

A Conversation on the History and Commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

By Unknown

On June 14, 2004, historians William L. Lang and Carl Abbott joined Roberta Conner (Umatilla, Cayuse, Nez Perce), director of the Tasmástlikt Cultural Institute and vice president of the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council Board of Directors, for a conversation about the legacy of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the twenty-first century. Christopher Zinn, then director of the Oregon Council for the Humanities, led the discussion. When this conversation first took place, the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial was a little over a year into a three-year national commemoration that included major museum exhibits, re-enactments, a national traveling historical program funded by the U.S. Forest Service (check this), and several commemorative books.

Zinn: I would like to begin with a big question based on something that Bill writes in his introduction: "Commemorations are generally only as productive as they are intelligent and purposeful." What would make a commemoration productive, and what are some of the standards we would look for in an intelligent and purposeful commemoration of an event like the Lewis and Clark Expedition?

Abbott: To be intelligent and purposeful, a commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition needs to start people thinking about the layers behind the heroic story. Especially since the early 1990s, the heroic story has become embedded or re-embedded in the American consciousness, and we need to see what else was going on at the same time. These can be stories about how we understand a place, how we begin to learn the geography, and how we give meanings to place. There obviously are multiple meanings about different peoples who were already in the Oregon Country when Lewis and Clark made their trip. We now think more about multicultural Oregon and how the ethnic and racial mix has been changing with new immigration. We also need to remember that the Oregon Country was a racially and ethnically diverse environment two hundred years ago.

Lang: Commemorations look back, and when we look back we have to recognize that almost everything we understand about the Lewis and Clark Expedition is built on earlier representations. We can't just simply read the journals, for example, and not recognize that we have many ideas that we bring to that reading in the twenty-first century that are based on earlier discussions about, for example, what is heroic in the American past and whether or not that heroism is still something that ought to be highlighted. Maybe we want to criticize it, and maybe we want to focus on one element of this large story that is important to us. In some ways, a commemoration is dichotomous in that we stand in the present looking into the past. We have to recognize that these are two legitimate pieces of our view; and unless we look at both of them correctly, something will be out of focus.

Zinn: Carl used the phrase "embedded narrative." Is there a narrative that already exists—let's call it the heroic story? Is it natural that the heroic story emerged for framing the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, or does that story itself have a specific cultural and even imaginative location in contemporary culture? In other words, could we have begun the narrative with a different "master" narrative than the one we have?

Lang: It could be quite different, and I think it has much to do with what has happened in the last forty or fifty years and the American position in the world, among many other things. In a way, the narrative satisfies our own needs, and one of those needs is to have legitimate heroes. That is part of the reason why the heroic story has been so successful. We can imagine many different narratives that would be acceptable besides the heroic one. In some ways, however, we have taken the line of least resistance. The heroic narrative is convenient in its ability to either ignore or historicize really difficult questions about what has happened in the last two hundred years in the country as a whole and for ourselves here in the Columbia River Basin.

Abbott: I also think that it fits an American need for heroes, for remembering a Great Generation. After the cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, there is a desire to come back to grounded values. This is contested in "culture wars" and in how you teach American history, for example. I think it is no accident that *Undaunted Courage*, by Stephen Ambrose, which told the heroic story, was popular because of when it was published, in 1996. It might not have been as popular if it had

come out in 1967, when people's minds were on other things. And you can certainly think of other narratives. The expedition could have been a narrative about the growth of American science, for example, which has largely been noted by scholars.

Zinn: When we think about the popularity of the Ambrose book, are we really dealing with a popular imagination? You said there was a need for popular heroes. Was that need universal? Is it more important in some quarters than others, or are we really looking at the way in which we want to view these things? Is there a momentum or an inertia there, if you will, that we have to try to resist or overcome or complicate, or is this a much more concerted effort in some quarters to intervene in the culture wars?

