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A PICTURE-PERFECT PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM, VENICE ARTS AND SAN GABRIEL HIGH SCHOOL OFFERS STUDENTS A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A New Youth-Based Photography Program Teaches Storytelling Through Visual Language

(LOS ANGELES, May 20, 2008) -- Picture This! is a newly launched, dynamic youth-based photography program developed by the Chinese American Museum (CAM) in collaboration with Venice Arts (VA) that connects twelve San Gabriel High School (SGHS) students with their community through the art of black and white photography. Inspired by CAM's upcoming photography exhibit of New York-based photo-journalist Corky Lee, Picture This! challenges youths to compose their own stories of their community through creative, visual interaction and photo-documentation. The 10-week program involving a diverse group of students from mixed grade levels and gender is currently underway and will culminate with a class exhibition to be unveiled and permanently featured at SGHS school library during a private reception on Wednesday, May 28 at 12 noon.

Funded by the Nissan Foundation, The California Council for the Humanities and the Friends of the Chinese American Museum, *Picture This!* is the first organized program of its kind for both CAM and SGHS. Coordinated by CAM's Educator, Jane Cheung and instructor, Joanne Kim from Venice Arts, a non-profit organization that brings talented artists together with low-income young people to nurture their creativity and talent, the students were selected based on their interest in exploring their neighborhood and learning about photography. The students meet on campus every Thursday after school to gain training on how to operate sophisticated camera equipment, discuss techniques on picture-taking, and engage in constructive ways to critique each other's work. Fieldtrips are taken into local areas of the San Gabriel Valley where the students are encouraged to use their sense of self-expression, cultural identity and awareness to photo-document stories of the community.

The importance of capturing what might be considered commonplace occurrences is critical for museums like CAM that focus on cultural history and identity. "Most of the images in CAM's photodatabase were taken not by professional photographers but by ordinary, everyday people living in the

community," notes Dr. Pauline Wong, Executive Director of CAM. "As a result, those photos created a visual dialogue for us to study and understand how community life was like back then. *Picture This!* exists to inspire today's youths to become active participants in helping to contribute to that dialogue with their own pictures and stories."

The program will conclude with a collection of 12 peer-selected photos to be permanently displayed at the school's library. Officials from the school and district, as well as friends and family of the student-photographers are expected to attend the special exhibit opening.

In November 2008, a selection of the students' work will be reprinted and featured at CAM in conjunction with a brand new photography exhibition highlighting the work of Corky Lee, whose iconic images have been widely printed in newspapers such as The New York Post and Asian American Studies books, magazines and journals. Titled, Asian Roots, American Reality: Photos by Corky Lee, this highly anticipated exhibit will explore Lee's trademark themes of socio-political experiences and struggles as well everyday community scenes of Asian America from the past 30 years of his career.

The Chinese American Museum 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 at 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. For more information, visit www.camla.org.

Venice Arts is an innovative arts center that brings talented artists together with low-income young people to nurture their creativity, imagination, and talent. Their programs focus on those whose access to the arts, as artists or audience, has been limited. For more information, visit www.venice-arts.org.

San Gabriel High School works to ensure that all students acquire the academic, vocational, thinking skills, and personal qualities essential to becoming responsible, contributing members of our multi-ethnic, democratic society. For more information, visit www.sqhsmatadors.org.