



The Coordinating Committee for Ellis Island, Inc.

The Coordinating Committee for Ellis Island, Inc., organized in 1980 to publicize the historical importance of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island and to raise funds for their renovation, obtained its 501(c)(3) status in September 1982. The Committee's founder, Eleanor Sreb, was at that time the Executive Assistant to the Director of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, a position she held until 1985. Many of the Committee's original members, as well as the United States Senators and Representatives who served as honorary members, were recruited by Mrs. Sreb. Through her friendship with St. John Terrell, both Alexander Scourby and Gene Kelly agreed to serve as the Committee's honorary chairpeople. Joe Ventura became chairperson.

The name "Coordinating Committee" was chosen for this Washington, D.C., group because the founders envisioned chapters in each state with the Washington group serving as the central contact entity. The Committee was established before the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Commission, Inc., was created in May 1982 under the direction of Lee Iacocca.

The Sculpture Project

The Committee's first project grew out of a meeting between Mrs. Sreb and Washington, D.C.-based artist Phillip Ratner, who was interested

in doing a series of sculptures on the theme of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. He asked Mrs. Sreb if she knew anyone who could and would do something with the statues. She contacted Ross Holland, Associate Director of Cultural Resources in the National Park Service, who in turn contacted David Moffitt, Superintendent of the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island National Monument. Both men expressed interest. She then met with Mr. Ratner and Mr. Holland, who agreed that if the sculptures could be funded privately they could be given as a gift to the National Park Service. Within a week after this meeting, Mrs. Sreb traveled to New York with Mr. Ratner for an on-site appraisal of Ellis Island. The Committee's first major project, "Becoming Americans: Images of Ellis Island," was born.

Funds were raised, and Mr. Ratner produced a series of bronze sculptures of immigrants: 13 were large (approximately five feet high) and 32 were smaller (table-top size). Eight of the large pieces were placed in the lobby of the Statue of Liberty and five were installed outside in an area called Founders' Park. The smaller pieces were designed for Ellis Island, to be installed there upon completion of the renovations. A \$5,000 gift was received from Mrs. Sreb's friend Dr. Myron A. Coler to publish a book about the collection, entitled *Becoming Americans: Images of Ellis Island*. Allan Kullen, experienced in producing works of this type and willing to underwrite some of the production costs, printed the book. This was the beginning of Mr. Kullen's involvement with the Committee.

On June 10, 1982, the Committee hosted a reception and exhibit in the Rotunda of the Russell Senate Office Building to call attention to the sculpture project and the Committee's operations, especially to its fund-raising efforts for the renovation of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Alfonse D'Amato agreed to serve as honorary sponsors of the exhibit.

On September 12, 1982, the dedication of "Becoming Americans: Images of Ellis Island" was held at the Statue of Liberty National Monument. Mrs. Sreb and Mr. Ratner's wife, Miriam, had coordinated the activities in Washington and had made numerous trips to New York to ensure that all details were in order. At Mrs. Sreb's request, St. John Terrell



Eleanor Sreb

recruited several theater associates with immigrant roots to present a very informative program.

The actors included Arlene Francis and her husband, Martin Gable; Celeste Holm and her husband, Wesley Addy; Alexander Scourby and his wife, Lori March; Gene Kelly's brother, Fred Kelly; and David Wayne. Mrs. Sreb also obtained the services of folk singer Laura Canaan to be on the program. Through an association with Mr. Ratner, the Committee was pleased to have Ave Butensky and Rhona Libov, of Ed Libov Associates, serve as co-chairpeople of the event. Their efforts, and those of many others, made the dedication ceremony a huge success. The event raised quite a bit of money in donations.

From August 15 to September 11, 1983, the sculptures were on exhibit in the Rotunda of the Cannon House Office Building. Also shown were photographs from The First Experience, Inc. This Connecticut-based company, led by Ira Yellen, specialized in the development, production and sale of educational products using Ellis Island as a theme (based on the public's recognition that the base of the Statue of Liberty was built from Connecticut granite). The First Experience, Inc., hoped to create

a forum through which artists and writers could interpret the immigrant experience through art, photographs, oral histories and audio-visual presentations. Mrs. Sreb and Mr. Yellen, who had met previously while discussing educational concepts and programs regarding Ellis Island with others, made arrangements for the exhibit and coordinated the physical set-up. Mr. Kullen, who met Mr. Yellen while working on this exhibit, provided brochures for both the sculpture and photograph exhibits as a charitable contribution.