Lang: There is one element that addresses this question and fits with what both Carl and I have been saying. The Lewis and Clark narrative itself underwent a very interesting change after World War II, when many parts of the story were pursued, some of them exotic, some of them antiquarian, and some of them contested. The Ambrose narrative or, even more, the more popular Ken Burns film (*Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery*) in 1997 essentially calved off those more exotic subtopics and focused on one relatively singular story about people accomplishing something through teamwork in a military fashion in an era and in a place hard to imagine for most twenty-first century Americans. In some ways, it's the ultimate action drama, with many episodes to highlight. It is full enough in itself to be its own narrative and there is no reason to worry about any of the pesky problems that might be raised by looking elsewhere.

Conner: I think the reason the popular mythology is so successful is that this is a singularly ethnocentric or egocentric American story. The reason it succeeds so well in the Northwest is because it is the beginning of American history in the region. Nothing precedes it, with the exception of thirty-one or thirty-two ships that reached the coast of what are now Oregon and Washington before 1805. Unfortunately, however, the story is not seen as a story of the land. People don't want to hear that story. They don't want to talk about that story. It's too laden with organic material, the geology of the landscape. It's much too complex to fathom. Instead, we talk about a time when America marched across the landscape and planted brands and flags and otherwise made known its presence far from its center of government.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition is fundamentally a political story, a story of the people in the expedition. It comes from the need to have not only heroes but also self-definition, the need for self-sufficiency to be a contemporary idea—such that Baby Boomers and Yuppies can use the story to fulfill personal needs. They get that story straight out of those thirty-three people. The young teenage mother who overcomes all odds to become a banker in New York. We're looking for a metamorphosis that we can apply to our own lives. People imagine that all of this is true when, in fact, most of the lives of the members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition were short, if not colorful and tragic.

Zinn: Bobbie, when you say "typically American stories," what kind of story do you picture?

Conner: It's the journey story, the story of American movement becoming part of a conquest. By virtue of the movement, something is overtaken or controlled or dominated and owned. That is what space travel is to us, which is the big leap people try to tie to the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, claiming that "no journey since, including space travel, has been as remarkable." Nonsense.

Zinn: I asked because I can imagine a number of rival versions of the typical American story. F. Scott Fitzgerald said, "There are no second acts in America"—that's one kind of American story. Or think of the City on the Hill story, which is all about failed promise and compromised endeavors. That story never seems to become part of the Lewis and Clark story. The heroic plot holds our imagination still, brushing aside other historical approaches.

Conner: People have a hard time imagining what was before Lewis and Clark. If they could imagine that, it wouldn't be so hard to consider more of the story, more of the landscape. They have a hard time imagining the world before my great-grandparents lived here or before their great-grandparents moved here in a covered wagon—what life was like in Ireland, what life was like in England, what life was like wherever those people came from. And then, what life was like in the largely poverty-stricken East before they moved out here. What life was like in Independence, Missouri, before it became the jumping-off place. People cannot seem to fathom anything more

than a couple of hundred years ago.

Lang: There's another part to what Bobbie is saying that is really interesting. When we read this adventure story, we don't read the story of William Clark or the story of Meriwether Lewis or the story of any of the people who were involved in the expedition, save to say that their part in that adventure is documented. We also don't talk much about the political sequence of events that made the expedition possible. The expedition has become a vignette ripped out of its historical context to become a universal, dramatic story of accomplishment. In some ways, a commemoration should try to place the Lewis and Clark Expedition into its proper perspective, and that's part of what Bobbie is referring to about looking at nothing that came before.

Conner: Or anything after. The epilogue.

Lang: The expedition is very much taken out of its context, where it is not only relatively safe in the best sense of that term politically but also easier to get hold of because it is not burdened.

Zinn: So, when we look at the narrative of the Lewis and Clark Expedition—which we all admit is truncated, limited, temporally shallow, culturally shallow—are we looking into the face of American popular imagination and encountering all of its limitations or are we looking at the image of the way in which the bicentennial has been handled by the planners and the people who have been entrusted with framing it for the public? What limitations are we seeing? Is there a problem in the popular American imagination? Bobbie, you seem to be suggesting that there is resistance among Americans to engage in complex and deep historical thinking, which is made particularly dramatic in this instance.

