



Are We So Different?™

Media contacts:

Peggy Overbey,
703-528-1902,
ext. 3006
poverbey@aaanet.org

Susie Bodman
703-528-1902,
ext. 3039
sbodman@aaanet.org

WHAT: Media Event "How Race Has Changed and Hasn't Changed Since Martin Luther King" to coincide with the world premiere of **RACE: Are We So Different?™**, a public education project of the American Anthropological Association

WHEN: Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2007, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

WHERE: Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota

MORE INFO: Contact Peggy Overbey, project director, 703-528-1902, ext. 3006, poverbey@aaanet.org

ON THE WEB: Preview Web site for scholars <http://raceproject.aaanet.org>

As of Jan. 10, 2007
Public Web site
www.understandingrace.org

PRESS CREDENTIALS:
Susie Bodman, media relations associate, 703-528-1902, ext. 3039, sbodman@aaanet.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Race in America: What has and hasn't changed since Martin Luther King?

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) will host a media event Jan. 10 focused on race in the United States and what has and hasn't changed since Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech and the Civil Rights Era. The media event coincides with the world premiere of a provocative and pioneering public education program called **RACE: Are We So Different?™**. The program, developed by the AAA with funding from the Ford Foundation and National Science Foundation, will offer a fresh look at the history, science and lived experience of race and racism in the U.S.

RACE: Are We So Different?™ aims to help individuals of all ages better understand the origins and manifestation of race and racism in everyday life by investigating race and human variation through the framework of science and the humanities. The **RACE** public education program will include a 5,000-square-foot traveling museum exhibit, a public Web site, educational materials and public programming.

The exhibit will debut in January at the museum that produced it - the Science Museum of Minnesota. Exhibit features include interactive experiences for visitors to learn about the history of race, the role of science in that history, and the subtle and obtrusive expressions of race and racism in our institutions and daily lives.

Three main themes await visitors to the exhibit as well as the project's Web site and public programming events:

- ◆ The concept of race is a recent human invention imposed on existing patterns of human biological and cultural variation by powerful and privileged sectors of our society. How we define race has and continues to change over time.
 - ◆ Race is about culture, not biology. The idea of race groups people into categories using arbitrary biological and cultural characteristics. Humans share a common ancestry and are more alike than we think. Race is an inaccurate way to describe human variation.

◆ Race and racism are embedded in our institutions and every life. Race and racism are powerful ideas that shape how we see ourselves and others. Race and racism affect the places we live, the people we hang out with, date and marry, the things we buy, the sports we play, the schools we attend. Although racism is less overt today, subtle forms of discrimination continue to hurt people in many ways.

The media event will begin at 10 a.m. with a brief welcome and walkthrough of the **RACE** exhibit and introduction to the Web site and educational materials. A media briefing will follow at 11 a.m. Lunch at 12:00 p.m. (noon) will follow the briefing.

At the briefing, scientists, scholars and others will be on hand to discuss the recent history of the idea of race, the role of science in shaping the notion of race and perpetuating race science, the changing nature of race reflected in the U.S. Census, the disparities in health and education resulting from racism, and the ways in which race and racism continue to influence U.S. immigration and other policies. For example:

◆ Before 1990, the U.S. government used just five racial categories to describe all Americans - white, black/negro, Native American/Native Alaskan, Asian and "other." Since 2000, the U.S. Census allows Americans more leeway in describing themselves, resulting in combinations that add up to 126 categories. Yet, the U.S. Census and other federal agencies will often compress those categories into far fewer numbers for statistical reporting. When the big picture of America is condensed, obstacles occur not only affecting how we see each other and how our governments serve us but often leading to race-based disparities and marginalization.

◆ Misconceptions or outdated information about disease - such as the myth that sickle cell anemia is a "black-only" disease - can lead to harmful biases and disparities in health care. The RACE project exhibit includes the story of a man whose sickle cell anemia went undiagnosed for years because to his doctors he did not fit the "racial profile" for the disease.

◆ Although the U.S. is largely a country grown on immigrants, it has a cyclical history of racism, discrimination and anti-immigration sentiment toward our newest arrivals. The current cycle of immigrant bashing has its roots in the 1990s. But unlike past history, this cycle is being fed by concerns over terrorism and security in the post-9/11 world. Instead of one group being targeted with a new-immigrant backlash, several groups - Latino, Muslim, Arab and South Asian immigrants -- face discrimination and racial profiling - resulting in escalating racial, ethnic and religious tensions in the U.S.

For more information about AAA's **RACE** program, contact Peggy Overbey, principal investigator and project director, at 703-528-1902, ext. 3006, or poverbey@aaanet.org.

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.