

FINAL REPORT

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION:
CHILDREN OF COURAGE EXHIBITION

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INTRODUCTION

This report represents the end product of a comprehensive series of evaluation studies carried out in connection with the design, preparation and installation of the Children of Courage exhibition. This exhibition development effort was under the direction of the Division of Exhibit Planning and Design, Harpers Ferry Center, with the strong substantive support of Park Service personnel at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Visitor Center in Atlanta Georgia, where the final installation was made.

Early in the thinking and planning stages of this effort it was decided to obtain the services of an independent evaluation consultant to carry out studies that would help to guide and inform the work to be done. To this end a three stage program of visitor evaluation was supported that included a Front-end Study, a Formative Study and a Summative Study, the latter being the primary subject of this report.

Earlier reports submitted to the Harpers Ferry Center documented the results of the Front-end and Formative testing programs. A brief review of this work will help to put this final study in its proper context.

Front-end testing consisted of four focus groups conducted at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Visitor Center, Atlanta, Georgia, in October 1998. Two groups consisted of local inner city students who represented the target population of the proposed exhibition (Middle School level), one group consisted of classroom teachers from the same schools as the students, and the fourth was composed of adult visitors to the Center. The purpose of these focus group sessions was to learn more about the current level of knowledge and understanding of the proposed subject matter of the exhibition among the student population and the way in which exhibit content and media could be used that would be of greatest interest to the student audience.

Among the more salient and useful findings from this first-stage evaluation effort, were:

- The exhibit must relate to children at a very personal and direct level, with real world examples they can identify with.

- The more interactive and hands-on activities there are (that are relevant to the subject matter, of course) the more the exhibit will be attended to by young visitors. Problem solving and game-like activities were noted often in this context.
- Awareness of the possible roles and actions of young people today in dealing with current civil rights issues tended to center on personal behavior - what can I do to advance the cause.
- The use of images of young people within the exhibit itself would increase interest (e.g., interviews and stories, both positive and negative).
- The use of music related to the civil rights movement was often noted as a good way to attract and hold the attention of young people.
- The use of real objects related to the civil rights movement came up often in the discussions as having a special appeal to young visitors, especially things they could touch.

A final recommendation in the report had to do with the importance of maintaining a clear focus of the exhibit on those things that are consistent with the messages that are intended to be conveyed. In this context a plea was made to "refine the stated objectives (more properly called goals) and make them more specific so that we can avoid trying to do too many things." The project team took this admonition seriously and prepared a set of very specific, message-related statements that were instrumental in guiding further content and media development.

Formative testing consisted of three focus groups carried out over a period of two days at the Alice Deal Junior High School in Washington, DC: A teacher group (N=17), and two student groups (N=15 each). The student groups were selected by the school from the 6th and 7th grades, and represented both gender and ethnic diversity. Each group met in the school auditorium for a pre-briefing during which they were asked to carefully attend to all aspects of a mockup of the complete exhibition which was assembled on the stage. They were given approximately one hour to "do" the exhibition, reading all labels, looking at all visuals and doing ¹ the hands-on activities. They were also told that, upon completion, they would be asked to discuss the exhibition in terms on its content and what they liked and/or disliked about it. In effect, we were asking them to become exhibit critics. The focus group discussions lasted approximately one hour for each group.

The high quality of the mockup of the Children of Courage exhibition in terms of its content and physical layout, and the enthusiasm with which the students carried out their unique assignment, combined to provide a rich source of valuable information on the basis of which recommendations for the completion of the exhibition could be made. Among the more salient of those recommendations were:

- Every effort should be made to "lighten up" the exhibition. Specific areas noted in this connection were: lower comprehension level of text material, use of more visuals and more color in the visuals, include more "real objects that can be held or touched, more contrast between text and background and more variety in text layout and fonts, the addition of music and sound effects where possible, and the use of lighting that is bright and "cheerful."
- The all-text orientation panel used in the mockup did not attract or hold very many students or teachers. Its location and content both contributed to this low level of usage. A more visible panel with a brief message was suggested with no more than 30 seconds viewing time.
- The three time periods covered by the exhibition need to be made more apparent as well as the sequence in which they should be viewed.
- The "Today" area (the third section) needed to be given more substance, clarity and "punch." Too many students failed to grasp the central message of personal involvement in human and civil rights activities.
- Related to the previous point, too many students thought that the main message of the exhibition had to do with Martin Luther King, Jr. and his early life in the Sweet Auburn area of Atlanta rather than the role of young people in the fight for civil and human rights. This finding seemed to be related mostly to the first area dealing with segregation in the 1930s where MLK, Jr.'s life and times were dealt with most extensively in text and visuals.
- A 20 minute video on the history of the desegregation movement and the role young persons played in it proved to be a major distraction from the rest of the exhibition. It should be moved to a separate location.

- Located in the Today section, a large "wheel" that could be manually rotated by the visitor showed areas of the world where human rights violations are currently prevalent. This proved to be confusing to those few who actually tried to use it. Another way of making this important point should be considered.

It should be noted that the Formative Evaluation report ended with a very positive statement about the effectiveness of the Children of Courage exhibition. "... even in its mockup stage the exhibition has many excellent elements and ideas in it that hold the promise of a finished product that all those connected with the project can be proud of. The summative evaluation will provide another opportunity to assess the impact of the exhibit, and ... to make even further improvements/adjustments as appropriate." It should also be noted that numerous conversations were held with members of the exhibit development team at the completion of the study about various ways of accommodating the recommendations made. Despite the usual time and funding constraints that all projects face, in point of fact every one of the above recommendations resulted in some kind of substantive modification to the exhibition:

- The exhibition was made more "cheerful" looking and accessible to young visitors in a variety of ways, including the use of more color, pictures, objects, and variations in text formats.
- The all-text orientation panel of the mockup version was replaced by a short, silent, animated video presentation that showed how to "use" the exhibition (e.g., which direction to go from the video terminal).
- The labels identifying the three major sections of the exhibition were made more visible to the visitor.
- The Today section was given more message focus and visual appeal.
- The 30s section was re-configured so that the main message was the impact of segregation on young people. How Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Sweet Auburn area of Atlanta related to this period was treated as a sub-text.
- The video that was an integral part of the mockup version of the exhibition was moved to an auditorium adjacent to the exhibition itself.
- The history wheel was removed and replaced with a simple map and more focused text material.

