



**GET UP,
STAND UP**
**Rights and
Responsibilities
of
Citizenship**

Sam Durant

*"Every spirit builds itself a house,
and beyond its house a world...
Build therefore your own world"*
2017

Wood, vinyl text

167½ × 539¾ × 377 inches

Installation view, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

Sam Durant's deconstructed house references the first houses built by and for the first freed Africans in Revolutionary Massachusetts. Its wooden boards, originally used in the artist's 2016 outdoor installation *Meeting House*, in Concord, Massachusetts, include texts by prominent African American contemporary writers and poets while the work's title is based on an 1836 essay by abolitionist and transcendental philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. Durant has said of this work, "I've always been attached to different types of language... From vernacular signage like handmade protest signs that are so loaded with different kinds of meaning to mom and pop stores that advertise by hand lettering their windows to poetry and the power of words that aren't said and read between the lines."



Immigration, Discrimination, and the Journey to Citizenship

Minita Sanghvi

¹ Alan Houston, "Population Politics: Benjamin Franklin and the Peopling of North America" (working paper, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies Research Seminar, Dec. 2, 2003), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6ps3x4fh>.

² Catherine Rampell, "America Has Always Been Hostile to Immigrants," *Washington Post*, Aug. 27, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/from-benjamin-franklin-to-trump-the-history-of-americas-nativist-streak/2015/08/27/d41f9f26-4cf9-11e5-84df-923b3ef1a64b_story.html.

For me, as for many immigrants, citizenship has been a destination, not a right. It is a long, arduous, and expensive journey. And during this time, one has the responsibilities of being a good citizen, but one definitely does not have many of the rights or even some of the aspirations of a citizen by birth. In the United States, we often consider ourselves the nation of immigrants. Yet discrimination and violence against immigrants and people of color have been woven into the very fabric of the American tapestry—from the early roots of our nation to the present day, and especially during the Trump administration. But this is not just a Trump problem: this is an American problem.

The Trump administration has focused on immigration issues in a rather harsh manner and has created a climate of fear among immigrants. However, one can find, at almost any time in the history of the United States, stories of discrimination and violence against immigrants, especially those of color or perceived to be of color. In fact, in many cases, Trump's present-day policies originated all the way back to our founding fathers.

Take, for example, the attitude toward immigrants entering the United States in the 1750s. Benjamin Franklin complained of the scourge of German immigrants polluting America and described Spanish, Italian, French, Russian, and Swedish people as having a "swarthy" complexion.¹ He wondered aloud, "Why should we, in the Sight of Superior Beings, darken its People?" While many European immigrants were not considered "white" at the time of their arrival in the United States (they were instead marked by their ethnicity), over time they have been folded into the Caucasian/white group—and many are proud to belong to that group. Today, the Trump administration believes that brown people from across the border are "infesting" the country like vermin. While he may be the only one to say it out loud, several politicians have used racial dog whistles on the issue of immigration. Often the discussion and debate about immigration is really about having the *right kind* of immigrants. Most politicians hide behind "procedural legalese of having the right 'papers,'" but the real message is that anyone "who doesn't look sufficiently white or sound sufficiently Anglophonic is presumed illegal until proven otherwise," says Catherine Rampell in her *Washington Post* op-ed "America Has Always Been Hostile to Immigrants."²

3 “The Examination Number VIII,” Jan. 12, 1802, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-25-02-0282>.

4 Richard Carwardine, “The Know-Nothing Party, the Protestant Evangelical Community and American National Identity,” *Studies in Church History* 18: 449–63.

5 Rampell, “America Has Always Been Hostile.”

6 Harmeet Kaur, “A Duke Professor Warned Chinese Students to Speak English,” CNN, Jan. 29, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/28/health/duke-professor-warns-chinese-students-speak-english-trnd/index.html>.

