



***A Major Project to Establish a
Permanent Indian American Presence
at the Smithsonian Institution***

FACT SHEET

HomeSpun: Made in the USA is a major, new project dedicated to establishing an exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution to chronicle the history of immigrants from India and their descendants in America. Though Indian Americans number more than 2.5 million in the United States, the history, contributions, challenges and perspectives of this vibrant community have yet to be told at the Smithsonian. The accomplishments of individual Indian Americans in the fields of science, technology, politics, the arts, business and more are only the tip of the iceberg. Their historic struggles, the communities they have built in America and the challenges facing future generations are largely unknown to the general public. *HomeSpun* is the first project of its kind to tell the story of the peoples of India who have made their home in America for more than two centuries.

The “Nation’s Attic”

With 18 museums and nine research centers, the Smithsonian Institution (SI) is the largest museum and research complex in the world. On an annual basis, 24 million visitors come to the Smithsonian and another 97 million visit it on the web. The SI reaches another 30 million visitors a year through traveling exhibits. Since 1826 SI has served as the “nation’s attic” by preserving the artifacts chronicling the history of this country and by serving as a pre-eminent educational institution in its pursuit of “the increase and diffusion of knowledge” as mandated by its founder James Smithson.

In 1997, SI established an office for Asian Pacific American Programs to reflect the experiences and history of more than 13 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders living in the U.S. Under the auspices of this program, SI has commissioned exhibits, public programs, and collections, detailing the experiences of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino and Vietnamese Americans. Now it is time to tell the Indian American story.

The Project

HomeSpun seeks to establish a permanent presence – through exhibits, research, collections, and public programs – within the Smithsonian complex. There, students and visitors to one of the nation’s busiest museums can not only view displays about Indian American history, but also learn about the role that Indian Americans have played in shaping American society. The development of teaching curricula, multi-media exhibits, trained docents and an endowment to sustain a permanent presence are all part of the larger vision of this project. *HomeSpun* will also be visible in key cities with large Indian American populations as the exhibit travels the country and public programs are held in various venues in cooperation with local groups.

The Next Steps

Because *HomeSpun* is first and foremost a community-based initiative, prominent Indian American families and leaders are asked to help lay the groundwork for the project. The immediate cost for hiring a scholar to develop the exhibit, traveling it around the country, establishing a dedicated website for *HomeSpun*, setting up public programs, and developing a curriculum guide to accompany the exhibit is \$2 million. The goal is to have the exhibit open by 2009 and travel the country for three years.

To ensure a permanent presence at the Smithsonian, an additional endowment of at least \$1 million is needed to generate the interest needed to continue SI projects focusing on Indian Americans in perpetuity.

The Ask

HomeSpun needs your financial support. It is time to tell the story of the Indian experience in America and, in so doing, honor the generations of immigrants who persevered to make this land their own.

Generous donations from individuals, families, foundations and corporate partners around the world are required to make *HomeSpun* a reality. Your early support will provide the seed money for this exhibit and, as such, all early donors will be prominently recognized within the exhibit and in accompanying materials. To raise seed funds, we are encouraging “angel” donors to make their pledges now and submit contributions towards the first \$200,000, to be included in the “Founder’s Circle” of donors who will be recognized prominently on the *HomeSpun* website and on the exhibit’s credit panel.

To make your contribution right now or for more information, please contact Francey Youngberg, Development Consultant to the Smithsonian APA Program at 202-487-8160 or francey.youngberg@verizon.net.



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is an Indian American project necessary?

Though immigrants from India came to America as early as the 18th Century, Indian Americans are still a relatively new and emerging community in this society. Past experiences with ignorance and bigotry have taught us that the best way to combat the notion of Indian Americans as “perpetual foreigners” is through education. The Smithsonian is first and foremost an institution for education; by establishing an exhibit that chronicles Indian American history, achievements, contributions and struggles, *HomeSpun* will lend a human face to this community and build bridges of understanding. The dedicated website, curriculum guide and public programs will complement the exhibit and expand the educational component of the project.

Why the Smithsonian? Couldn't this be done through a private gallery?

Yes, but an exhibit at the Smithsonian gives the imprimatur of the largest museum complex in the world. The Smithsonian is also largely funded by the government and serves as the historical repository of the nation. Private galleries are subject to the whims of their leadership and donors. The Smithsonian is essentially the “people’s museum.” Most importantly, the Smithsonian is accountable to Congress in its accounting, operations and management making its activities transparent to the American public.

How will the Project funds be used?

The initial \$2 million will be used to develop an exhibit which will debut at the Smithsonian and travel the country for three years, a dedicated website, a curriculum guide for middle school students, and public programs in key cities across the country.

Who comes up with the exhibit? What will it look like?

If an initial \$200,000 is raised for the project, the Smithsonian APA Program will hire a scholar to work with the APA Program Director and the *HomeSpun* Working Group (volunteers from the community) to conceptualize the exhibit, collect materials, and design the space.

When will the exhibit open?

The pace at which the funds are raised, the availability of exhibit materials for collection or loan, and the scheduling of available galleries at the Smithsonian will determine the opening of the exhibit. The initial goal is for the exhibit to open in 2009.

What cities will the touring exhibit go to?

In the past, the Smithsonian Office of Asian Pacific American Program has traveled its exhibits to 12 – 15 venues around the country for three years. A similar arrangement is expected for *HomeSpun* – but the tour can be extended as needed.

Isn't the Smithsonian funded by tax dollars? Why do they need my contribution?

The Smithsonian receives almost two-thirds of its funding from the U.S. Congress and the rest from private sources. The Smithsonian APA Program only receives modest funding from the Smithsonian for administrative support. Since its inception, it has raised ALL its own funds for exhibits, public programs, collections, websites, and other project-related expenses.

Is my contribution tax deductible?

Yes, the Smithsonian is a 501 (c) (3) organization so all donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Who can donate to *HomeSpun*?

We welcome donations from individuals, nonprofits, corporations and foundations worldwide. Contributions to *HomeSpun* are not limited to American citizens.

This is a great idea! How can I be a part of this effort?

Give money, volunteer to join the *HomeSpun* Working Group, tell your friends, and reach out to your community networks. Word of mouth campaigns are the best vehicle for grassroots efforts like this one.