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION RESULTS

The final step in this three-stage evaluation process took place in Atlanta, GA. in May, 2000. The completed and modified configuration of the Children of Courage exhibition was installed in the lobby of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Visitor Center, its intended final venue. The basic plan used in the earlier Front-end and Formative evaluations was followed. Two school groups and one teacher group were invited to the Center to participate in the study. Eighteen 6th grade and eighteen 7th and 8th grade students from inner city schools and of mixed gender and ethnicity were asked to study the exhibition for approximately one hour. They were then assembled in a quiet room with only the focus group facilitator and asked to relate their reactions to and feelings about the exhibition. Nine teachers from the same schools as the students followed a similar format. Each focus group session lasted approximately one hour.

Since, as noted, the video presentation was taken out of the exhibition itself and moved to an adjacent auditorium for its installation at the Visitor Center in Atlanta. the question arose as to how this-element should be treated sequentially. That is, should it be considered as a prologue or orientation to the exhibition and shown before the students went through the displays themselves, or as a review or summary of the exhibition after "doing" the exhibition. To answer this question the student groups were divided into two sections, one of which went to the video showing before going through the exhibition, and the other of which went after completing their inspection of the exhibition. The teacher group was also asked to pay particular attention to this issue and be prepared to discuss it in the focus group, although they were not divided into two separate groups.

Because the proper setting up and conduct of focus groups is such a critical element in carrying out studies such as this, a copy of the protocols used for both the students and the teachers is presented in Appendix A to this report. It includes both the instructions given to students and teachers before viewing the exhibition and the questions and "probes". That were used to guide the actual focus group discussions themselves. It should be noted that the ebb and flow of conversation that arises in such groups usually has a certain momentum of its own, and the focus group leader cannot always cover each and every subject listed on the protocol - it is a guide, not a straight-jacket. The free flow of ideas, concerns, and opinions is at the heart of the focus group methodology.

In addition to the above data collection activities, the opportunity to observe HOW casual visitors. Moved through the exhibition, what they did, and how much time they spent at the various elements within the exhibition provided another dimension to the evaluation. While it was not possible to collect more than a small sampling of actual visitor tracking data, the results are given at the end of this section to show the potential that this kind of visitor input has to evaluating how effectively and completely an exhibit is being utilized in situ. Since the comments made by the students in the focus group sessions are the primary source of data in this study, a review of the audio tapes made during the one hour discussion with each group follows.

Focus Group Results - Group One.

When asked to indicate by a show of hands how many thought that seeing the exhibition was a positive experience, all hands went up. When asked to say what the main message or story of the exhibition was, a variety of answers was given. "Segregation" was the term mentioned. most often, with "children" a close second. About two thirds agreed that a major theme of the exhibition was the way segregation affected young persons during the 30s and 40s. However, only one third felt confident that they knew what the name of the exhibition was. When told what it was, almost all indicated that they then recognized it as being the name.

With few exceptions, the students picked up most of the handouts that were available throughout the exhibit area is total of 4). Several positive comments were made to the effect that they provide something to show those at school or at home what they saw. What appeared to be the most problematic of the handouts was the pledge card, in which specific personal commitments are asked for (e.g., respecting all people, choose non-violence over force; help promote freedom, justice and world peace). To measure the long range impact of such a brief exposure to an important message is obviously beyond the scope of the present study.

The fact that the exhibition is divided into three distinct sections each with a separate message and time period, and that there was a preferred pattern to be followed in moving from one section to another, was noted by only a few students in the group. The "arrows" in the floor covering were not seen by a one as being directional indicators. And the new orientation video, which was designed to show the way the exhibition should be traversed, failed to get this message over.

fact, only a few actually looked at this video. The addition of sound to the video was thought by some to be a way to get people to pay more attention to it.

The pullout drawers received a lot of favorable comments. However, the fact that some things are removable and others can be touched but are NOT removable caused a few problems. One student reported that another student tried to take a camera out of the drawer and pulled the strap off of it in the process.

When asked specifically to name areas that were noted in the 30s section that were influenced by segregation, (e.g., travel, schools, shopping, etc.), very few were able to do so without considerable prompting

As to the important question of whether to show the video before or after seeing the exhibition, this group voted in favor of "before." The actual count was 15 "before" and 3 "after." The feeling was that the video provided an effective orientation to what was going to be seen in the exhibition itself. Several saw it as background that made the content of the exhibition more understandable. The small "after" group saw the video as providing a good review of what was seen in the exhibition itself. As the discussion on this subject continued, several noted that since reading the text material in an exhibit is not usually done, the video gave them the information needed to help interpret the visuals used in the exhibition. This suggested that young people today learn more effectively by "ear" than by "eye." In short, the target audience for this exhibition seems to come from a visual (TV/movies) culture rather than a reading (book) culture.

Ten of the 18 in this group said that they actually used the computer interactive display (not just watched someone else use it). However, only 3 students said (?) that they went through all of the subject categories, the rest using only a small sample of the total content. The "non-standard" configuration of the mouse proved to be a problem for 4 of the students. It was evident from the tone of this discussion that this part of the exhibition has a very high attraction value but a not-so-high holding power value. One student noted that she wanted to use the computer but got tired of waiting for her turn. This is a serious problem with one-on-one displays.