A Traveling Exhibit

The Committee had hoped to feature the sculptures in a traveling exhibit, to increase national awareness of the historical significance of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, and to raise funds for their restoration. The idea moved forward when Allied Van Lines offered to donate a truck to do so. However, no funding was available to cover the costs associated with moving a national exhibit.

Mrs. Sreb made a trip to New York and, accompanied by Ave Butensky of Ed Libov Associates, visited Steve Briganti, of the Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island Centennial Commission, Inc. They asked Mr. Briganti to give the Committee its seal of approval and allow it to use the Commission's logo for the traveling exhibit. Mr. Briganti inquired as to the amount of money the Committee would be giving the Commission for the privilege of using the logo prior to the start of the traveling exhibit, and the amount of money the Committee would be giving the Commission after the exhibit had completed its traveling. The required sums were huge, and securing them, with guarantees, was out of the Committee's league; so it seemed impossible for the Committee to undertake this venture.

At this point it should be clearly understood that The Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island Centennial Commission, Inc., was very inflexible as to how its logo could be used, even to authorized nonprofit organizations. The Commission, which had been set up as an umbrella group to help smaller organizations, was operating essentially as an unrestricted monopoly, making it virtually impossible for groups such as the Committee to operate. Restrictions imposed by the Centennial Commission included the prohibition of solicitation of corporate funding and the sale of

unauthorized items. Therefore, the Coordinating Committee could not approach any large publishers or other corporations for help; Mrs. Sreb was limited to working only with the close contacts she had, so as not to create a legal conflict with the Commission.

On September 21, 1983, Mrs. Sreb obtained a written agreement from the National Park Service to have the sculptures on loan for a traveling exhibit. The term of the loan was for four years with the provision that it could (and would) be renewed. At a meeting on September 30, 1983, Committee member H. Randolph Barbee, president of Alexandria-based Victory Van Corporation, reported that Allied Van Lines was seriously interested in underwriting the entire cost of the traveling exhibit and had commissioned a public relations firm to draw up a budget for this project. The Committee gave Mr. Barbee authority to act on its behalf in negotiations with Allied. Allied Van Lines then took over the project by providing two trucks to carry exhibits of the sculptures all over the country for two years. Both exhibits were entitled "Move to Freedom."

On October 23, 1984, Allied Van Lines held an elaborate kick-off ceremony at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C.; the event was expertly done and well attended. On behalf of the Committee, which was determined to provide any support it could, Mrs. Sreb arranged for a small article on the exhibit to appear in the November/December 1983 issue of the National Parks and Conservation Association's magazine, *National Parks*. The Committee also placed a full-page advertisement on the back cover of the May/June 1984 issue of *National Parks* publicizing the traveling exhibit and offering a copy of *Becoming Americans: Images of Ellis Island* for a donation of \$5.00 or more. The Committee raised approximately \$2,400 for its operating fund with this promotion.

An Educational Focus

In order to generate more interest, the idea of creating educational materials on the historical significance of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island moved Mr. Kullen to investigate the public school system for existing information; he discovered a complete lack of such materials. Mr. Kullen and Mr. Ratner then developed a commercial project based on Mr.

Ratner's sculptures and on lithographs produced by Mr. Kullen's manufacturing entity, the Portfolio Project, Inc. This project would pay a royalty to the Committee for its use of some of the images from the National Park Service's sculpture collection. However, the failure of Allied's "Move to Freedom" exhibit to create national exposure for either the sculptures or the artist, and the scarcity of media coverage assigned to the sculptures at the monuments, limited the project's success.

