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**Missouri History Museum in Forest Park Welcomes
Special Exhibition *RACE: Are We So Different?***

**Traveling Exhibition Received the American Association of
Museum's 2008 Award of Excellence in Exhibition**

ST. LOUIS, December 14, 2009— Race is a powerful concept that shapes how one sees others and is seen by others, yet few Americans understand what race is and what race is not. Historically, race has been a source of community strength and personal identity, as well as the basis for discrimination and oppression ranging from the horrific to the subtle. Today, scientific understanding of human variation is questioning “racial” differences—and even challenging the very concept of race. To clarify the issue of race, the American Anthropological Association (AAA), with its sections, members and other science and humanities organizations, including the Science Museum of Minnesota, developed *RACE: Are We So Different?*, an interactive museum exhibition that allows visitors to learn the history of race, the role of science in that history and the insidious and obtrusive expressions of race and racism in institutions and daily lives.

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RACE: Are We So Different? is a project of the American Anthropological Association in collaboration with the Science Museum of Minnesota. Funding for the *RACE: Are We So Different?* exhibition is provided by the Ford Foundation and National Science Foundation. The national tour of *RACE: Are We So Different?* is sponsored by Best Buy Children's Foundation. Wells Fargo Advisors is the local sponsor.

RACE: Are We So Different? opens to the general public at noon on January 16, 2010, and runs through April 4, 2010.

Filled with multimedia components, hands-on activities and key artifacts, the 6,000-square-foot exhibition addresses the topic of race and racism from three different perspectives. The three sections are interwoven and tell a compelling story of science with deep and lasting social impact.

- **The Science of Human Variation:** Visitors will discover that human beings are more alike than any other living species, and no one gene or set of genes can support the idea of race.
- **The History of the Idea of Race:** Ideas about race have existed—and dramatically changed—throughout American history. Economic interests, popular culture, science, politics and power struggles have played roles in shaping our understanding of race.
- **The Contemporary Experience of Race and Racism in the United States:** Though the concept that race is biological is false, it is certainly real both socially and culturally. Visitors will explore personal experiences related to race in our schools, neighborhoods, healthcare system, sports and entertainment industries, and more.

The goal of the exhibition developers and designers was to create a meaningful and approachable museum experience that promotes discovery, discussion and reflection. Highlights include:

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- **Who’s Talking?**, an interactive that invites visitors to match voices they hear with people in photographs based on speech patterns and inflections. The results may surprise visitors.
- A beautiful and provocative **Face Morphing video** created by artist Teja Arboleda.
- **The Colors We Are**, an activity that allows visitors to scan their skin and watch their shade appear as a color “chip” on a computer screen mosaic next to chips from dozens of other visitors.
- An exploration of the **United States Census** that demonstrates how our conception of race is ever-changing and has morphed throughout American history according to social, economic and political forces.
- The **photography of Wing Young Huie** that captures—in ways large and small—the lives of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic communities across the country.
- A study of **high blood pressure** and the people who suffer from it that reveals the complexity of race, racism and medicine.
- Sections exploring **affirmative action, housing segregation, wealth disparities** and **school mascots** allows visitors to explore these contentious issues

To aid public dialogue, *RACE: Are We So Different?* features “Talking Circles,” which are inspired by the Native American tradition of peacekeeping circles. Led by an experienced local facilitator, the conversations that take place in the “Talking Circle” will help visitors reflect on their museum experiences learning about race, as well as how race affects their experiences in their lives and communities. Participants sit in a circle and pass around a “talking piece;” only the person holding the piece may speak. When s/he has finished sharing her/his thoughts, the individual passes it to the next participant. The “Talking Circle”

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process has proven to be a successful method of conflict resolution and respectful discussion, and will enhance the exhibition experience. During the run of the exhibition, the Missouri History Museum will offer one-hour “Talking Circles” on a first-come, first-served basis Tuesdays at 6 p.m. and Saturdays at 2:30 p.m. (Participation is included in exhibition ticket price.) Participation is limited to the first 20 exhibition visitors who register the day of the “Talking Circle.” Registration forms will be available at the entrance to the exhibition.

Since its debut in January 2007 at the Science Museum of Minnesota, *RACE: Are We So Different?* has garnered a number of national awards, including the American Association of Museums (AAM) 2008 Award of Excellence in Exhibition. In April 2007, the *RACE* website (www.understandingRACE.org) received the Interactive Media 2007 Award for Outstanding Achievement in Education.

“We are excited about hosting *RACE: Are We So Different?* and eager for the opportunity to engage the St. Louis regional community in the frank but compassionate conversation the exhibition will surely engender,” says Dr. Robert R. Archibald, president of the Missouri History Museum. “Here, in the comfortable and welcoming civic space that the History Museum has become, we will pave new roads to understanding of our past and our present, construct new agendas for coordinated community action, and most importantly develop a rich appreciation and respect for whatever differences we discern in each other.”

Public Programs:

In preparation for *RACE: Are We So Different?*, the Missouri History Museum, in conjunction with the **St. Louis Beacon**, an online newspaper, and **KETC/Channel 9**, the local PBS affiliate, have presented monthly programs addressing issues related to race in

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the metropolitan St. Louis region and nation-wide, including education, employment, housing, health, personal relationships and politics. Debuting July 2009, the programs have included documentaries, discussion groups, workshops, storytelling and spoken word performance. The monthly programs will be offered throughout the run of the exhibition and will continue after the exhibition closes in St. Louis. Visit www.mohistory.org for a complete list of *RACE: Are We So Different?* programming.

Corporate Diversity Programs:

During the run of the *RACE: Are We So Different?*, the Missouri History Museum will offer three corporate diversity trainings: “Talking Circles;” “Racing to Understand Race,” a seven-hour anti-oppression diversity training; and “Corporate/Workplace Half-Day Training,” a three-hour program. For additional information, contact the Missouri History Museum at 314-361-8059.

Admission:

Admission to *RACE: Are We So Different?* is \$8 for adults; \$6 for seniors/students/groups; \$4 for children (ages 6-12). Children five years old and younger are free. Missouri History Museum members receive free and reduced exhibition tickets based upon membership level. Call 314-454-3101 for membership information.

Residents of the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County receive free admission to *RACE: Are We So Different?* on Tuesdays. As a member of the Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District (ZMD), the Missouri History Museum receives property tax support from the citizens of the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County. Financial support from these taxes assists the Missouri History Museum with exhibition development and design, conservation of artifacts and documents and educational

programming. Complimentary admission on Tuesdays is the Missouri History Museum's way to recognize those citizens whose taxes support the museum.

Hours and General Information:

The **Missouri History Museum** is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Monday; Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. For general museum information, call (314) 746-4599 or visit our interactive Web site at www.mohistory.org.

Location and Travel Information:

The **Missouri History Museum** is located at Lindell and DeBaliviere in Forest Park, near the Forest Park-DeBaliviere MetroLink station. Visit the following Web sites for up-to-date travel information: www.metrostlouis.org; www.getaroundstl.com; or www.thenewi64.org.

The Missouri History Museum

The **Missouri History Museum** has been active in the St. Louis community since 1866. Founding members established the organization "for the purpose of saving from oblivion the early history of the city and state." Today the museum operates the **Missouri History Museum in Forest Park** and the **Library and Research Center** at 225 South Skinker Boulevard near the Washington University campus.

For more information, visit www.mohistory.org or call 314/746-4599.

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