Another critical issue pertaining to immigrants today is often framed around the idea of “their culture and ideals versus ours.” Benjamin Franklin’s opinions toward immigration were largely based on the color of America; those of another founding father, Alexander Hamilton, were more focused on the ideals of the United States being polluted by immigrants. Hamilton, himself an immigrant from the Caribbean islands, noted, “The influx of foreigners [would] change and corrupt the national spirit;... complicate and confound public opinion; [and] introduce foreign propensities” into the American Republic.³ Many people consider Hamilton a popular hero among immigrants, thanks in part to Lin-Manuel Miranda’s famous Broadway musical, which valorizes the life journey of Hamilton from a bastard orphan in the Caribbean to a war hero and founder of the US Treasury. While Miranda’s line “Immigrants, we get the job done!” sparks applause on Broadway, Hamilton in reality had a more checkered perspective on immigrants.

Apart from color and ideals, religion has also been a point of contention and a reason to discriminate against immigrants. While Trump’s Muslim ban is a glaring example of present-day intolerance enshrined in policy, the Know Nothings, a national political party in the mid-nineteenth century, canvassed on the basis that Irish Catholic immigrants would threaten the livelihood and liberties of native-born Protestants.⁴ In her op-ed, Rampell notes that Emma Lazarus’s sonnet “The New Colossus” (“Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”), mounted on a bronze plaque on the Statue of Liberty, was written “when the United States began implementing strict laws to keep the huddled masses out.” She refers to the Chinese Exclusion Act, passed by Congress in 1882, as the “first major immigration law to restrict entry of a specific ethnic group, after complaints that the Chinese were polluting American culture and appropriating American jobs.”⁵ So it should come as no surprise that in January 2019, a professor at Duke University asked Chinese students not to talk in Chinese in the hallway, threatening them with withholding internships and awards.⁶

From the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II to the current ban on Muslims, from Benjamin Franklin’s apprehension about the darkening of America

7 Carrie Jung, “Harvard Discrimination Trial Is Ending but the Lawsuit Is Far from Over,” NPR, Nov. 2, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/02/660734399/harvard-discrimination-trial-is-ending-but-lawsuit-is-far-from-over>.

to Donald Trump’s designation of Mexicans as “rapists” and Haiti, El Salvador, and African lands as “shithole countries,” there is a long and mostly evident history of discrimination against immigrants woven into the fabric of the United States. And yet people continue to come.

I came in 2001. I came because, as a lesbian in India, I couldn’t possibly exist under tyrannical Section 377, which deems homosexuality a crime. My dreams of a family, a healthy, productive life, and an ability to live as my honest, true self were impossible in India. So I came. I’ve lived, studied, worked, paid taxes, voted in elections once I became eligible, and fulfilled all my duties as a responsible citizen. In turn, I’ve been told to “go back home” several times. I’ve been told Asians are stealing “our” jobs, “our” spots at universities, “our” scholarships in med schools. In recent years, Asian Americans have sued universities like Harvard, claiming that they discriminate against Asian American applicants and assign too much significance to race, which forces Asian Americans to face a higher bar than other candidates.⁷

I’ve been asked to show ID on a trip within the United States to confirm that I’m here lawfully. I’ve been told that I speak very good English. (To which I politely respond that India, a former British colony, is second only to the United States in the number of people who speak English.) Some may describe these incidents as discrimination, others as micro-aggressions. Many believe it is just part of the path to citizenship. None of these experiences deterred me from applying for US citizenship the moment I became eligible, at a cost of \$725 (nonrefundable) and two days of work, during one of which I renounced my Indian citizenship and pledged allegiance to the American flag.

But these expenses of time and money are just the tip of the iceberg for many immigrants. Numerous young people come here as students, and to apply for a student visa, they must be enrolled in a full-time academic program. To work in the United States, an immigrant must be sponsored for an H-1B visa. To apply for a green card, allowing permanent residency, the immigrant must then hope to win a lottery. Finally, after five years of being a green card holder, an immigrant will be asked to take a test to showcase their knowledge of the history of the United States, geography, and civics.