The Today section was recognized by a number of students as representing a major shift in the exhibition from segregation and black civil rights in the United States to human rights throughout the world.

There was a strong vote for the use of more music in the exhibition. They recognized the problem of sound from one area interfering with other areas, but thought the use of earphones would be an acceptable solution.

The memorial book appeared to be effective, getting a large percentage of students looking at it. One student wondered why MLK, Jr.'s picture was not in the book.

The amount of emphasis given to MLK, Jr. in the exhibition seemed about right to most of the students. A few thought he could have been given more prominence, but others pointed out that there is already so much available about him in the Sweet Auburn area that this is really not necessary.

The group gave a positive vote to the use of the flip panels. One girl said that "they make you think before you lift the cover."

The subject matter covered by the exhibition was seen by most of the group as being "fresh" in the sense that it put a new slant on things they had talked and studied about in school. No one was willing to say that the exhibition was boring or repetitious!

A show of hands indicated that all but a few thought that this exhibition should be shown in other locations in the US. If it was, the "local" content could be removed or reduced.

Everyone in the group raised their hand when asked if they would recommend this exhibition to their peers!

Focus Group Results - Group 2

It should be noted that this group was not able to devote their full attention to the exhibition due to the arrival of a large group of school children that "burst" into the area just as they were getting started and continued throughout the time they were in the exhibit area. As a result it was very difficult to get near many of the elements and displays. The comments below should be considered in the light of this unfortunate but realistic situation.

The issue of when to show the video gave somewhat different results with this group. Only five voted for "before" with 8 "after" and 5 said it did not make any

difference. The notion that the video reduces the need to read the text material in the exhibition was noted again. It appears that reading is not a behavior that is associated with museum going and exhibit "doing."

Most of the comments about the main theme of the exhibition had to do with the Today area.

"There is still a lot of work to do," "A lot of people are more unfortunate than we are," "Some people don't have shoes and food," "A little to us is a lot to other people." One comment that "We are the future and we still have to take an active role" got a round of applause from the group!

When asked how many were confident that they knew what the title of the exhibition is, only 5 hands were raised.

The mirror generated a lot of discussion. Most thought it was a good idea but a few thought it was unrealistic to think that one person -"me"- can make a real difference. Of course, the size of the mirror and the second mirror on the door were noted as "things to change."

Hearing the audio associated with the interactive computer station was noted by several as being a real problem. Of course, the noise level in the exhibit area was extremely high, given the number of young children who were in the area. Also, several noted that the way the mouse worked was confusing at first. They thought a touch screen would be better. Having more than one "station" was also noted, so more than one person could use it at a time.

One person thought that the computer program should be available in more than one language - Spanish being the most important second language in the area.

In general, this group thought that going through the exhibition in sequence was somewhat important but not essential. Several noted that you could pick up on the story line even if you went through in a different order. (This was a very bright and articulate group. This insight was not expressed by the first group.)

The orientation video did not work for this group (either). Nor did the "arrows" in the floor covering. They thought that a video with audio would help to convey this kind of information more effectively. (When asked if a video of a young boy and girl talking to each other about how to use the exhibition would be a good idea, the response was very positive.)

Some of the things in the pull out drawers did not make sense to them. The lunch box was noted as one example of this. Also, the fact that there are drawers is not made very clear. They should be outlined or otherwise made more visible.

However

The reading level of the text seemed appropriate for this group, but a few wondered about how appropriate it would be for younger children. Also, the use of audio instead of text was endorsed by the group as a way of making the exhibition more "understandable." Here again, reading behavior seems anathema to exhibit going and doing, at least among the younger set.

The use of "flips" got a unanimous vote of approval. One person thought that the cover on the flips was too heavy and might discourage their use.

An unsolicited testimonial was offered by a young girl: "This is one of the most interesting museum exhibits I've ever been to." However, this prompted another young lady to say that she liked the exhibit across the hall better - it had more pictures and videos. To try to get the general feeling of the group, they all agreed that the exhibition was "not boring." This may be high praise indeed from a group who thinks that almost everything in the world is "boring."

The handouts were viewed favorably - almost everyone in the group had several of them. The pledge card got mixed reactions. There was skepticism as to their real effectiveness. One person was looking for a place to put it or turn it in. He signed it and thought that it should be dropped off somewhere. He has a good point! Another, perhaps more realistic (cynical?) person, suggested a trash can would be a more appropriate receptacle for the pledge cards! A final comment on the subject - have a bulletin board where you could put your card to show how many responded.

The question of the use of more music in the exhibition failed to get much a response, pro or con, from this group.

The exhibition should definitely be sent to other cities, but the Auburn material probably should be reduced or removed.

All said that they would tell their friends about the exhibition and recommend that they come to see it.

Focus Group Results - Teachers

All but one of the teachers thought that the video should be seen before the exhibition, and the lone dissenter thought that it would not make much difference.

For school groups there should be some kind of classroom preparation before the visit. Also a review of what they saw after the visit would consolidate the experience.

One teacher made an unusual point - Kids need to get not only some background on the subject matter of the exhibit, but on how to use the exhibit. There is a lot to do and they need to be aware of what to expect. "There are things in drawers that you need to look at, some things you need to lift, etc., etc. - understand how it is built."

You need to limit the number of children who use the area at one time. Children have a tendency to push and pull, open things, etc., without knowing why they are doing it.

The pull out drawers are very good. So was the mirror idea.

"Flips" are a good idea. Seem to work.

NONE of the teachers could comment on the orientation video because they did not remember seeing it, even though they were asked to take a look at it during their tour of the exhibition. This question drew a blank.