Conner: I think that especially since the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, we don't pause to think a little harder. Nothing is more abhorrent to me than to hear someone describe 9/11 by saying "never has such tragedy been struck against a people on this landscape." Nonsense. What happened to millions of American Indians before we were called American Indians? Nothing could be more deplorable than to have such a narrowness of vision. As a consequence, I don't know that the planners of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial—as if there were a wholesale lot of planners—achieved a lot of objectives, most of which were economic and related to tourism.

Some new scholarly efforts are worthy. I certainly think that, especially because of William Clark's career after the expedition, the conversation in the Northwest should tie the expedition to the treaty-making process that occurred in the forty-nine years and seven months that followed the expedition's arrival in Oregon. From my perspective, it's not so much an unwillingness or a resistance to going there, but people are simply not being asked to think that way, to think that deeply, or to think that hard. The question has not been posited frequently enough for people to actually begin to dig at it.

Zinn: This is the hopeful view—that if the public were given better and more resources we would all rise to the occasion.

Abbott: I've been trying to think what I knew about Lewis and Clark when I was growing up in Dayton, Ohio. I was an avid reader of the Landmark Books history series for kids, and I know I must have read a Lewis and Clark book. I also read a Daniel Boone book and a Father Marquette book and a Davy Crockett book, so Lewis and Clark weren't any different from a whole bunch of other Europeans poking around in different parts of the continent. The big American history story that people in the Middle West thought about was, and probably still is, the Civil War, which you can't understand in simple terms. There is complexity on the surface as well as beneath it. It's a hard story to figure out who was right, who was wrong, and how it was possible to go so wrong. Lewis and Clark is a lot easier, because we can detach the expedition from the political context of conquest.

Zinn: Guys in the woods.

Abbott: Yeah. Guys in the woods.

Conner: The tragedy for me is that there's much to be learned from the Lewis and Clark story, but can we actually learn anything while we're worrying about benches and Port-a-potties and picnic

tables and off-ramps and trains to locations where there's an interpretive center? I have just as many concerns about economic opportunity for eastern Oregon as anyone does along the Lewis and Clark Trail, but will we as a nation, as a people, learn anything? From my perspective, the idea that schoolchildren have learned the story without Lewis and Clark even eating a dog is beyond me. How do you miss that?

Abbott: That's an interesting connection to the Lewis and Clark Exposition in 1905, because a group of Filipinos was imported as show-and-tell and they were purported to be dog-eaters. The *Oregonian* ran the story: "Come look at these dog-eaters and lock up your pets; Filipinos are in town."

Conner: Savages.

Abbott: Savages, exactly. "They're so weird." That was the way Portlanders in 1905 distanced themselves from the rest of the world.

Conner: The impolite is often completely missed or glossed over or omitted. The captains' sexual liaisons with Native women, the consumption of dog, all of the popular medicine at the time—bleeding, for example—you don't learn about that in fourth grade or eighth grade and usually not in college.

Lang: One thing that could replace the narrative that we're talking about right now—one with a dominant adventure and accomplishment theme—is the term "discovery," which most often is not focused on as a process or a historical set of events. In 1814, when Nicholas Biddle published the first official version of the Lewis and Clark journals, he purposely made the Lewis and Clark Expedition an adventure narrative. The discovery portion was stripped away to make sure the story had some currency, that people would actually read it. The expedition fell out of American history books in the nineteenth century and didn't appear again until the turn of the twentieth century, so we really haven't had a continuous coming back to the story. The discovery portion of the story would include science, of course, but also cartography and all manner of other things. This is another narrative that we could pursue, and I would argue that the discovery story is at least as productive for schoolchildren as the heroic story that connects Lewis and Clark with Davy Crockett and other American heroes.

The discovery narrative is extremely complex, and it immediately raises the question of ownership—ownership of information, discovery of what and who were here. This came up in 1992 with the Columbus commemoration, and it raised an enormous amount of controversy. There is something to be said for the Lewis and Clark bicentennial learning from that and saying, "We're not going there." That certainly had an influence on Ken Burns and Stephen Ambrose, who purposely stayed away from that story.