8 Clark Mindock, “US Workplace Immigration Raids Surge 400% in 2018,” *Independent*, Dec. 12, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/ice-immigration-workplace-migrants-undocumented-immigrants-raids-trump-obama-2018-a8678746.html>.

9 Tess Bonn, “Trump’s Immigration Rhetoric Has ‘Chilling Effect’ on Families, Says Children’s Advocacy Group Director,” *The Hill*, Dec. 20, 2018, <https://thehill.com/hilltv/rising/422371-childrens-advocacy-group-director-says-trumps-immigration-rhetoric-has-chilling>.

10 Helena Bottemiller Evich, “Immigrant Families Appear to Be Dropping Out of Food Stamps,” *Politico*, Nov. 14, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/11/14/immigrant-families-dropping-out-food-stamps-966256>.

These regulated processes don’t even scratch the surface of the trials and tribulations imposed upon illegal immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, or of those crossing the border who are separated from their children for months at a time. The Trump administration has weaponized US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, casting fear into the hearts of immigrants across the country. The number of workplace immigration raids—designed to find and arrest undocumented immigrants—surged 400 percent in 2018.⁸ Immigration raid arrests declined during the administration of Barack Obama but have risen sharply since Donald Trump took office in 2017. So many communities are devastated by these raids, so many households torn apart. Families are scared of seeking medical help or of accessing government programs for fear of deportation. In 2017, for the first time in a decade, the number of children in the United States living without health insurance increased—from 3.6 million to 3.9 million, according to a recent report by Georgetown University’s Center for Children and Families. Marylee Allen, the Director of the Children’s Defense Fund, says that this increase is found especially in states like Texas, and squarely because of Donald Trump.⁹ The CDF found that immigrant parents, especially those who are residing illegally in the United States, were hesitant to enroll their children in health care because of Trump’s escalating rhetoric toward immigrants. For the same reason, many low-income immigrant families have stopped accessing governmental programs such as food stamps.¹⁰ These are the harsh realities on the ground.

In contrast, it is easy, or thought to be easy, for citizens by birth to expect the rights provided to them in the constitution—unless of course you are Black, brown, LGBTQIA+, Native American. The rights of these groups have been trampled upon in numerous instances since the eighteenth century. Some have found justice; many have not.

Naturalized citizens like me are still figuring out where we stand. What is our place in the United States? What price do we pay for our citizenship? What benefits do we accrue from it, and do the benefits outweigh the costs? Indian American comedian Hasan Minhaj appropriately calls it the American Dream tax. Minhaj has captured the experience of an immigrant or naturalized citizen in a

visceral way in his stand-up special *Homecoming King*. He relates to the audience an incident his Muslim family suffered after 9/11. They received an anonymous threatening phone call, and immediately afterward, someone broke the windows of their family car. While Minhaj ran out on the streets to figure out who had done this to his family, his father started “sweeping glass out of the road like he work[ed] at a hate crime barbershop.”

In his stand-up routine, Minhaj says he ran to his father and asked, “Dad, why aren’t you saying something?” To which his father looks at him and responds, “These things happen, and these things will continue to happen.” Minhaj continues, saying that his father believes that this is the price an immigrant pays for being in the United States. He says, “My dad’s from that generation like a lot of immigrants where he feels like if you come to this country, you pay this thing like the American Dream tax, right? Like you’re going to endure some racism, and if it doesn’t cost you your life, well, hey, you lucked out. Pay it. There you go, Uncle Sam. But for me, like a lot of us, I was born here, so I actually have the audacity of equality.”

Perhaps it is appropriate, then, that this generation is “woke,” becoming allies to their immigrant brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents, neighbors and friends. Citizenship can become a right only when there is equality. America is built on the dream of a more perfect union. And so the fight continues. ▲

Sam Durant

artist

Eric Gottesman

artist

Minita Sanghvi

professor

Isolde Brielmaier There are various ways in which we conceive citizenship, and likewise there are various rights and responsibilities that citizenship may or may not encompass. We will engage those issues and consider visual culture's role in citizenship.

