For Immediate Release

OMSI Exposes Science of Race in New Exhibit
RACE: Are We So Different? Offers Unprecedented View of Human Variation

Portland, OR (September 13, 2012) – Though each of us is as unique as our fingerprint, humans across all walks of life actually have more in common than ever previously imagined. A new exhibit about the science of human variation at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) will challenge visitors to consider race in a new light. RACE: Are We So Different?, opening Wednesday, September 26, is the first national exhibition to tell the story of race from biological, cultural, and historical points of view.

Offering an unprecedented look at race and racism in the United States, RACE was developed by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in collaboration with the Science Museum of Minnesota. The exhibit introduces the idea of race as a primarily social construct as opposed to physical reality, presenting a contemporary scientific understanding of human variation that challenges the idea of racial differences and even questions the very concept of race. RACE at OMSI is sponsored locally by The Standard and was created with generous funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Ford Foundation.

“At OMSI, we’re proud to present thought-provoking exhibits that encourage further exploration of ideas,” says President Nancy Stueber. “Our visitors know we are – and always will be – a place for hands-on science learning that appeals to all ages. We also want them to think and talk about important social issues in which science plays a role, and we want to give them the space and the tools to do that.”

“People are going to be surprised by RACE,” says Bob Speltz, director of public affairs at The Standard. “The Standard is excited to contribute to this unique exhibit with the power to spark quality conversations about how race operates in our daily lives.”

“The concept of race has not always existed,” notes exhibit contributor Robert Garfinkle of the Science Museum of Minnesota. “This exhibit reveals that sorting people by physical differences is a recent invention, only a few hundred years old. Current science tells us that all humans share a common ancestry and the differences we see among people are gradual variations, not discrete categories of different peoples. Humans have always migrated and mixed, not just recently but ever since our origins in Africa.”

“The exhibit elaborates on the reflection that while race is the least important aspect in determining character, it is often the most significant factor in how we are perceived. The truth is: human beings are more alike genetically than virtually any other species on the planet.”

The RACE exhibit addresses the topics of race and racism from three different perspectives, interwoven to tell a compelling story with lasting impact.

- **Science:** In this section of the exhibit, 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 of *RACE* 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. In this section of the exhibit, visitors will explore the personal experiences of race in our schools, neighborhoods, health care systems, sports and entertainment industries, and more.

The exhibit will give visitors an opportunity to learn about race in all its contexts through a number of interactive exhibit components, historical artifacts, iconic objects, compelling photographs, multimedia presentations, and graphics.

**Highlights:**

- **Who's Talking?** is an activity with surprising results that invites visitors to match voices with people in photos based on speech patterns and inflection.

- **An exploration of the United States Census** demonstrates how our conception of race is ever-changing and has morphed throughout American history according to social, economic, and political forces.

- The work of photographer **Wing Young Huie**, which captures – in ways large and small – the lives of diverse individuals and communities across the country.

- **The Living with Race Video Kiosk**, where visitors can hear people talking about their experiences with race and racism. Examples include a person talking about becoming aware of her white privilege, another talking about growing up Korean in a white family, and yet another discussing what it’s like to be a part of a multi-racial couple.

- **Youth on Race** is a video featuring high schoolers relating their views of racial identity and how they differ from those of their parents.

As stated by the AAA, throughout history, people’s differences have been a source of community strength and personal identity, but they’ve also been the basis for discrimination and oppression.

“Our hope is that this exhibit will initiate some profound discussions,” says Stueber.

The price of the exhibit is included in paid museum admission. Members are free. For more information, visit [www.omsi.edu](http://www.omsi.edu).

**About OMSI**

Founded in 1944, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) is one of the nation’s leading science museums, a world-class tourist attraction, and an award-winning educational resource for the kid in each of us. OMSI is located at 1945 SE Water Avenue, Portland, OR 97214. For general information, call 503.797.4000 or visit [www.omsi.edu](http://www.omsi.edu)