

# ALTERNATIVE LABELING PROJECT

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum  
ca. 2011

**UIC** COLLEGE OF  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE & THE ARTS

*Jane Addams*  
Hull-House Museum  
[www.hullhousemuseum.org](http://www.hullhousemuseum.org)

## WHAT IS A LABEL?

Labels define a person, place, or thing, providing explanation and clarity. But labels may also *confine* us and our understanding of the world.

Museums are filled with labels that typically offer a single lens through which to understand what you are seeing and experiencing.

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Can a common museum label—so often the omniscient voice that provides factual evidence that identifies artifacts in a museum’s collection—sensually engage us, inspire revolution and reform, or provide pleasure and comfort?

The Jane Addams Hull-House Museum asks these questions in its new series of Alternative Labels that presents diverse voices and encourages visitors to view history from a fresh perspective.

For our first alternative label, we invited Luis Rodriguez, one of the country’s leading Chicano writers, to compose a poem. *A Hunger Song in the Shadows* is inspired by several artifacts including the Halsted Street Historic Film found in *Why Settle?*, the Bootblacking Box found in *Invention of Childhood at Hull-House*, and Photographs of Immigrants in Chicago found in *Mapping the Neighborhood*.

Over the next months, look throughout the museum for alternative labels by the International Contemporary Ensemble, a vibrant, cutting-edge new music ensemble, and Terri Kapsalis, a writer and performer.

For the final part in the series, **YOU** will be invited to exercise your voice and participate by creating your own alternative label for an artifact in our collection.

## CAN A MUSEUM LABEL BE...

{ a poem,  
an essay,  
or piece of music?

## ABOUT LUIS J. RODRIGUEZ

Luis J. Rodriguez is one of the leading Chicano writers in the country, with 14 published books in poetry, memoir, fiction, nonfiction, and children’s literature. His poetry has won the Poetry Center Book Award, the PEN Josephine Miles Literary Award, and the Paterson Poetry Book Prize, among other accolades. *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*, his 1993 memoir of gang life, has sold more than 300,000 copies; it received the Carl Sandburg Literary Award and a Chicago Sun-Times Book Award, and was designated a New York Times Notable Book. His latest poetry collection, *My Nature Is Hunger: New & Selected Poems*, appeared in 2005 from Curbstone Press/Rattle Editions. Rodriguez helped found Chicago’s Guild Complex, Tia Chucha Press, and Rock A Mole Productions, which organizes arts festivals in Los Angeles. He is renowned for his work in gang intervention.