How would each of you define citizenship? And how do you think we, as a society here in the United States, generally define it? Is it a social right, a form of agency, a practice, a relationship of accountability between public service providers and their users, all of the above, and/or more?

Eric Gottesman Yes to all of that. When I think of citizenship at the basic level, I think of belonging. Something that we've been saying as part of For Freedoms, an organization I cofounded that uses art to provoke civic engagement, is that citizenship is defined not through status, not through ideology, but through participating—whether you're a professor in a college or a student in a society or a citizen in a community or a member of a family. I think of citizenship as a form of active participation.

Minita Sanghvi I'm going to differ from Eric. To me, citizenship was \$640. That's the price one pays for the N-400 form to get naturalized, plus \$85 for the biometrics test. That \$725 is not necessarily accessible to all. And these costs do not include lawyers' fees, the two days that you have to take off work—one day for the interview and test and another day, once you're approved, to go and say the Pledge of Allegiance and become a citizen—or the business-casual clothes or business clothes that you have to buy to stand in front of a judge. A lot of people would want to actively participate and become citizens and cannot.

For immigrants, there's this thing called "US citizenship" that you aspire to. My parents already had green cards, so it was a given that I was going to become a citizen; it was just a matter of time. But for a lot of people who come here as students or refugees or asylum seekers, it's a long path. It's a frustrating path, and it's an aspiration. We are participating in America in every single way all through that process, but we are not citizens. When we go talk to our representatives, we are aware that our voice means little to them because we are constituents but not citizens, and so we don't have the vote to say, "In November, I'm going to show you."

IB It's interesting that you boil it down to purely transactional terms. There are multiple layers here: point of access, privilege, and, for some people, the journey to get here. Even when you break it down in that way, it becomes quite a feat to tackle for many people.

Sam Durant In general, the idea of citizenship is different from the idea of rights, particularly the idea of human rights. Citizenship is something that can be given and taken away. Citizenship comes with obligations and responsibilities as well as rights. And we owe it to one another to live up to the ideals of what it means to be a citizen, to participate in the society that we have, fully, to give as well as take. If we don't, then we're going along with something that, especially these days, we might not be too happy with.

IB It's one thing to hear about something, but it's another thing to actually see it. Images concretize a lot of what we think we know. In what ways does each of you feel that art or visual culture plays an important role? For example, Eric creates art and social interventions that address nationalism, migration, structural violence, and colonialism, among other themes. Sam's work frequently references US history and relationships between culture and politics. Minita's book *Gender and Political Marketing in the United States and the 2016 Presidential Election* looks to marketing, which includes the visual. Why choose to focus on art or visual culture as an essential vehicle to engage and inform people?

EG Participation as a form of citizenship is aspirational, but participation and criticism can and should coexist. A lot of times, artists think about whether we are part of a system or outside of it. Participation can be a baseline of entry into something, but it doesn't necessarily suspend critical faculties or critical judgment. In fact, criticality is a fundamental part of being a citizen, whether or not that status is granted by some other authority.

For Freedoms is an artist-run initiative to increase civic participation and direct action on behalf of artists and arts institutions. In 2015, my project partner, artist Hank Willis Thomas, and I started the first ever artist-run super PAC to engage directly in the political process. We put our skin in the game in a real way: we were registered with the FEC and the IRS. But we were also acting as artists and performing the role of political strategists.

Over the last few years, we've run a number of different events and activations, hundreds at this point. We're in the midst of the 50 State Initiative, where we are working with two hundred arts institutions, museums, galleries, colleges, and universities and over eight hundred artists, including Sam and many others, who are doing billboards, exhibitions, and town hall meetings.

One of the goals is to make the claim that all art is political. Art is politics. And all arts institutions are in fact civic institutions. Why draw a line between them? It's all part of the same thing. Art can be a gateway for participation in society so that even people who are left out for one reason or another are making things. They are laboring and they are producing; and that is a way of valuing. If we expand the notion of what we consider to be citizenship to include creativity, then we start to get a clearer picture of what citizenship actually could mean.