When the purpose of the video was explained to them, one teacher thought that some arrows on the floor would be a better way of accomplishing the same thing!! When told that there were "arrows" on the floor, they were unanimous in saying "they don't work."

If an orientation video is going to be effective it has to be moved away from the exhibit itself and given a more prominent position. It is too easy to miss the way it is now. (Silence does not seem to work!)

There was not a strong feeling about the need to go through the exhibition in

particular order, even though most recognized that it had a logical sequence to it. "People like to do their own thing" was one person's reaction to any effort to get visitors to go in the "right direction." Several teachers only realized now that they went through it "backwards."

The interactive computer program was both "really good" and "confusing." The latter person said she didn't know what to do, whether to scroll or not to scroll, for example. She was nit a "computer person." Also, the "only one person at a time" problem was noted

They seemed to like the pledge card idea, especially if it was followed up in the classroom. "Make sure they sign them." "Laminate them."

The child labor material came in for special mention. "Would be good if you could name the companies that engage in this."

They thought that the main theme of the exhibition came through loud and clear. MLK, Jr. was given the right amount of attention so that the ", young people" idea was not obscured. Relating the past to the present was given special praise.

The notion that the young persons who participated in the civil rights movement had to be trained and prepared for it was contrasted with today's "apathetic youth." This notion was picked up by the group and seemed to be an idea they would want to take to their classrooms. "You don't decide to sit at a segregated lunch counter without a well worked-out plan and be prepared for what could happen." "Kids in the 50s and 60s fought to go to school while today a lot of kids would be happy not to have to go to school." This is a kind of "meta message" that the teachers seem eager to take responsibility for. The necessary content is in the exhibition but it must be interpreted by the teachers in their post-classroom discussions. Having materials available for teachers that would help them carry out this kind of lesson plan would be critical. They say they would use it if they had it. They ALSO thought that teachers should play an important role in developing such materials. (Several in the group volunteered to do it "for a small fee.")

^subjects that this group of teachers taught: Georgia History; Science; Math; Language Arts; Social Studies; Special Education.

Observational Findings

An effective exhibition is said to be one that attracts, holds, and communicates its intended messages to its intended audiences. The findings from the focus group studies reported on above address the third of these characteristics - does *Children of Courage* get its messages over to the young audience it is intended to serve, if *they pay attention to its contents*. We do not have, however, the answer to the first two characteristics - do the exhibit elements attract young visitors and, once attracted, do they pay attention to its messages under casual *visitor conditions`?* After all, it does little good to say that a particular display in an exhibit is a first-rate communicator if it turns out that few visitors approach it and those that do spend too little time to more than glance at it. (It should also be said that just because a particular display is very attractive and holds visitors for long periods of time that it is effectively communicating its intended message. It may even be communicating a wrong message, as a number of visitor studies have documented!)

Remember that the focus group students were told to spend time looking, reading, and doing everything in the exhibition and were given an hour to do so. These are ideal conditions. It is not likely that the casual visitor will spend that much time, nor will he or she make such a concerted effort to pay careful attention to all aspects of this (or any other) exhibition. These kinds of observational data complete the picture, as it were, of exhibit effectiveness.

For these reasons casual visitor tracking data is usually not possible to obtain until the exhibition is completed and placed in its intended physical location. A mockup or prototype of an exhibit, even an excellent one such as was prepared for the earlier Formative study, placed on the auditorium stage of a school, does not correspond in any meaningful way with the finished product sitting in the lobby of the Martin Luther King, Jr. visitor center with streams of visitors of all ages, interests, educational levels, gender, ethnicity, etc., etc., being represented.

During the time when the Summative study was being carried out at the Atlanta Visitor Center it was possible to observe a large number of casual visitors as they moved through the *Children of Courage* exhibition. In addition, a limited formal tracking study was initiated to show how such data contributes to the effectiveness picture and become part of the final analysis that leads to recommended changes.

The table on the following page shows the results of the (limited) tracking study - carried out in Atlanta. The form that was used to record the visitor behavioral data contains a plan view of the exhibition, showing and naming each of the major display areas and their component elements. The three "wings" of the exhibition are shown (30s, 50/60s, Today) as you move from the Intro Video to the right, along with the three pull-out drawer units located on the outer perimeter of the exhibition. A rug covering the entire exhibit area is denoted by the large circle; it contrasted sharply with the marble floor of the Visitor Center. There are no physical barriers along the outer perimeter of the exhibit area. One could enter it from any of the 360 degrees of the compass.

