

RACE Project Moves to Cincinnati

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RACE... Are We So Different?

Exhibit helps Cincinnati talk about race during watershed moment in history

Jan 22, 2009 – *RACE Are We So Different?*, American Anthropological Association's (AAA) traveling exhibit exploring the science, history, and everyday lived experience of race in America, landed in Cincinnati this past Saturday with an enormously positive response from the community. The opening dates corresponded with events during Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend and the inauguration of Barack Obama as the first African-American president.

Exploring the origins and manifestations of race and racism in everyday life in America, the exhibit will have Cincinnati talking about race, a topic not always easy to discuss.

"Cincinnati Museum Center (CMC) began planning to bring the exhibit here about two years ago, well before anyone knew that Americans would elect an African-American president," says Tonya Mathews, vice president of museums. "The fact that the exhibit opened just before Obama's inauguration was just karma," she says.

There were several events held during Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend leading up to a free community viewing of Barack Obama's inauguration.

"Having the RACE exhibit at this time has been a wonderful coincidence for CMC. Weekend attendance was strong through Sunday and many used Monday's Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday as an opportunity to attend the RACE exhibit." explained Chad Mertz, director of public relations at CMC.

"On Tuesday, the nation witnessed a historic event as we inaugurated our first African-American president. CMC allowed local residents the opportunity to witness the historic event in one of the region's most historic spaces, Union Terminal, by hosting a free community viewing. With approximately 2,000 people attending, the event was a huge success and provided us another chance to promote the RACE exhibit's appropriate message during this time of celebration." noted Mertz

Exploring the science, history, and everyday lived experience of race, the award-winning exhibition, developed by AAA along with the Science Museum of Minnesota, will be at the CMC from Jan 17 through April 26, 2009.

The exhibit is part of the RACE Project, AAA's far-reaching public education program which explores how race differs from human biological make up, when and why the idea of race was invented, and how race and racism affect everyday life. The project also includes an interactive website (www.understandingRACE.org) and an educational DVD-CD set developed to promote informed conversations based on a shared understanding of race in the US.

“Our intention through this project has been to challenge the many popularly held assumptions and beliefs about race that have been the source of divisions among us. Our hope has been to build a bridge based on a true understanding of what ‘race’ is and what it isn’t,” AAA Executive Director Bill Davis stated.

In a recent interview, Matthews explained the key role that the exhibit will play in moving conversations about race out in the open from behind closed doors. CMC is partnering with sister museums and civic organizations to present a number of open dialogues. In conjunction with the exhibit the Cincinnati Enquirer has invited readers to participate in a special forum on racial identity.

She also expressed her hope that RACE be used as a tool for parents and teachers to help answer children's natural questions about human diversity. The exhibit's content aligns with the Tri-State educational standards and benchmarks in social studies for elementary and high school students.

To date, over 1.5 million people have visited the RACE exhibit and website. Beginning in early 2010, a replica and a condensed version of the exhibit will tour along with the original exhibit. All three exhibits will tour through 2014.

To learn more about the RACE Project please visit our website (www.understandingRACE.org) or contact Joseph Jones at jjones@aaanet.org or (703) 528-1902, ext. 1171.

For more information about the *RACE Are We So Different?* exhibit at Cincinnati Museum Center contact Chad Mertz at cmertz@cincymuseum.org or (513) 373-6592.

For press kits including an exhibit description please contact Lauren Schwartz at lschwartz@aaanet.org or (703) 528-1902, ext. 1164.

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Founded in 1902, the American Anthropological Association is the world's largest professional organization of anthropologists and others interested in anthropology, with an average annual membership of more than 10,000. The Arlington, Va.-based association represents all specialties within anthropology — cultural anthropology, biological (or physical) anthropology, archaeology, linguistics and applied anthropology.

Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal is a nationally recognized institution dedicated to sparking community dialogue, insight and inspiration. As one of the top cultural attractions in the Midwest, Cincinnati Museum Center has served as an educational, research and entertainment resource to millions of visitors from around the world.

Organizations within Museum Center include the Cincinnati History Museum, Duke Energy Children's Museum, the Museum of Natural History & Science, the Robert D. Lindner Family OMNIMAX® Theater, and the Cincinnati Historical Society Library. These organizations combine to serve more than one million visitors annually, reaching out to nearly 400,000 young people through hands-on exhibits and programs