Conner: There's a lot that has been created to make fertile ground for a dialogue that hasn't happened. At the National Council and the Circle of Tribal Advisors level of planning for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, we still point out that we do not call this a "celebration"; it's a "commemoration." Still, the minute we're finished with an interview with someone, the headline reads "celebration." We have not even scratched the surface of trying to get to the psyche of what is offensive about "discovery," the doctrine of discovery and American Indians, the use of exploration and discovery to reveal Indians to the landscape—as if we had been waiting for that to happen.

Few people look at what happened immediately following the expedition, with David Thompson and Nathaniel Wyeth and John Jacob Astor. We were "discovered" many times. The six men who could write about the Lewis and Clark Expedition make it notable, and they do marvelous cartography and ethnobotany as well as all kinds of other work. But underneath all of that seems to be the idea that the landscape was still here to manipulate and that the people were here to expose themselves to the opportunity of manipulation by Thomas Jefferson's directives. If you look at the directives, whether you like the words he uses or not, it's clear that the Lewis and Clark Expedition was a reconnaissance mission. To pretend that it was not is foolhardy and naïve. That we would negate, in the retelling of the story, France and Britain and Spain and all of the international interests in the Pacific Northwest is even more important if you look at the context of the story. That a young country is trying to prove its might and muster up the money to make a claim of this magnitude is important because of the context of the story. The youth of the United States is still something that

makes us very fallible.

Zinn: There were questions about the direction of the young republic, and those debates were reflected on the frontier, too. There were quarrels about who should benefit from the republic and whether it should continue to be democratic in the way that it had been. Some of those quarrels are played out in the big power game that Jefferson and his company were playing.

Conner: Fifty years after the expedition arrived here, the Cayuse proposed at our treaty council to wipe out all of the people in the Northwest who were not Indian and take the land back. Now, is that nine thousand people? Ten thousand people? Including the Puget Sound area? Compared to now, it's not a large number of people who were here fifty years after the Lewis and Clark Expedition. What came with them was problematic, including the pandemic that killed so many thousands of people. The population explosion that occurred after the Lewis and Clark Exposition in 1905, when Portland's metropolitan area grew by two-thirds, is remarkable. If there was an opportunity to squelch something celebratory that was going to change the landscape, 1855 would have been the time to do it.

Zinn: One of the things I hear in each of your comments is a concern about the direction of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial observation. When we look at the 1905 centennial, do you see other interpretive possibilities, other ways of understanding the event that were missed? Was there more openness in 1905 to different interpretations, different understandings, of the Lewis and Clark Expedition than there are now?

Abbott: I think there was less openness. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were not very prominent and important at the exposition. They were an excuse, not a reason for the fair. St Louis had the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and so Portland had to have something, too. Depictions of Lewis and Clark are on the seal—the logo for the fair—but they are not otherwise very prominent. The message of the exposition was resource development. It was all about fish and timber and farm products and how rich the region was and the possibility for markets. It was as if the Port of Portland were doing the whole thing. It is not that this sort of economic development promotion is wrong, but it was a very narrow conception of what the future needed, so there seemed to be little historical awareness. The 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition was all about how Oregon could take the next steps forward to prosperity.

The Portland fair was not reminiscence; it was boosterism. People at that time were already looking for economic growth, and so they wanted to have a simple story of settlement. The early twentieth century was perhaps the whitest time in the history of the world. Apart from the Italian-Ethiopian war a couple of decades later, white European empires were at their height. People of color were on the retreat in South Africa. The indigenous economy of India had been destroyed so it could be tied into the British economy.

Portland, in 1905, was a very white city in a very white state in a very white world. At the same time, however, the Japanese were kicking Russian butt in the Russo-Japanese war, much to the surprise of Europeans, who thought Asian people shouldn't be able to defeat a European country. Obviously, over the next hundred years the balance of power would change in some remarkable ways.