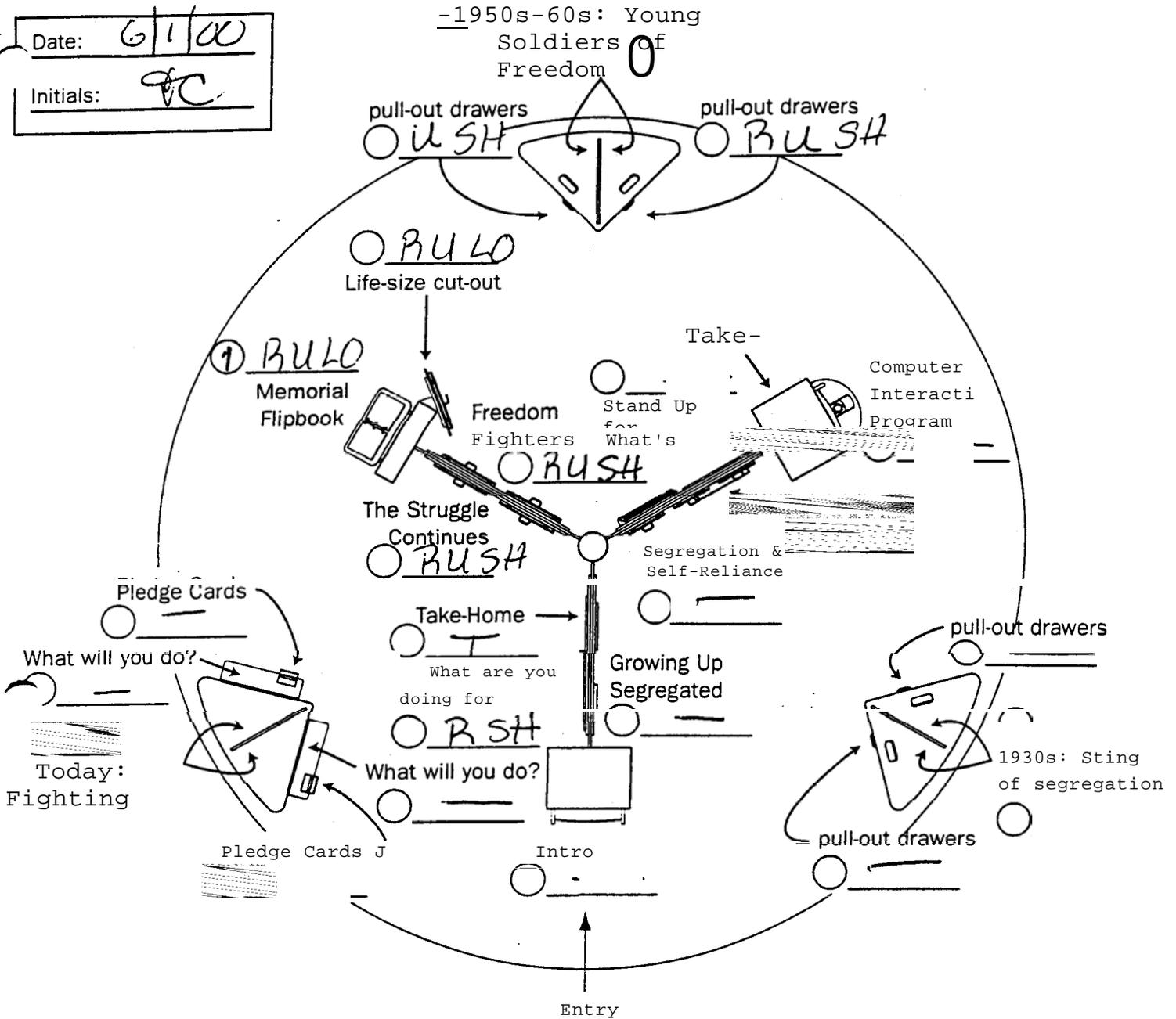
The labels on the tracking form are taken from the display panels themselves, and are designed to help the tracker locate where the visitor is at. The circle and line next to each label is provided for data entry where it is recorded what the visitor is doing at that particular location. The Key noted at the bottom of the form allows the tracker to note in shorthand form what a particular visitor is doing at that particular spot. The circle provides a place to note the point at which a person entered the exhibit area. Visitors were randomly selected from among those that "crossed the rug" (i.e., entered the exhibit area).

As an example, the form shown here is reproduced from the second visitor tracked 13- and shows that the , year-old black female in a group entered the area (1) at the Memorial Flipbook, read (R) and used (U) it (i.e., turned the pages), and spent this lots of time doing (LO). (Sometimes tracking forms ask for actual time at, but in each place stopped this case only relative time was called for.) This that this form also tells us person tended to use the left side of the exhibition "front") and (from its intended not the right side. She read (R) much of the text material she stopped at.

The following table "captures" these data points and allow us to make some general statements about where visitors go and what they do when they go there. If we also look at the demographic data, we can also answer many important "relational" kinds of questions - do young visitors have different usage patterns than older visitors, girls different from boys, blacks from whites, etc., etc. Time data can also be correlated with the various demographic categories. Also, we can learn how conditions of crowding impact on usage patterns.

Tracking Form - Discovery Center Exhibits - Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS

Date: 6/1/00
 Initials: FC



Time In: 15 min
 Time Out: _____
 Age Estimate: 13
 Gender: Male X Female
 Ethnicity: Black
 Alone: No
 Two Others: No
 More Than Two: Yes

Key:

- 1 Indicates order in which visitors attends to exhibit elements
- G Glance. Does not stop but looks in direction of element
- S Stop. Makes a full stop, in which case one of the following will obtain:
 - L Looks at visuals on panel
 - R Reads at least part of text
 - U Uses, i.e.. opens drawer. flips a flip, listens to audio, touches objects, watches video
 - T Actually takes a brochure. map, etc.
- Time spent at each numbered element:
 - SH Short. Very little time spent relative to area
 - ME Medium amount of time spent relative to area
 - LO Lots of time spent relative to area

Even though the number of tracking forms collected is not sufficient to make sweeping generalizations or do any kind of statistical analysis of the data, one can see interesting trends in the behavior of these 17 casual visitors. Adding some validity to these findings is the fact that they conform quite well with the independent personal observations made during the focus group study. As an example, looking down the upper left column on the table ("No. 1"), we note that the place where people entered the exhibit area is quite variable, with only 2 entering at the "Intro Video" (the preferred entry point) and 9 others entering at other locations. (Six forms did not have the entry point noted.) It can also be seen in the row across from "Intro Video" that it got only a glance from the 5 persons who saw it at all! (Time was not recorded for a "glance" rating since it is self explanatory. It should also be noted that it does not take much more than a "glance" to see all of this presentation.) If a larger number of forms had been completed, we could ask other questions, like who was more likely to watch the video for longer periods of time - is age, gender, etc. related to this particular behavior. And an even more critical question, do those who watch it actually go through the exhibition in the preferred way?