IB You're asserting that art has multiple points of entry. Accessibility is a vehicle, right?

EG Yes. My practice prior to For Freedoms was very much about working within communities slowly. Over time, ideas would bubble up in various forms of creative actions. Sometimes, exhibitions look like so-called activism or political action, and sometimes I create other types of actions.

SD The work that For Freedoms does is a great example of why art is important. It's bringing imagination and creativity into everyday life—where it always is and it always was. If we think historically, art, making,

expressing are fundamental human needs. The United States, only a little more than two hundred years old, is an anomaly in history. It's a completely commercial society, and it has sidelined creativity and culture and different kinds of expression and made us feel like they're not important and we have to constantly justify them, answering questions: Why art? Who needs art? I think it's the other way around, actually.

IB Sam, you frame this culture as a commercial society and offer this idea that, in certain contexts, art constantly requires ongoing justification: maybe because it's hard to prove its return on investment. But your projects often engage and activate community and spark discussion and debate. That may not be a tangible return that you can deposit in a bank, but it has real ramifications and impact.

Minita, can you talk about how you place emphasis on the importance of the visual as well as messaging and storytelling?

MS Politics is all visual. If Christine Blasey Ford decides to testify about how she was assaulted several years ago, you're going to have her and an all-male panel. That visual is something that's reminiscent of Anita Hill and her testimony from the 1990s. Those are the image bites that we talk about. They remind women, again and again, that they're second-class citizens. The year 1992 was called the Year of the Woman, but we haven't come very far. Especially in politics, and especially when it comes to gender, visual culture is critical in explaining and uncovering the layers of bias and sexism that still pervade institutions.

IB That's relevant not only to the discussion on citizenship but also in a consideration of how individuals craft particular images of themselves. That image is often critiqued and pulled apart, especially when that visual is not upholding what we conceive of as proper or what a woman or person of color is supposed to project.

When we think about individual political figures, and the way in which they impact our view of who is entitled to engage in citizenship or who is entitled to a voice, how do you think that impacts our view of particular issues?

MS One of the reasons that Donald Trump won was that he had a better marketing campaign. He was masterful. Hillary Clinton was doing political science; Donald Trump was doing political marketing. There's a difference between the push-and-pull strategies. She was doing more sales, a get-out-the-vote approach; he was pulling people in in a sort of blitz or branding media. When he said, "Build the wall," it was a very visual statement. You can immediately visualize exactly what he means.

And in some ways, for some people, it was picturesque. His notion "Make America Great Again" builds into nostalgia. He never tells us when America was great and for whom it was great. We all imagine this America that was great at whatever time we want it to be. The campaign and the marketing and the slogan were visual and so catchy. That was really good branding. Hillary Clinton's slogan was "Stronger Together." That's great, and I thought it was a better slogan, but it doesn't have the same impact.

Politicians who succeed are able to give this awesome visual to the people that’s full of promise and hope. Barack Obama offered a “new, sunny day of hope” vision. It was visual; everybody could see themselves together with him. Hillary Clinton, unfortunately, just couldn’t do it.

SD The amazing linguist George Lakoff has been very helpful in understanding how we communicate our values. He shows that we don’t think rationally: we think in terms of metaphors; our thought is 90 percent emotional and unconscious. His book *Don’t Think of an Elephant* is an example: just try not thinking of an elephant right now. When we refute an argument by using the same words, we are actually strengthening the idea we are trying to dispute. We need to use new language that reflects our values and just forget about arguing.

EG What is amazing about what happened with Trump’s campaign is that people reacting against it made it stronger. The reaction against Trump became a political marketing tool. It made me think that he was a brilliant marketer. I was talking about this with Cuban artist Tania Bruguera, who says that he’s *not* a brilliant marketer. In Cuba, people love Fidel Castro, but nobody loves Donald Trump. He just won. Her point is that there’s a difference between winning our hearts and minds and winning a calculated game.

A lot of art is reactive, and I wonder if that’s the power of what we have as a creative community, as an arts community. Is that where the value lies?