Lang: One of the underlying aspects of boosterism versus the backward glance, which was minimized to some extent, was the forward look that was so dominant in 1905. In many ways, it was the United States' ambition to become an imperial power, and the nation began to recognize for the first time, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and especially at the turn of the century, that the United States had the ability to become a major player in the world in a way that it had not yet prepared its people for. That ambition about twenty years later, when the Columbia River expedition was sent out by rail from St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1926 to put monuments at all of the Lewis and Clark locations along the rail line—including the Astor Column, which was erected in Astoria as a symbol of the end of the Lewis and Clark Trail. As you look at the history represented on the Astor Column and the whole business about marching out and erecting monuments for David Thompson and the meeting of Lewis and Clark and mid-Columbia River Indians at Wishram, you see that the monument is not about ambition but about accomplishment.

By the 1920s, the United States felt as though it was capable of doing almost anything. After World War I, we were part of the victory; in fact, we claimed it was our victory. We actually passed laws to end war in the world, believing that we could really do that in Congress, which seems incredibly naïve today. So, in some ways, the Lewis and Clark episode was used in 1905 for ambition, and it was used in 1926 as confirmation. Yet, none of this is really about Lewis and Clark. The Lewis and Clark Expedition becomes clothing, it becomes opportunity, it becomes mural.

Conner: Very much in the same way the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial commemoration was window dressing. You go through Montana and Washington and Oregon and Idaho and all the way into the Ohio Valley, and there are statues and parks and all sorts of infrastructure that commemorate the Lewis and Clark Expedition. They particularly commemorate the group's passage through a place. If this were not now the United States, we wouldn't put them there. If this had become a corner of the country that was Spain, they wouldn't be there.

Zinn: Let's talk a little bit about the other way of seeing the bicentennial. What if you were the commissioners of the bicentennial celebration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition? What are some of the forms the story might or should take, and what are some of the ways that you would recommend that we commemorate this as a region? While you think about that, let me just suggest a couple of things. First, maybe the best thing would be that we not have a bicentennial and that we instead lumber along in this confused present with a pluralistic, opportunistic, episodic history of our region that isn't circulating around Lewis and Clark. In other words, we have a lot of history to talk about in the Northwest, and maybe a commemoration isn't the best place to put our resources. Second, should we strip off the local-coloristic aspects of Lewis and Clark and talk about nation-states and peripheral territories in the eighteenth century, so that we look at America in the Northwest in the same slide, as it were, that we look at Russia in central Asia, Japan in Manchuria, France in the south. We would see a global story about industrial national centers and their control of geographic peripheries rather than a story about this particular republic and its God-ordained destiny at the beginning of the eighteenth century. So, as commissioners, how would you draft or design a public observation of the Lewis and Clark Expedition?

Conner. My mother's fondest desire is that instead of just traveling back and forth along the trail and doing interpretive programs, someone would actually do an inventory. If we use the Lewis and Clark journals as baseline materials, flawed as they are in terms of linguistic observations and other things, it is still the best inventory baseline we have in the interior Northwest. So, if we do an inventory of how things are faring along that route, we could look at species, what's here and what's not here anymore. We could look at languages, the diversity or lack thereof. We could look at the health and well being of the people. We could look at the health and well being of the water and the air and the landscape and the ecosystems. Whether modern travelers have any particular appreciation for a given ecosystem is not as important as whether or not it still exists. If it does not exist, then should we be doing something about that? Again, using a commemoration to look to the future to see how good a job we've done taking care of this landscape.

Abbott: I would also look at what it means to be a Pacific as well as an Atlantic nation. At the heart of Jeffersonian ambition was the possibility of becoming a Pacific nation, and there was a kind of imperial vortex swirling around the Northwest Coast. Spain, Russia, Britain, and the United States all had claims on the region. There was trade with China, and Pacific Islanders were becoming part of the labor force. It turns out that the United States thrust itself into that vortex with great ambition and remarkable success. We got San Francisco as a result of the war with Mexico, just like we wanted to. A hundred years after Lewis and Clark, the thought was Pacific trade: trading with East Asia, trading with China, trading with Japan on the assumption that the Pacific was rapidly becoming American territory with the acquisition of Hawaii and the Philippines. The United States had begun to intervene in China at the time of the Boxer Rebellion. The nation was saying that the Pacific Ocean is our big lake and we're nudging aside the French and British and Germans as well as Japanese and Russian interests.