During this same time period, The First Experience, Inc., also ran into difficulties with the Centennial Commission, Inc., and subsequently with the marketing efforts of its recently developed education programs. Mr. Kullen and Mr. Yellen entered into an agreement: Mr. Kullen would take over the ongoing development costs of Mr. Yellen's existing project and repay The First Experience, Inc., for its initial investment, thus gaining ownership of the rights to the entire educational component. Mr. Yellen would continue as a consultant in the development of these and additional educational materials. The new project would combine historical data about Ellis Island collected by The First Experience, Inc., with images of immigrants that came from the Sherman Photograph Collection. The project, called "Images of Ellis Island," contained classroom and teacher materials that were circulated to school districts across the country for evaluation and feedback.

After the Statue of Liberty's renovation was completed, the July 4, 1986, celebration gave the country a big birthday party. Unfortunately, it failed to provide a basis for an ongoing educational effort. Mr. Kullen and his wife, Diane, went to New York to meet with Prentice Hall in an effort to interest them in distributing the materials developed by the Committee and the Portfolio Project, Inc., to our nation's school systems. Prentice Hall declined because of the program's failure to show approval from the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Commission, Inc. An associate of Mr. Kullen received the same reply from McGraw Hill, Inc.

In 1986 Harry Rosenfeld, a friend of Mrs. Sreb, was so impressed with early proofs of the Committee's new publication, a full-color book entitled *The First Experience With Liberty: Ellis*

Island, that he donated \$2,500 toward its publication. The Committee advanced an additional \$1,500 for the book's completion. A letter of agreement dated October 29, 1986, signed by Mrs. Sreb and Mr. Kullen, stated that the \$4,000 would be used for the book's production and that the funds plus an additional \$2,000 would be returned to the Committee before any profits from the book's distribution could be taken by Mr. Kullen.

In a memorandum dated March 28, 1987, Mrs. Sreb reported to the board that Chairperson Joe Ventura had died. The Board agreed not to seek an outside replacement for him. Instead, Mrs. Sreb would serve as acting chairperson, a position she held until Raye Virginia Allen became acting chairperson in 1992. The board also agreed to donate \$9,000 for educational purposes to the National Park Foundation of the National Park Service. Had it not been for the educational potential of the "Images of Ellis Island" project, the Committee would have disbanded at this time because of restrictions placed on it by the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Commission, Inc.

At the April 15, 1987, Committee meeting, Mrs. Sreb reported the details of her recent meeting in New York with the New York Statue of Liberty Celebration Foundation (a regional grass-roots group); The First Experience, Inc.; Mr. Kullen and the Portfolio Project, Inc.; and the Urban Institute to find means for small groups such as the Committee to work together to accomplish a common goal. Unfortunately, nothing resulted from this meeting. Shortly thereafter the New York Statue of Liberty Celebration Foundation ceased to exist.

On December 5, 1987, Mrs. Sreb discussed with and confirmed to Committee board members Raye Virginia Allen, Edward B. Danson and Jerry Rogoway that the development of "Images of Ellis Island" had been successfully completed and that the Committee would receive a significant contribution from Mr. Kullen, based on a percentage of the sales, if the project became commercially successful. She also explained that, in developing the project for the Committee, she had been working with Mr. Kullen as an unpaid consultant and would continue to serve in that same capacity to further the goals of the Committee.

An Emphasis on Diversity

In May 1988, Mrs. Sreb met in Illinois with Dr. Gail C. Christopher, executive director of the Family Resource Coalition, a national membership organization representing community-based family education and support groups. Knowing Dr. Christopher's background in development and programmatic design, Mrs. Sreb hoped to interest her in working with the project. Dr. Christopher was impressed with the materials and with the positive responses from many of the sampled school districts regarding the materials' impact on at-risk student groups. Dr. Christopher's involvement initiated the expansion of the project to include a programmatic approach involving a broader multicultural emphasis.

This new emphasis incorporated the migration and immigration history of six ethnic and cultural groups who peopled the United States during its early history. These groups include Native Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans, European Americans, Mexican Americans and Puerto Rican Americans. Dr. Christopher also developed intensive teacher training and support, community outreach strategies and a conceptual framework by integrating components from another educational program she had developed, entitled "Appreciative Learning." With these changes, "Images of Ellis Island" became "Immigrants All...Americans All," a national multicultural education program.