SD I completely agree. Another thing that Lakoff shows is how you strengthen the neural pathways in the brain when you repeat something. It gets stronger and stronger and stronger. The more you try to argue against another argument, the more you strengthen that argument. Lakoff says that we need to have our own vision and our own images, if you’re a visual artist; or our own metaphors, if you’re a writer.

MS That’s one of the biggest problems the Democratic Party has today. They’re struggling to find that vision. The big branding they had recently, trying to build off the New Deal and the Four Freedoms, was “A Better Deal,” and I’m thinking, really?

IB **This notion of citizenship can impact particular communities. How do different political parties, specifically Republicans and Democrats, define citizenship? How are their ideas articulated visually within the political sphere?**

MS Shirley Chisholm, a Democrat, was the first Black woman to get elected to Congress. This was in 1968. The first Black woman to get elected from the Republican Party, Mia Love from Utah, was in 2014. The chasm between 1968 and 2014 tells you the story of race relations and the two parties.

One of my colleagues often says that Black and white are the only races that matter. But I see myself as a brown person. And he says, “No, no, race in America is just Black and white. If you’re not Black, you’re white.” In the South, especially in the Bible Belt, that opinion does hold

true. Bobby Jindal in Louisiana and Nikki Haley in South Carolina have managed that idea well. They were thought to be not-white enough to gain the Black population’s vote, and they were white enough for the white population’s vote.

“Morning in America” was one of the iconic images of Ronald Reagan’s campaign. It was “morning in America” for some, but not for gay people—this was during the AIDS crisis. There’s definitely a way these parties handle women, race, and minorities of different sorts. The reason why white people, including the white working class, Trump’s base, get so agitated about immigrants is because of this notion that immigrants are getting more rights through citizenship and that this is somehow diluting their citizenship, and it’s taking away their power as a citizen. Citizenship is about equal rights. It’s about active participation for everybody, and both parties don’t believe that.

EG It gets even more complicated when we look at the history of the parties and the fact that this president is not necessarily of the party that he won the presidency with nor is the party itself holding the same relationship to values pertaining to race as it was in the 1950s.

SD What do you think about the recent, highly publicized victories of young women of color? Are you optimistic?

MS Isn’t it great that we have all these fresh and diverse voices? It’s almost like we flipped the script. Fundraising is so much harder for women of color, but Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is like an ATM machine. People are just sending her money.

EG A lot of these candidates—Stacey Abrams, Andrew Gillum—are coming out of a longer-term strategy on the part of progressives, through organizations like People For the American Way and others, to start building the kinds of pathways that the conservative movement has been building for decades. As artists, what are the ways we can build beyond the structures that we’re mired in? That kind of creative thinking is a part of political marketing as well.

IB **Where do you identify the shortcomings of the United States in ensuring that citizenship means the same thing across political, economic, culture, class, or race lines? It’s twofold: building these long-term pathways but at the same time recognizing that we have this notion of citizenship and whether you are or aren’t one.**

MS The word *build* is interesting. These candidates—Ayanna Pressley or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez or Gillum or Abrams—are winning almost despite the Democratic Party. They are winning because the people are saying, “We’re no longer going with establishment politics.” The Democratic Party is not building them; the Democratic Party is not allowing all voices to get on the stage. Right here in New York State, the party bosses chose incumbents in the elections. Then people got together and asked, “Why?” And they signed their own petition, and got signatures, and elected their own people. Across the country, people are finally fed up with party

bosses deciding who wins. Eric, I disagree with you: the Democratic Party is not building candidates as a party; the people are building and making those pathways. That's where the real power is: that the citizens are wide awake. And the citizens are participating by creating pathways for these diverse voices that otherwise would not be heard.

IB When you have these independent candidates who are building their own structures and pathways, it's not dissimilar from what artists are doing as they move beyond a reaction or response to create and execute a new vision and new contexts.