Now, a hundred years later, we are again trying to figure out who's going to be in charge. We worried about Japan in the 1980s, and then their economy crashed. Now we worry about China. Is it going to be the big dog? Who is going to control the Pacific? We have fought many more wars in the Pacific world in the last hundred years than we have in the Atlantic world. Every generation or

so we have a Pacific war, starting with the Philippine Insurrection, then World War II, the war in Korea, and the war in Vietnam. That's been where a lot of military attention has been focused. So what does it mean to be a particular chunk of the Northwest coast of North America in different periods in this kind of global, political, military, and economic swirl?

Lang: I take a little stranger view of this in some respects. Go back to the American story of Lewis and Clark, and ask what America was at the time the Expedition came west. What was the concept that was really undergirding the notion that you could have empire and liberty, which was a Jeffersonian idea that we put a lot of high philosophical rhetoric behind. It seems to me that it's heuristic and ambitious to a fault. It's thinking about the American experiment, the American idea, as something that is of universal application, of universal worth—that it is a template. There's an awful lot of that in all of the engagements between the Corps of Discovery, as it was called, and Native people. It raises questions. How inclusive can a republic of the sort that America put together in the break from the colonial existence and the creation of a nation be? What is it going to cost?

One of the ways of looking at Lewis and Clark and subsequent events is to see in their descriptions, even in the journals, the entire continent they surveyed and the territory that was the ambition of the reconnaissance. That's exactly what they saw—that it was all open, to be used to build something new. In some ways, North America is laid open in the Lewis and Clark experience as potentially susceptible to being cannibalized. You can cannibalize your own environment to create whatever you want. There's a heuristic element to that, an ambition that is somewhat shocking. Now, given all of the mistakes that the American republic has made and continues to make, if you look at what we do critically, one way to do a commemoration is to ask what is embedded in the Lewis and Clark experience that was misleading, that was overreaching, that is in some ways an open document for caveats, to simply say think about it again; think about the potential contingency—in other words, be less ambitious and less ethnocentric.

There's no question that the diversity of North America has changed. You can make an argument that the country is more diverse now, as anybody does who looks at the Los Angeles school system and the number of languages spoken there. But we can also say, yes, but there's an enormous amount of diversity—human diversity and ecological diversity—that has been lost. So in some ways, I think the stock-taking that Bobbie mentioned and the baseline is an excellent place to start, but you also have to take stock of our attitude toward all creation with respect to Lewis and Clark.

One final point is that when Thomas Jefferson approved of, sent, and then received and to some extent used Lewis and Clark's experience in his own political life, he had one overriding political fear for the nation—the accumulation of debt. We don't ever hear about this. We simply don't think about the content of the continent and, as Carl suggested, the global imagination of the Lewis and Clark Expedition event.

Zinn: Talking about the baseline narrative and the process of comparing what was with what we have and thinking about what this tells us about the direction we're headed, how do we do that in a public context? Is it possible to reshape or redirect or pluralize the way in which hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions of people commemorate the Lewis and Clark Expedition? Is this too difficult?

Conner: It's very hard to do, and the reason it's hard to do is because we are talking about politics. The words *control* or *domination* or *dominion* or *extraction* or *depletion* or *resource development* all come with some nationhood and sense of dominion over nature. It's not so much metaphysical as it is philosophical, that by virtue of this inherent right we have to produce agriculture, to harvest timber, to deplete resources. We don't talk about responsibility. I don't think we've found a way to open this conversation publicly, because we're still uncomfortable with history.

