



June 20, 2011

The Honorable Eric Garcetti
President, Los Angeles City Council
Councilmember, District 13
City of Los Angeles
200 North Spring Street, Room 470
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mr. Garcetti,

We, the five signatories to this letter, were Trustees of the Southwest Museum prior to its merger with the Autry in 2003.

We had served on the Southwest Museum Board for many years. Other members of the Autry Board can claim two generations of Board service at the Southwest. We all remain Trustees of the Autry National Center to this day.

Why? Because we believe, under the Autry's stewardship, the future of the Southwest Museum is more secure than it's ever been.

The Southwest Museum is not about a building. The Southwest Museum is about one extraordinary collection of Native American art and artifacts – a collection most of which the world has never seen.

If, by the actions of a handful of neighborhood political activists, who have been agitating since long before the Merger, the Southwest Museum collection is forced to remain in Mt. Washington, as it was, then it will remain unseen. What a travesty.

We would like to set the record straight. It is us, not the "Southwest Coalition," who are in the position to speak with truth and authority about the future of the Southwest Museum. Prior to the merger with the Autry, the Board and staff of the museum recognized that the age of the building, the location, the inaccessibility, and the unique scope of the collection all were working against keeping the Southwest Museum site open to the public as a viable museum.

Certainly no one in the neighborhood came to our financial aid. No one in the neighborhood donated money in any significant way (it is ironic that the activists are holding a "fundraiser" this weekend to support their political aims, but they never held a fundraiser to help us keep the museum open!) or made any effort to help us to maintain a viable museum in Mt. Washington. Members of the Coalition were working against any plans we had for our future. As early as 1990, many years before the merger, members of the Coalition were already organized against any changes we might want to have made to rescue the crumbling and nearly bankrupt organization.

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Times have changed. The public's expectations of what constitutes a first rate museum have changed. That place we went to on school tours to see 19th century style exhibitions does not hold appeal to 21st century donors and funders. As a Board, we considered seriously what it would take to re-open the Southwest Museum site to the public as a fully, functioning museum, and made the sensible, business decision that, for the future of our museum, our investment needed to be made in a location with the most chance of success.

By merging with the Autry National Center, the Southwest Museum has a future. We have a professional staff to manage our museum in Griffith Park and care for the collection. We have the opportunity to conserve and exhibit the Collection to hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Because of the merger, we can move this priceless, irreplaceable Collection out of a building that jeopardizes its future into a state of the art building designed specifically to house the Collection and make it accessible to the Native American community, researchers and scholars.

We, the Trustees who stood by the Southwest Museum during its darkest days and who found an able and generous partner in the Autry and orchestrated the merger - are frustrated and tired of being maligned.

More importantly, we are frustrated with the Coalition's behavior - their intractable demands and their lies, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the Autry and the Southwest to succeed and thrive as an institution.

It is they, not the Autry, who are destroying the Southwest Museum. No matter what we do, this group will never be satisfied. They are local activists who have to have an enemy in order to have a reason to exist as an organization.

It's time to end this.

Sincerely,

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The Newhall Land and Farming Co.
CEO (retired)

Robert Raney
Covington Capital Management
Chief Investment Officer

Robert L. Weir
Metro Video Systems, Inc.
President and CEO

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The Honorable Ed Reyes
The Honorable Paul Krekorian
The Honorable Dennis P. Zine
The Honorable Tom LaBonge
The Honorable Paul Koretz
The Honorable Tony Cardenas
The Honorable Richard Alarcon
The Honorable Bernard Parks
The Honorable Jan Perry
The Honorable Herb Wesson
The Honorable Bill Rosendahl
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Autry National Center

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Mon, Jun 20, 2011 at 2:52 PM

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The attached letter is being sent to you on behalf of Daniel Finley, President and CEO of the Autry National Center.

Gloria Mejia

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