

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

801 East Durango Boulevard, San Antonio, TX 78205

Contact: **James M. Benavides**

E. james.benavides@utsa.edu

C. (210) 347-9786

O. (210) 458-2237

Contact: **Terry McDevitt**

E. mcdmedia@mac.com

C. (210) 232-5759

O. (210) 569-6926

RACE: ARE WE SO DIFFERENT?

*Explore the reality - and unreality – of RACE at
the Institute of Texan Cultures*

SAN ANTONIO – The Institute of Texan Cultures will confront the issue of race and racism in the United States when the “RACE: Are We So Different?” exhibit opens in the new traveling exhibits gallery on Jan. 23. The exhibit will remain at the ITC through May 16, 2010.

The Institute of Texan Cultures was founded in 1965 and opened for San Antonio’s HemisFair, April 6, 1968, two days after the assassination of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Racial tensions and institutionalized segregation were part of everyday life.

“The Institute of Texan Cultures was established to tell the stories of the many cultures that settled and established the state of Texas,” said Tim Gette, the institute’s executive director. “This type of museum, dedicated to diverse cultures and people, had never been conceived before. Through the RACE exhibit, we continue the conversation on race and racism, which are still felt throughout the United States.”

“Race is an important part of the American story,” says Robert Garfinkle, program director for special projects at the Science Museum of Minnesota and a guiding force in the creation of the *RACE* exhibit. “This exhibit gives visitors the opportunity to look at the way race touches our lives and the lives of the generations that came before us. They can explore the way they see themselves and others and see that all of our lives are affected by race and racism, both in overt and subtle ways.”

A project of the American Anthropological Association, in collaboration with the Science Museum of Minnesota, *RACE* will encourage museum visitors to explore the science, history, and everyday experience of race. The three sections are interwoven and tell a compelling story of science with deep and lasting social impact.

-MORE-

RACE

Add one of two

- **Science:** 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.
- **History:** Ideas about race have been around for hundreds of years and they have changed over time. This section demonstrates that throughout American history, economic interests, popular culture, science, politics and the struggle for power have played a role in shaping our understanding of race.
- **Everyday experience:** Though race may not be a real biological concept, it certainly is real, both socially and culturally. Visitors will explore the personal experiences of race in our schools, neighborhoods, health care systems, sports and entertainment industries, and more.

“*RACE* is a powerful exhibit experience,” said Garfinkle, “We hope its content will challenge our community to increase the quantity – and the quality – of their conversations about race and racism and the experiences they’ve had in their lives.”

Highlights of the *RACE* exhibit at the institute include “Who’s Talking?” which challenges visitors to match voices they hear with people in photos based on speech patterns and inflection; “The Colors We Are” which allows visitors to scan their skin and watch their shade appear in a mosaic with chips from dozens of other visitors; “An Exploration of the United States Census,” showing how perception of race has morphed throughout American history according to social, economic, and political forces; and “Living With Race Theater,” a first-person interpretation that lets visitors hear and respond to people talking about their experiences with race and racism.

RACE will include an optional Race Forum, a moderated round-table allowing guests to express their perceptions of the exhibit. Guests can sign-up at TexanCultures.com.

“Participants can expect an open, honest, non-confrontational chance to share their experiences and learn from others with different perspectives in an attempt to understand how race perceptions affect us all,” said moderator Matthew Anderson, an educational specialist at the institute. “I feel very strongly that this exhibit and the programs, such as the Race Forum, have the potential to make a positive change

-MORE-

RACE

Add two of two

in our community.”

Today, Texas is a unique frontier on race relations, as a “minority-majority state.” The exhibit will include a Texas Connections display that highlights important events in race relations in our state. Also, the RACE exhibit is an opportunity for the institute to draw on the expertise of its parent institution, The University of Texas at San Antonio. Professors from the sociology and anthropology departments will give free presentations on various racial topics that affect the San Antonio community, 6:30-8 p.m., Feb. 25, Apr. 8 and Apr. 22.

In a joint venture with the YWCA, the Institute of Texan Cultures will offer visitors the opportunity to ‘Take a Stand Against Racism’ by adding their signatures to a wall bearing the YWCA’s pledge to treat all people with dignity; to open their hearts and minds to new perspectives; and to embrace the richness of diversity.

The RACE exhibit is part of a larger public education project from American Anthropological Association and funded by the Ford Foundation and the National Science Foundation. In addition to the exhibit, the initiative includes a website at understandingrace.org, educational materials, and conferences designed to share research and information with the public.

RACE will run through May 16, 2010, at the Institute of Texan Cultures, then continue on a tour of museums and science centers across the country. The institute is located on the UTSA HemisFair Park Campus, 801 E. Durango Blvd., a short distance from the Alamo and the River Walk. Regular hours are 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday; noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$8 for adults (12-64); \$7 for seniors (65+); \$6 for children (3-11); free with membership, UTSA or Alamo Colleges identification. For additional information, call (210) 458-2300 or visit TexanCultures.com.

-30-

The Institute of Texan Cultures is an agency of the Vice President for Community Services at The University of Texas at San Antonio. Its mission is to engage lifelong learners in the understanding and celebration of Texas cultural heritage. Located on the UTSA HemisFair Park Campus in downtown San Antonio, the 182,000-square-foot complex features 65,000 square feet of interactive exhibits and displays that tell the stories of Texans. The institute develops quality, accessible resources for educators and lifelong learners on topics of cultural heritage and strives to develop a rich and vibrant culture in the arts and humanities that will expand the community’s awareness and appreciation of Texas through an engaging series of exhibits, programs, and special events. Resources for multiple audiences are available at the institute’s Web site, TexanCultures.com.