Another interesting area is the "Computer Interactive" entry (# 9 down the left column). It shows 9 "Uses," matched in popularity only by the pull-out drawers on the right side. It also had by far the largest number of long time users (7 vs. 4 for the Memorial Flipbook). The other two pull-out drawer areas also had lots of users (8 and 5). (All of these findings, it should be noted, match very closely the comments made by the two student focus groups,)

Another critical area of the exhibition is pledge card usage. We know that many of the focus group students took them but they were not very positive about their usefulness or impact. Here in the tracking data we see how the casual visitor handled this part of the exhibition (# 23 and # 27 in the left column). Of the 17 potential "Takers" only three persons did so, and only two other persons looked at it and presumably put it back. This is another example of the value of tracking is. a great idea that has real value, if it is not casual data. Even if the pledge card target visitor its "true" value would be getting into the hands of the severely compromised. (The three persons who took a pledge card in this study were a 45 year old black female, a 10 year old black female, and a 50 year old white male. Only one of these, of course, is a "target audience" member.)

Another interesting column to inspect is "Reads." We noted what appeared to be

reluctance on the part of the focus group students to do much reading in exhibits. Here we see a fair amount of reading, one area achieving a little over 50% Segregation and Self Reliance - #3), a very high level based on previous exhibit studies. But looking only at the tracking forms of the 8 persons who were in the target age range of the exhibit, we see very few "R" letters (our own sample form person being an exception). Again, it would be inappropriate to jump to conclusions, but when two data sources closely match each other, one begins to at least lean in that direction. (Ages, by the way, were estimated by the tracker).

An analysis of the "Uses" column, by the way, reveals a fairly high level of use of the flip panels, again a finding that correlates highly with the focus group results. The "Looks" column was not used in this study since it was not possible to separate just looking from looking and reading. The latter was assumed by the tracker to be the more accurate notation to use.

Time spent in the exhibit area is another important data point that tracking studies provide. The average time here is 12.6 minutes, a long way from the one hour our students spent. However, based on the many time studies carried out over the years, this figure is actually quite good for a relatively small exhibit such as this. However, it must be noted that a lot of this time was accounted for by those who stopped to use the Interactive Computer site (mostly members of the target audience!), leaving scant time for the remainder of the exhibition. The maximum time spent by any one person in the exhibit area was 20 minutes and the minimum was 5 minutes.

A final demographic of interest is the ethnicity of the tracked subjects. Of the 17 in this sample, 9 were black, 7 were white, and 1 was Latino. With a larger sample one could, of course, compare such breakdowns with similar Visitor Center data collected over longer periods of time and different times of year to see how representative it is.

It should be obvious even from this limited effort that observational data can play an important role in the overall assessment of any exhibition and at any point in time after its installation. Visitors, it could be said, "vote with their feet."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was noted earlier that effective exhibits should succeed in three areas - attracting, holding, and communicating with their intended audience. Of these three, the third area is of paramount importance, since without being able to "deliver" its messages (cognitive, affective and/or behavioral), an exhibit's very "reason for being" can be challenged. But there is another reason that the ability to communicate is so important - it is the one characteristic that can be carefully studied and validated by the three-step evaluation process. That is, the question "If members of the target audience pay attention to the content of our exhibit, will they be able to articulate what it is that we are trying to say to them?" can not only be studied, but can result in modifications that will make it an even more effective communicator. In this way the basic "contract" that an institution that develops exhibits has with its visitors - "All of our exhibits are comprehensible and understandable." - can be validated. To do any less is a breach of that contract.

The focus group studies that are documented here were designed to help to produce an end project - the Children of Courage exhibition - that is capable of getting its several key messages across to a pre-teen audience. The results of the Summative study are the key to giving an answer to whether or not this goal was achieved. The responses of the participants in the two student focus groups, as well as the comments of the one teacher group, point clearly to an affirmative answer. If the exhibition is used pretty much as intended, the vast majority of students were able to show by their responses that the main objectives were largely met. While this study revealed some areas that could be strengthened (which will be discussed below), there is no doubt that the essential ability of this exhibition to communicate to its intended audience has been validated. If a person pays attention to and uses the exhibition, they will be informed. The "basic visitor contract" has been fulfilled!

What can we say about the other two characteristics of an effective exhibit - attracting and holding the visitor? Here we enter another domain that does not lend itself to the same kind of management and control over the important variables that are possible with the previous area. This is because the casual visitor is a self-directed entity, behaving in response to a myriad of "forces" that the exhibit designer has only marginal control over. Thus, we see even in the

limited observational results reported on above, that casual visitors to Children of Courage do not tend to "use" it in a way that corresponds very closely to its intended use. We can be reasonably certain, therefore, that under these conditions, the typical visitor will not achieve the same level of understanding that was achieved by the focus group participants.

For this reason the results of the observational study should not be ignored, especially since there would appear to be a number of steps that could be taken that would increase the likelihood that the exhibition would be more "properly" used by a larger percentage of visitors. As usual, the suggestions that follow are made without benefit of knowledge of time and budget constraints that would influence how and even whether they could be implemented. Also, some of them are in the nature of generalities that would need to be "fleshed out" before they could be implemented. Finally, the project team has no doubt independently arrived at some of the same ideas. That should be viewed as a plus rather than a minus.

A good place to start is with the big picture - the basic architecture of the exhibition and its location in the Visitor Center. In its present configuration it invites idiosyncratic usage. Consider these facts:

The Intro Video is unobtrusive and thus largely ignored. Even when seen it does not communicate its directional message to the viewer. In effect, the exhibit has no obvious entrance.