SD The ability to solicit large numbers of small donations has allowed this phenomenon to become visible and have success. I've been spending a lot of time thinking about the effects of social media. It's such a powerful phenomenon in US culture now. I have a number of younger students at CalArts who don't have smartphones and don't do any social media. I think that's a good sign for our culture, and for our visual culture.

EG It's kind of a radical act now.

SD Jaron Lanier is a Silicon Valley pioneer; he started virtual reality back in the 1980s. His most recent book is called *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*. A lot of things we know about—Cambridge Analytica and that kind of manipulation—but he goes into the details of how much you're being manipulated, even if you think you're just using social media for your professional life or as a convenience.

Grassroots politicians can raise a lot of money. Kids can donate a dollar. If you're really passionate about a candidate, you could donate a dollar by text message. If millions do it, that's a lot of money.

EG What if voting was available on your phone? That would change things. Even voting rights are being taken away and being restricted and battled over.

MS In June 2018, we found that your citizenship can be taken away, too. Trump and the US Citizenship and Immigration Services have started the denaturalization process. They can say, "Well, you are naturalized, but guess what? Not so much." In terms of voting rights, we consider New York a superprogressive state. But here in Saratoga, our polling booths don't open until noon. That's not access. Access is early voting. Access is polling booths open from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. There are lots of different ways to participate for people who want to, but they don't have access. I would have liked to drop my son off at school and then go vote, but I couldn't do that because the booths were not open.

Active citizenship is an effort even in a place like New York. Forget places like North Carolina, where they're actively taking away voting rights, or counties where voting records are getting lost. Stuff like that only happened, by the way, in Black counties, not so much in white counties. There are so many pieces to the puzzle in terms of active participation and what that means and what people can and cannot do.

IB I also think of what we presume when we say *citizenship*. What the notion of citizenship actually encompasses varies. It's fluid.

SD If you look at other countries in the world and how they handle voting, there are some interesting examples. For instance, in Mexico, they vote on Sunday, so you don't have to worry so much about people being at work. In many countries, voting takes place over a week. In many countries, voting is mandatory and you're given a fine and a misdemeanor charge if you don't vote, including in Mexico. So there are a lot of better ways to handle voting. We probably have one of the worst systems possible in terms of empowering our citizens. But that's what you are saying: let's envision something better and try to fix this system in which voting only happens on Tuesdays.

MS It fundamentally changes American politics if everybody votes.

SD We have to figure out a message for that. A visual, a metaphor: we have to put our values out there in a way that captures people's attention and imagination.

EG As artists, that's where we're situated. I think of Joseph Beuys with Free International University. This radically open university was intended for, at times, combative discourse. Talk about feeling uncomfortable! But it was never sustainable. It was intended as a prototype for a potential participatory, democratic education. We can experiment with and carve out space for these things because we're creative or we're artists. Maybe this is the upside to the sad separation in American culture between artists as individuals apart from society: it carves out space for us to be subversive.

Audience Many museums aim to be a place for everyone but lean very clearly toward progressive thought. Are there any museums or cultural institutions that are doing things that lean more toward the conservative? What does that look like?

EG I read a statistic that Wyoming has the largest per capita ratio of museums to people. I think that's because there aren't a lot of people in Wyoming, but the state traffics in nostalgia—cowboy museums and so on.

IB If you cast your net wide in terms of how we conceive museums, you would probably find much more variation. But when you're talking about today's art and living artists right now, it's fairly safe to say, in general, that many artists tend to be more on the progressive side.

Political leanings and ideologies may shift as you move further off the ground level in institutions, that is, when you start talking about leadership and the gatekeeping community, where decisions are made about what work to show or what exhibition will never be shown. We've seen that throughout history. But if you think about it, there are a lot of historically controversial exhibitions and institutional decisions that lean more heavily toward the conservative.

MS If you go to the Perot Museum of Nature and Science in Dallas and look at the fossil fuel section, it is not progressive at all. Texas is an oil-drilling

state, and the museum is bending science. In Kentucky, there is a museum that promotes intelligent design. So there are museums that have a conservative viewpoint.