The development, demonstration and piloting of this comprehensive programmatic initiative were funded by a number of nongovernmental sources.

Photographs of Ellis Island courtesy of Library of Congress, (top) LC-USZ62-29337, (bottom) LC-USZ62-11203; "Move to Freedom" exhibit van photograph courtesy of Allied Van Lines; photographs of Eleanor Sreb, the bronze sculpture pieces and the Americans All® program materials courtesy of the Coordinating Committee's archives.

A major portion of the funding came from foundation grants, the largest being: the Marcus and Bertha Coler Philanthropic Fund; The Hitachi Foundation; the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; The Quaker Oats Foundation and The Sears-Roebuck Foundation. The largest private sector contributor was the Portfolio Project, Inc., a company owned by Mr. Kullen.

Between 1989 and 1992, the program was implemented in five cities: San Diego; Chicago; Cerritos, California; Washington, D.C.; and Pittsburgh. Feedback from the early pilot sites prompted the developers to modify the name to "Americans All," reflecting the new inclusive philosophy of the program.

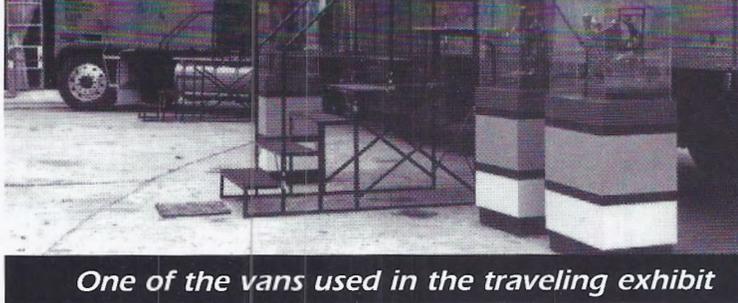
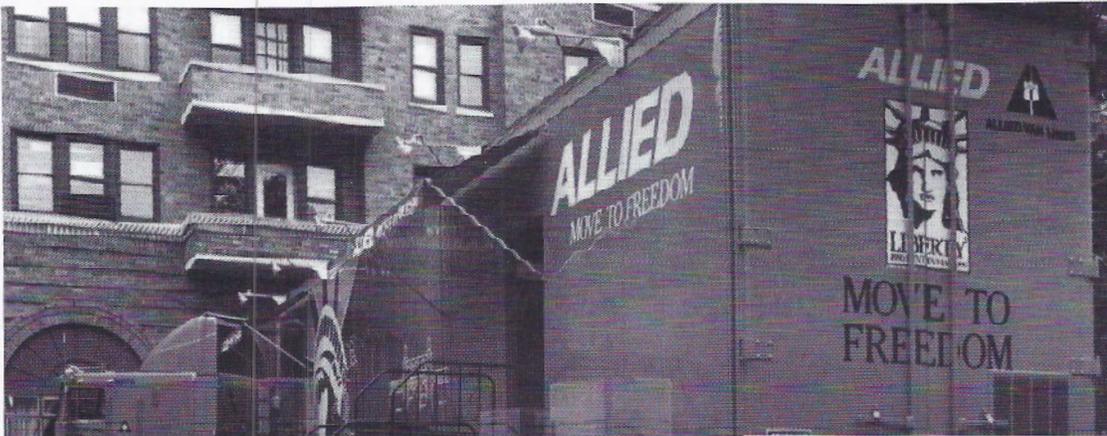
Future Plans

The Committee continues to pursue its goals of historic preservation and education by contributing human and financial resources to the development of the Americans All® program. A portion of the Committee's revenue is royalty income from sales of the program's training and printed components. Currently, Committee revenues are being used to familiarize educators with the content and value of the program.

Looking ahead, the Committee intends to work closely with other educational organizations in encouraging acceptance of, and participation with, the Americans All® program as a means of educating and sensitizing teachers and students to the culturally diverse experiences of our nation's people.

The Coordinating Committee for Ellis Island, Inc.

3003 Van Ness Street, Suite 727W, Washington, DC 20008 • (202) 244-2834



One of the vans used in the traveling exhibit

Some of the large bronze sculpture pieces created for installation at the Statue of Liberty



The Americans All® Program Materials