There are no barriers to entering (or exiting) the exhibition from any point on the compass. They are all equally "attractive," in some ways more attractive than the "real" entrance.

The "arrows" on the floor rug are not seen as arrows and thus exert no influence on visitor directional behavior.

The exhibition sits in a large and busy vestibule area of the Visitor Center, with several major activities going on, such as films being shown in the adjacent auditorium, another major exhibition across the floor, an information desk near the entrance, and rest rooms behind the exhibition (a major destination point for visitors coming in the front door - especially the "rocking chair" set!). Thus, potential exhibit visitors are very likely to approach it from a wide variety of directions.

Given the above, it should come as no surprise that the exhibition is seldom gone through by the casual visitor in any kind of a directional and/or comprehensive way.

It should be noted in this connections that the focus group results, including those of the teachers, did not seem to argue very strongly for the absolute need to go through the exhibition starting in the 30s section and ending at the Today section. Or, at least, that going through it in a different order would "make that much difference." By the same token, it is certainly evident from the way the exhibition is organized that viewing it chronologically was the intended, or, at least, preferred, order. The following are suggestions that may result in general in better "use" of the exhibition.

- Make the intended entrance more obvious with design and color features. Make the video monitor more prominent. Improve the content of the video so that its message is more obvious and less stylistic. The addition of sound and real people to this video may be helpful. Add "Entrance" and "This Way" signage, with "real" arrows in the rug.
- Put posts around the exhibit with "Entrance This Way" and arrows pointing toward the entrance. Rope barriers would be another more physical way to achieve this.
- Make a right turn at the entrance more attractive than a left turn. (Perhaps a line in the rug toward the left with the red word "Exit" that clearly can be seen from the entrance.)

All of the signage suggestions have the advantage of being relatively easy to try out and to change if they prove to be ineffective. However, before acceptance they all require the collection of observational data over a period of time and with a decent sample of visitors in order to be validated. If the signage ideas do the job, it may be possible to do away with the video presentation altogether.

The second feature of the exhibition that is interfering with its proper use is the Computer Interactive terminal, especially for the targeted age group. There are really two problems here - the popularity of the Interactive draws the younger set to use it, and its length (and waiting for it) takes up a large part of the time that they are willing to spend in the exhibit area.

There is another kind of problem with the content and format of this interactive -
-program - it is too hard to use. Even some members of the focus groups noted that it
was difficult to make ones way through the program, and even to get started properly.

This is certainly true for the older visitor, a number of whom were
observed trying to "get it to work" and gave up in disappointment and frustration.
But it may also be the case that the target audience for this material may not be
from the most affluent parts of our society, and may not be as computer literate as
there more fortunate brothers and sisters.

The "fix" for these problems may be easier said than done. The computer program
should be carefully reviewed and modified to make it more users friendly. Second,
this site should be moved to a separate location near the exhibit itself and
installed in multiple formats so more than one person can use it at a time. This
will probably require the use of earphones for the sound material.

Before leaving the usage area a major point needs to be made about the use of this
exhibition by school groups. It is probably the case that its most effective usage
can be realized from this group. However, this will be true only if its potential
is realized by the teachers and that the proper kinds of materials are prepared to
support its use before and after a visit made. (The chilling experience of seeing
a **bus** load of school children empty into the Visitor Center like locusts, racing
about in a chaotic and noisy mob scene, brings into focus exactly what a school
visit should not be like.) The teacher focus group was absolutely unanimous in
their support for building the message of *Children of Courage* into their classroom
activities, even those teachers who teach subjects like math and science!

Two points were emphasized in connection with this notion of school support. First,
teachers must be part of the team that helps to put together the "before and after"
classroom materials. Second, these materials must include not just the subject
matter of the exhibition but the physical use of the exhibition. In other words,
the students must be told about its layout, its sequence, its three sections, its
pull-out drawers, etc., etc.

The message that the teachers thought was the most challenging and worthwhile to
make, based on exhibit content, was the notion that to be effective in working
Forward the improvement in civil and human rights one must be organized and prepared,
noting the way the young people in the 60s were trained as a group to respond to
violence, for example. The yellow handout "To Do More" is an excellent start in
building this kind of team approach.

The results of the focus group sessions brought out some additional ideas and issues that should be considered. As usual, it is recommended that the comments made by each group as reported in the Results section of this report, be examined as well for other useful insights and ideas.