Audience I'd like to add to that. It's not just what the leanings of the museum are, it's how the collections are used. I work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and we have people who come into the museum specifically to use the collections for a conservative bent. Even though things might be presented in a certain way by the institution, the public or the people who come in to do their own tours use the museum in ways that are more conservative-leaning.

IB Thank you for that insight. Any other questions?

Audience I'm a curator here at the Tang, and one thing I think about is the impact various projects I work on have on people. In participating in the For Freedoms activations, we're asked to measure the impact of our different programs. That's really hard to do. How do you measure the impact of the different projects that you engage in, whether that's art or writing or activism or something else?

MS I'm a management and business person. The only way we measure impact is: Where's the money? Sales, profits, return on investment.

SD As an artist, it's hard to make a quantitative judgment about the impact of your own artwork. Public art is a little easier to assess in terms of impact or feedback from larger groups; things like that are often built into the structure of the project. It takes mechanisms, it takes infrastructure, staffing to gather feedback. As an artist, I do it anecdotally and informally. Oftentimes other artists are the toughest audience. If you think that other artists respect what you did, or think it's valuable, that's pretty great.

The artist Adrian Piper comes to mind. She's very clear about the impact that she wants to have with her work, which is to help people overcome xenophobia and racism. It's about trying to get you to step outside yourself and help you to see the fiction of race or of xenophobia. I don't know how she measures that, but the fact that she has these clear-cut goals for her work has always been inspiring for me.

EG I feel strongly that the artist shouldn't be held responsible for measuring the impact of his or her work. It's an alchemical thing that happens, and it would be difficult to have to be accountable to explain that. But it's interesting when institutions start to engage in that conversation. What would the question be? In For Freedoms, we're trying to figure out how to frame a question for our partner institutions to ask. Maybe: When you walk out of this room, how are you different from when you walked into it?

IB The evaluation component for institutions, specifically museums, with regard to issues of reception and audience is incredibly important. We see ourselves as public institutions and, in a way, as similar to artists. You all don't create work to shove in the back of a closet; you create work to put it out there in the world. It's our job to help make that happen. But

our funding in many ways is contingent upon impact. If we're trying to get funding from public programming or exhibitions, we need to show that x number of people came through and engaged in a particular way. Measuring impact becomes trickier with some of the programming and presentations that have more of an ephemeral or temporal aspect to them. That's something that's nebulous in a way, but it is important for institutions, nonprofits, and others to be able to measure that.

Audience What's the difference between art and branding? Both can be visual. To me, it feels like branding is something where you have a specific goal, and you want to be able to measure it in some quantitative way. With art, maybe that's not necessarily the goal. As an artist, you wouldn't want someone to walk away from your piece thinking, Oh, this means I need to vote for this person because they are good and the other person is bad. You're not hoping that people will come away with such a direct message.

Sometimes I worry that those simple messages are the ones that get across more easily. And when we're talking about political campaigns, it can get you into this pessimistic state of mind because you think we can only talk about simplistic ideas. I like that you are talking about art going beyond that and not trying to combat simple ideas with other simple ideas. So where do you think the intersection between branding and art lies, and is that a correct dichotomy or distinction?

SD I think they're two totally different things. I mean, it's like apples and oranges. They're done for different reasons by different people. Not to say that artists don't use branding and branders don't use art. They do, definitely.

EG I agree with that in the sense that art is intended to open up questions. That's why this idea of measuring is a hard thing for an artist: maybe they'll go somewhere I didn't intend, and maybe that's better. Whereas branding is supposed to direct you to something—that's how advertising works. Do this, buy this, vote for this. In the context of labels and political brands—conservative, progressive—are artists progressive? Why are artists progressive? These are interesting questions.

I also want to challenge some of those brands as an artist and as somebody who believes that brands are constructed and that they don't really exist. It is getting increasingly hard to define what "conservative" means now or what "progressive" means now. A lot of those brands are used in politics to simplify and group us.

MS My wife, Megan, would say branding executives are artists who have sold their souls. And I guess that's the way I see it, too. ▲