



NOTES FROM OUR DIRECTOR, WILLIAM CALLOWAY

ARE WE SO DIFFERENT?

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

—James Baldwin, author

This summer the South Carolina State Museum will be presenting the award winning exhibit –“RACE: Are We So Different?” In light of the heartbreaking incidences in our state the past year, we believe presenting this exhibit aligns with our core mission of connecting communities by creating conversation of a difficult subject that still in many ways divides us. This exhibit is a scientific look at the social construct of race and asks the very simple question – **“Are we so different?”**

The exhibit seeks to provide a grasp of the scientific understanding of human variation through its interactive and engaging displays. The exhibit promotes “discovery, discussion and reflection” as it presents the history of race and how the ideas of race have changed over time. It looks at the impact of race on our lives and in our communities.

The exhibit addresses the disparity race has caused through misconceptions and misinterpretation of well-meaning intent. The exhibit addresses many cultures and will stimulate dialogue between the many diverse segments represented in the exhibit and in our state including African-American, Asian-American and Native American among others.

The exhibit will tackle some tough divisive topics that our state and our country have experienced over the years including -

- Housing, Land and Wealth
- Health and Medicine
- Youth, Education and Schools

The exhibit does a wonderful job of providing many thoughtful and differing perspectives of the subject. We all view our personal experiences through the filtered lenses of our own culture and upbringing. This exhibit seeks to remove those filters and provide us the opportunity to see and perhaps understand those differing points of view.

The State Museum will be forming an advisory planning board from the community that will be inclusive of many cultures. The advisory board will aid the staff of the state

museum in developing programs and marketing that will help to maximize the potential positive impact of the exhibit. We will be delivering programs such as -

- Collaboration with community organizations by hosting their established programs
- Encouraging conversation, awareness, and problem solving with groups in facilitator-led talking circles on site and in the community
- Meeting the communities needs with a health fair family event in partnership with health organizations.
- Creating vibrant social interactions with a reading club led by community and academic leaders in a welcoming environment with accessible hours for adults

According to a recent Institute of Museum and Library Services report, museums and libraries rank higher in trustworthiness than all other information sources, including government, commercial and private websites. This report highlighted the vital role of museums in supporting formal education and providing informal learning opportunities to students and citizens of all ages. Indeed the purpose of all museums is educating the public. Museums have earned a place of trust in the community.

The State Museum delivers tangible cultural, educational and civic value, and we are committed to service, engagement, and empowerment of our visitors. We strive to provide community engagement around a compelling topic and create lasting connections through meaningful experiences that enrich and strengthen all of our communities.

I am hopeful that his exhibit will allow all of our visitors to explore the topic of race in an environment that is respectful, open and engaging. The events of the past year in South Carolina have made us all pause and ask ourselves deeper questions. I am hopeful that by presenting this exhibit, the State Museum will help to answer those questions and perhaps even in our own small way, provide opportunities for healing and understanding across our state.