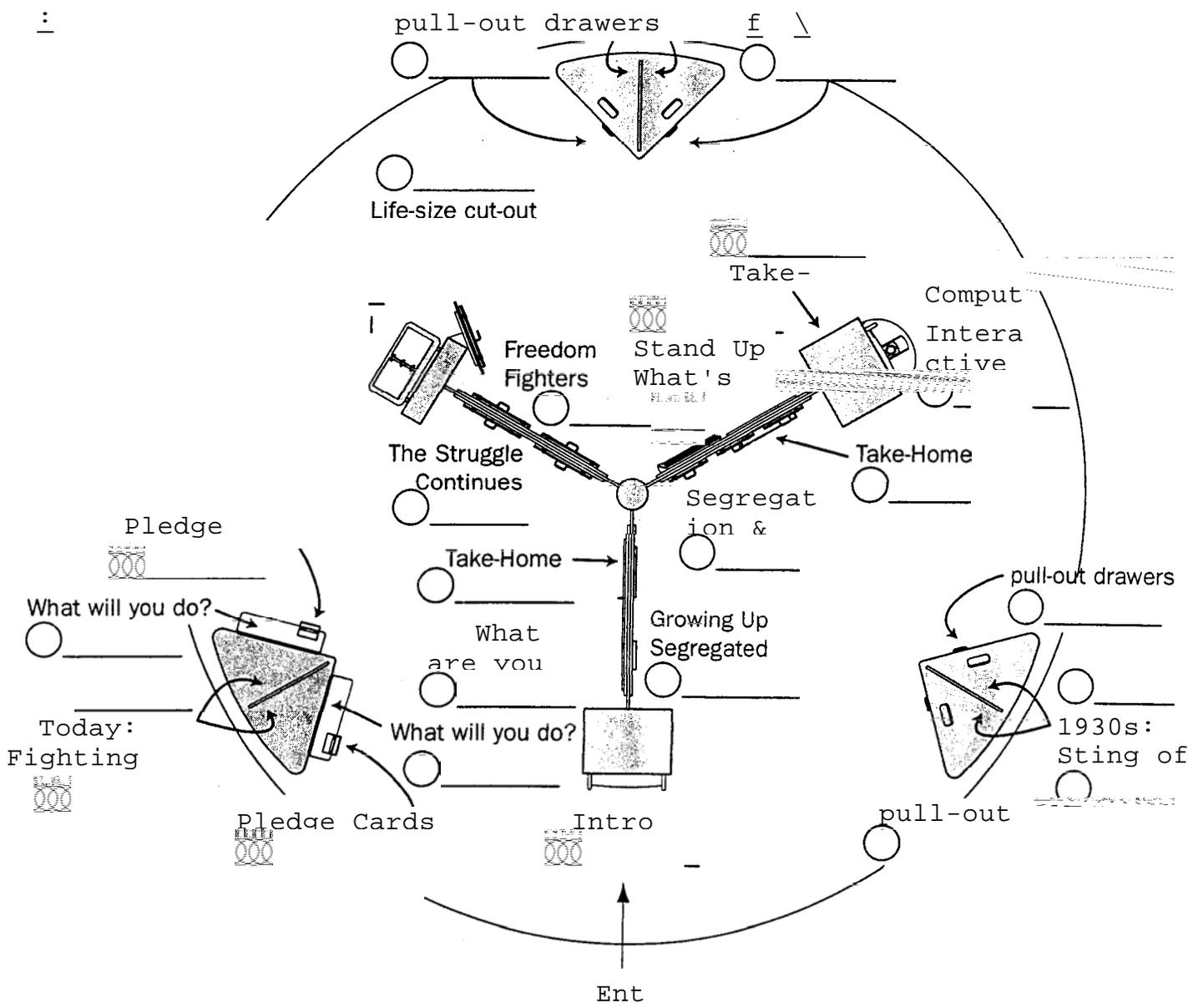
- The "video before vs. the video after" contest was not conclusive but leaned in the "before" direction. This is probably an academic point for the casual visitor, but it could be important for school groups where more control over their visit can be exercised. The notion that the video serves better as an introduction than as a review seems to make sense. In addition, the negative remarks made by a number of students about reading in the exhibit environment (they don't do it!) and that the video makes it easier to understand the content of the exhibition itself, points to its use as a vehicle for orientation rather than review. However, using it at either "end" of the visit is important - it was given very high marks by both students and teachers.
- The pull-drawers were one of the major attractions in the exhibition. Here is a case where the focus group comments and the observational data both clearly told the same positive story. However, a number of students thought that the drawers could be made more visible so they would be less likely to be missed. A label and some contrasting border around the edge of the drawer would seem to be a more than adequate "solution" to this problem.
- The objects in the pull-out drawers should be reconsidered. The fact that some are tethered to the drawer and some not seemed to present a problem to some, as did the fact that some drawers have a clear cover over the objects, making them inaccessible, while others do not. The "meaning" of some objects was also questioned (e.g., the lunch box). Knowing the popularity of this feature of the exhibition, every opportunity should be taken to build on it.
- The comments made about the reluctance of Young people to spend time reading labels and text in exhibits suggests that all text material be reviewed to see if it would be possible to reduce it, simplify it, and/or make it more attractive to the eye.
- The pledge card idea should be reviewed to see if it can be made more effective, especially for the young casual visitor. For example, it could be made clearer what one is supposed to do with it - take it home, show it to others, sign it and put it in a ballot box (which, of course, does not exist), read it and

it back, etc. Perhaps its location could be given more visibility in the exhibit. The content and layout of the card itself should be looked at as well to see if it could be made more attractive and less "academic" looking. It is probably the case that school groups would benefit most from these kinds of changes. The teachers liked the concept and thought they could "work with it" in their classrooms.

In closing it must be said that Children of Courage represents an excellent example of how the development of a new exhibition can benefit from the input of members of its intended audience. Throughout the process, these inputs informed both the content and the style of the exhibition, and even at this Summative stage, further ideas for improving its effectiveness have emerged.

No exhibit can be perfect. Reaching every visitor with all of its messages is like the holy grail - something to reach for but never possess. The messages that are contained in Children of Courage are among the more important ones that our society has to convey to young people today. Not to use the knowledge that is available to advance the exhibit "state of the art" denies visitors their right to the informed. The National Park Service and the people on its staff who contributed to this project are to be congratulated for taking the extra steps necessary to produce an exhibition that is worthy of its subject matter.

Date _____ 1950s-60s: _____
 _____ Young _____



Time In: _____
 Time Out: _____
 Age Estimate: Female
 Gender: Male
 Ethnicity: _____
 Alone: _____
 One/Two _____
 More Than _____

Key:
 1 Indicates order in which visitors attends to exhibit elements
 G Glance. Does not stop but looks in direction of element
 S Stop. Makes a full stop, in which case one
 R Reads at least part of text
 U Uses, i.e., opens drawer, flips a flip, watches video
 T Actually takes a brochure, map, etc.
 Time spent at each numbered element:
 SH Short. Very little time spent relative to
 ME Medium amount of time spent relative to
 LO Lots of time spent relative to area