



Contact:

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**WHAT:** The Tenement Museum's 2019 Gala

**WHEN:** Thursday May 23, 2019. Cocktail reception from 6:00pm to 7:15, Dinner & Program held between 7:15-9pm.

**WHERE:** Mandarin Oriental Hotel Ballroom, 80 Columbus Circle, NYC

## MEDIA ADVISORY

### TENEMENT MUSEUM GALA TO EXPLORE EVER-CHANGING CONCEPT OF AMERICAN IDENTITY

The Tenement Museum's 2019 Gala will explore the multifaceted and complex notion of American identity through a night celebrating how the concept has evolved, in leaps and bounds (as well as glacially slow shifts) over the course of our nation's history.

The 2019 Gala will highlight the Museum's accomplishments in its first year of an ambitious new 5-year plan to reshape the narrative around immigration in this country from one of fear to one of respect and admiration, by dramatically expanding the reach and impact of Museum programming.

Since then, the Museum has embarked on several new initiatives to accomplish this goal, including the launch of its inaugural podcast series, 'How To Be American', from which the Gala's theme takes inspiration.

Each of the 6-episodes of 'How To Be American' explored a particular facet of American identity, from food to ethnicity to the actual process of immigrating and acquiring citizenship, and the Tenement Museum's 2019 Gala program will follow suit with a program that takes cues from episodes of the podcast. NPR's Nina Totenberg will host the program, which will honor Henry Louis Gates Jr, host of PBS' 'Finding Your Roots'.

Vendors from the Lower East Side will provide food and cocktails to guests in attendance, which will highlight immigrant culinary traditions. The program will also feature special guests, including voices who were first heard on 'How To Be American'.

**Remarks by:**

- Cora Cervantes, *journalist & 'How To Be American' contributor*  
Cora was born in Mexico, but moved to the United States when she was just seven years old. She grew up in East LA before moving to New York City to attend Columbia University. In March, Cora shared her family's immigration story for the first episode of 'How To Be American', about the American immigration system and all its pitfalls.

- Kevin Jennings, *President Tenement Museum*

Kevin Jennings is President of the Tenement Museum. He served as assistant deputy secretary of education from 2009 to 2011 under President Obama and has been the executive director of the Arcus Foundation. Jennings founded the non-profit organization Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network and holds degrees from Harvard University, Columbia University's Teachers College, and the Stern School of Business at New York University.

#### **Honorees:**

- Henry Louis Gates Jr. *University Professor, Filmmaker, Public Intellectual*  
Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic, and institution builder, Professor Gates has authored or co-authored twenty-four books and created twenty documentary films and *Finding Your Roots*, his groundbreaking genealogy series now in its fifth season on PBS.

- Vartan Gregorian, *President, Carnegie Corporation of New York*  
Vartan Gregorian is President of Carnegie Corporation of New York since 1997. The Corporation is a philanthropic institution founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1911. In 2009, President Barack Obama appointed him to serve on the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

- Stephen B. (Siegel, Founders Award recipient)\* *Chairman, Global Brokerage, CBRE*  
In his role at CBRE, Stephen Siegel advises major corporations and property owners on a broad range of real estate strategies. Renowned for his philanthropy, Mr. Siegel has been called by *The Wall Street Journal* "the most generous person in the industry."

*\*First awarded in 2018 to the Museum's Founder, Ruth Abram, the Founder's Award recognizes an individual whose personal contributions have been essential to the Museum's success)*

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#### **About the Tenement Museum**

At a time when immigration is at the center of our national conversation, the Tenement Museum is more relevant than ever. Since 1988, the Museum has forged emotional connections between visitors and immigrants past and present, through educator-led tours of its historic tenement buildings at 97 and 103 Orchard and the surrounding neighborhood, enhancing appreciation for the vital role immigrants play in shaping the American identity. The Museum has become one of New York City's preeminent cultural and educational institutions, welcoming more than 238,000 visitors, including 55,000 students, each year. The Museum now aims to use every medium at its disposal to dramatically increase the impact of its programming—reaching millions not thousands-- with its message of how immigrants built and continue to build America.

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