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HISTORIC WEST COAST OPENING OF PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION WILL COMMEMORATE CAM'S FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Asian Roots/American Reality: Photographs by Corky Lee
November 16, 2008 – May 31, 2009

Media Preview Day: Wednesday, Nov. 12, 11 a.m. – 12 noon

(LOS ANGELES, Oct. 21, 2008) – For well over 35 years, New York-based photojournalist Corky Lee has played both witness and participant in chronicling the evolution and expansion of the Asian and Pacific Islander American (APIA) community through his photography. Signifying more than just a fleeting moment caught on camera, Lee's trademark images deftly capture the personal stories amidst a public sphere of social and political movements spanning from the 1970s to present day.

The Chinese American Museum (CAM) and El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument are proud to present ***Asian Roots/American Reality: Photographs by Corky Lee*** opening on Nov. 16 to May 31, 2009 and curated by community artist, Steven Wong and photography instructor, Joanne Kim. Occupying two galleries, the exhibit will feature 88

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black and white photographs depicting scenes of labor, protest, resistance, celebration and everyday community events that defined the socio-political and cultural landscape of APIA communities over the past three decades. The opening of this exhibit marks the first time Lee's work has been exhibited in Los Angeles and more significantly, in the entire West Coast. The debut of *Asian Roots/American Reality* will be Lee's first major career retrospective and will anchor the celebration of CAM's milestone Fifth Anniversary.

"Corky's passion for providing a voice to the untold stories, experiences and images of the APIA community resonates strongly with CAM's overall mission to preserve and document the Chinese American experience, especially in connection with other ethnic communities. For this we feel that *Asian Roots/American Reality* is a very significant exhibit to mark our own milestone 5th Anniversary," says Pauline Wong, CAM Executive Director.

Lee was a self-taught photographer who began taking photographs in the early 1970s. Fueled by his passion for community activism, Lee used his camera to gain ringside access to both news-making and commonplace situations, often times focusing on the compelling personal stories of invisible and excluded APIA communities. However, more than just visual records of a changing APIA community, Lee's images possess the unique ability to convey commonalities and shared experiences with its viewers. Whether he is photographing Connie Chung, Muhammad Ali, a Korean American hot dog vendor or a Japanese American war veteran, Lee's self-styled photographs have the ability to operate like windows into the Asian and Pacific Islander experience, gaining viewers entry into American realities that remain often unseen.

Lee's groundbreaking photographs have been exhibited on college campuses across the East Coast, including Harvard, Princeton, Columbia and Cornell and have been extensively printed in numerous ethnic publications, mainstream media like *The New York Times*, *The New York Post*, *Time Magazine* as well as seminal texts in Asian American Studies. Self-described as the "undisputed, unofficial Asian-American Photographer Laureate," it is no wonder why Lee's work has earned him the respect and reputation of being the most prolific photographer documenting the APIA experience today.

[High-resolution digital images of Corky Lee's photographs are available upon request]

MEDIA PREVIEW DAY

CAM is hosting a special *Media Preview Day* on **Wednesday, Nov. 12, 11 a.m. – noon** in anticipation of the *Asian Roots/American Reality* exhibit opening. Media will be treated to a private viewing of the exhibit before it opens to the public and will have access to Corky Lee as well as CAM representatives for interviews. All attending media will receive a complimentary exhibit catalogue (value \$5) as a keepsake. Light snacks and refreshments will be provided.

OPENING EVENTS

An invitation-only reception for CAM members, donors, exhibit participants and media will be held on **Saturday, Nov. 15, 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.** to jointly celebrate the new exhibit opening and CAM's Fifth Anniversary. Speeches from Corky Lee, CAM representatives, and a cake-cutting ceremony with guests toasting CAM will highlight the evening's program.

ABOUT THE CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM

The Chinese American Museum (CAM) is jointly developed and operated by the Friends of the Chinese American Museum (FCAM) and El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, a department of the City of Los Angeles. Located within the El Pueblo Plaza in downtown Los Angeles, CAM is housed in the last surviving structure of the City's original Chinatown. CAM's mission is to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of America's diverse heritage by researching, preserving, and sharing the history, rich cultural legacy, and continuing contributions of Chinese Americans.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Chinese American Museum is located at 425 North Los Angeles Street in El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, across from Union Station. Hours are 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday. Admissions are suggested donations of \$3 for adults and \$2 for seniors and students. Members are admitted free. For more information about the Museum, please visit www.camla.org.

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