In the work I have done on the treaty sesquicentennial and the bicentennial, I frequently heard about a desire for reconciliation. I heard about it from folks in Oregon City about the Cayuse Five on the anniversary of their hanging for the suspected murder of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. But how can you have reconciliation without justice? How can you have reconciliation without bringing the full story to the light of day, including all of the transaction costs that were genocidal? How do you have reconciliation without bringing people to a conversation that says: This isn't about guilt. This is not about pain. This is about trying to set the record straight. And by making the record

complete, we have an opportunity to have that conversation. So I think it really has to be the ambition to make the record complete, and there are devotees who are willing to endure the process.

Zinn: How do we get the imperial story in all of its complexity and profundity into a public discussion?

Abbott: I'm baffled about how to do it, I must say. If it was easy, it would be done. You just have to start trying to get people—students and others—to imagine themselves standing in a different place. Rather than starting in Missouri and looking westward—upriver, as Lewis and Clark did—what would it be like to stand in Idaho looking north, south, east, and west? What would it be like to think of American history if you were a Hawaiian? What does the world look like if you are standing on one of those islands and looking around, watching people and ships arriving from different countries, followed by sugar farmers? Before you know it, there's a different flag!

Zinn: I think of that monument to the Spanish American War soldiers in the center of Portland. Why there is a monument to Portland's involvement in an overseas war so early in the city's history. How did we get there, and what were we doing? It's a simple question, but I think it's not easy to absorb the fact that we were already involved in overseas empire-building by the end of the nineteenth century.

Lang: I'm with Carl and Bobbie on the difficulty of getting any of these issues discussed and in some way included in a forum about Lewis and Clark. As we've said over and over, the adventure story is so powerful that you would be doing two things at once—knocking down a story and then trying to put another in its place. But on the issue of democracy and on how much we think our republic in its political form and in its human energy can do, it seems to me that we could ask the question from the standpoint of a town meeting. Just how much are we willing as a group of people to be engaged in sacrifice? This is not a very easy prospect, because we can't get out of our own environment. We can't think about how we would be if we were in the eighteenth century.

Some of these same issues are before us now. The difference is that these issues are now related to how we understand something like Native American sovereignty, how we understand treaty rights and fishing, how we understand a community in the broadest sense of that term and our democratic form of government and justice and the rest of the things that we're all struggling with. Those kinds of questions can be addressed by displacing ourselves back to the time of Lewis and Clark and asking these very difficult questions. To some extent, Lewis and Clark can offer us a buffered opportunity.

Conner: I do think that the journals give us, by virtue of the language they use, a sense of what the educated United States citizen at the time could conceive. The fact that the journals are littered with "squaw drudges" and "heathens" and "savages" and "thieves" gives us a window into the worldview of the people who made the journey. The idea that fascinates me about looking at Pacific Rim and control issues and war is that there are underlying assumptions with empire-building—that one set of people is right and one set of people is wrong. Whether it's philosophical or religious or about control of the water and land, the simplistic notion that is perhaps most troubling is the idea that there is only one set of right answer and one set of wrong answers or that these people can be right all of the time and these people wrong all of the time. That sense of superiority is in the journals; and if you use the journals to take a look at how we operate today, beyond being simply politically correct, I believe we've made a little bit of progress in people's ability or willingness to consider that another point of view might have merit. That's where we need to move forward.

A commemoration is an opportunity to talk about what else might have been happening in Indian Country in 1805-1806 besides the Expedition. That is something we're very much interested in telling people—what our population was, where we lived, how we lived, and the fact that much of that culture is still practiced today. This is important to us because we'd like the world to know that it's only been a little over 200 years since our tribes became contact tribes.

Lang: There is something to be said for an approach that looks at what is left out of the Lewis and Clark journals. What I'm talking about is not in the journals. I know what happened because I'm a historian. What Carl is talking about is not in the journals. He knows about it because he's a historian, and he knows what happens next. Bobbie knows about it because of the cultural history

of peoples whose history was not recorded. The trade encounter on the Columbia, for example, was like two swords coming together and touching. The point of contact was extremely small, and there were whole worlds that were not engaged.

Conner: Let's call it what Lewis and Clark missed in their hurry.

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