this. Every portion of this exhibit so far has not been so effective in terms of changing the way I feel about historical issues and complications, but this poster somehow had me engaged. I started to truly sympathize with these historical figures presented.

Overall, I felt that there was nothing that detracted from the exhibit. All artifacts and its supporting components enhanced the exhibit experience. The exhibit did guide me through the order that he/she intended, but I did not feel forced to do so. It made more sense to go in the order that I was guided through, which was most likely the reason it was organized in that certain order. Everything made sense to me; from the title page to the photograph of Sarah. Most importantly though, from my experience, I think that this exhibit was successful in engaging with the audience, which had me sympathize with those who

Oh. I guess this could be considered a journey. Although not a physical one, it definitely was one. What tells a journey apart from any other trips is that a journey contains a story that provides morals of emotion or any lesson of some sort. Personally, this exhibit impacted my behavior towards any group of people. It is that one extra step which allows the audience to sympathize with what we are told. We all know about these historical events, but that one extra step is what we lack. In my case, this exhibit was that extra step. And I feel that the creator's intention of this exhibit was exactly that. While reading through his/her exhibit, I came to a realization that anyone could have been Sarah, perhaps even me. This realization was what made me feel as if this was all happening to me and encouraged me to be more aware in the future about issues, hardships, and complications people face.