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Smithsonian Community Engagement Project on Implicit Bias Coming to Pensacola MESS Hall

The Pensacola MESS Hall announced today that they will host “The Bias Inside Us” from July 15 to August 15. The community engagement project from the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) will raise awareness about the social science and psychology of implicit bias, the impact of this bias, and what people can do about it.

“The Bias Inside Us” features a traveling exhibition that serves as the centerpiece for local programs and activities. Through compelling images, hands-on interactives and powerful testimonials and videos, the exhibition unpacks and demystifies the concept of bias. The exhibition features six sections: Introduction, The Science of Bias, Bias in Real Life, Serious Consequences—Bias is All Around Us, #RetrainYourBrain and Personal Reflection.

Visitors will explore the foundational blocks of bias, the psychology of how it forms and how it influences behaviors both consciously and unconsciously. Interactive elements display how implicit and explicit bias show up in the world and how bias influences systems and policies that have consequences for many people and communities. One interactive experience invites visitors to think about how bias is reflected in product design, advertising, architecture and

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technology. Among the videos in the exhibition is a series that features eight voices from diverse perspectives sharing personal experience with bias.

The exhibition also features Spanish photographer Angélica Dass's *Humanae* project, which reflects on the color of skin that challenges the concept of race. In this work, Dass documents humanity's true colors through portraits, rather than the labels "white," "red," "black," and "yellow."

To broaden the discussion, on Tuesday, August 8th the MESS Hall will host a special presentation on Bias in Artificial Intelligence. This lecture will be presented by Dr. Brent Venable, Professor of Computer Science and Director, Intelligent Systems and Robotics Program, University of West Florida and IHMC.

"Bias is part of being human," said Myriam Springuel, director of SITES and Smithsonian Affiliations. "Our goal through 'The Bias Inside Us' is to help individuals understand and counter their implicit bias and help communities thrive through conversation and greater understanding."

Local support provided by Sunday's Child is ensuring that the concepts of bias in this exhibit reach more of our community. With their support, the MESS Hall created an unique outreach program, "Where Does It Fit?", designed for elementary learners. This program engages students in hands-on activities that engage learners in exploring perception, patterns, and perspective, looking from different angles and discovering how scientists analyze the world around them. This program will be provided at no cost to ten summer camps, plus presentations at libraries and other venues. Additionally, Sunday's Child is supporting visits to the exhibit by

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select organizations, serving both adults and youth, to broaden the community conversation about bias.

“Within our mission of Sunday’s Child are the words ‘promote equality and inspire inclusion’ and that is exactly what ‘The Bias Inside Us’ is offering our community,” says Jacey Cosentino, president of the board of Sunday’s Child. “It takes a deep dive into why we form certain opinions and are conditioned to think certain ways. I feel if we can utilize education like the MESS Hall is providing to better understand human nature then we can have the tools to help everyone feel they are welcomed and included.”

“The Bias Inside Us” draws from the scientific research and educational work by psychologists Mahzarin R. Banaji of Harvard University and Anthony G. Greenwald, professor emeritus at the University of Washington. They defined the term “implicit bias” through their work on unconscious and conscious mental processes. Their book *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (Delacorte Press, 2013) explores the biases people carry based on their exposure to cultural attitudes on areas such as gender, race, social class and disability status.

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SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS OF “THE BIAS INSIDE US”

Major support for “The Bias Inside Us” is provided by the Otto Bremer Trust. Additional support provided by Acton Family Giving, Anonymous donors, The Beverly Foundation, Steve and Sheri Lear, Target, the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation, Thomson Reuters, Alabama Power Foundation, Allianz of America, Valerie E. and William A. Anders, Atlanta Gas Light Foundation, Julie and David Burton, the Dreier Family, Lennart Ehn and Ginger Lew, Expedia, Trevor and Melissa Fetter, the Roger S. Firestone Foundation, Brenda J. Gaines, Myra Hart and Kent Hewitt, Charlie and Nancy Hogan, Judy and Bob Huret, Dr. Christine C. Jenkins and Mr. Pierre A. France, KNOCK, inc., Sarah Lawer and Frank Guanco, Leaders Forum, Kathleen Mason, Elyse Rabinowitz and Jim Porter, Dr. Philip S. and Alice Hoolihan Randall, Gloria del C. Rodriguez, the Family of Leona Roen, and Naoma Tate.

“The Bias Inside Us” is based on an original concept developed by Tolerance in Motion: Steve Lear, Laura Zelle and Elyse Rabinowitz, founders; Ellen Glatstein, Laura Lipshutz, Alice Randall, Joanne Jones-Rizzi and Susan Shapiro, directors; Don Shelby, founding advisor; and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, Steve Hunegs, executive director.

ABOUT SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE (SITES)

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 65 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. For exhibition description and tour schedules, visit sites.si.edu.

ABOUT THE MESS HALL

Founded in 2012 and located at 418 E. Wright St in Downtown Pensacola, the Pensacola MESS Hall is not a typical science museum. It’s all hands-on science. Visitors enjoy exploring math, engineering, science, and stuff with an ever-changing menu of mess kits, activities and exhibits. For more information about the MESS Hall and this exhibition, visit pensacolamesshall.org.

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