

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STUDENTS DELIBERATE THE QUESTION: *IS THE CONSTITUTION COLOR-BLIND?* DURING *THE EXCHANGE* AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

In Conjunction with the America I AM: The African American Imprint Exhibition

Philadelphia, PA (January 9, 2009) – Students from schools across the country, both at the National Constitution Center and live via Internet2 videoconferencing technology, will join in a roundtable discussion about the concept of a color-blind Constitution during the Center’s fifth installment of ***The Exchange: A Marketplace of Student Ideas*** on Wednesday, January 14, 2009, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. EST.

The concept of a color-blind Constitution was first put forth by Justice John Marshall Harlan to dismantle legal discrimination against African Americans in his opinion of the landmark 1896 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. This same concept has come to the forefront of the debate over affirmative action, with some arguing that if the Constitution is indeed color-blind, then the government should not show preferential treatment to one race over another. Led by host Emi Kolawole, Staff Writer for Annenberg Political Fact Check, students will deliberate the question, “Is the Constitution color-blind?” in light of topics such as college admissions and employment opportunities.

The schools participating in *The Exchange* include:

- Antilles High School, San Juan, PR*
- Beachwood High School, Beachwood, OH*
- Cassadaga Valley Central School, Sinclairville, NY*
- Cavalier High School, Cavalier, ND*
- Constitution High School, Philadelphia, PA
- Jack C. Hays High School, Buda, TX*
- Jamestown High School, Jamestown, NY*
- Menifee County High School, Frenchburg, KY*

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- R. Nelson Snider High School, Fort Wayne, IN*
- Robinson Secondary School, Fairfax, VA*

* Denotes school participating via Internet2

Any school in the country can view a live broadcast of *The Exchange* over the Internet and become a part of the conversation by e-mailing questions. Anyone wishing to watch the live broadcast should log on to www.constitutioncenter.org/exchange between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. EST on January 14, and click on the provided link. For additional information about participating in the program, please contact Jason Allen at 215.409.6644 or jallen@constitutioncenter.org.

Emi Kolawole of Annenberg Political Fact Check will host this edition of *The Exchange*. Kolawole earned her B.A. in international relations and theater studies from Wellesley College and studied abroad at both the Panthéon-Sorbonne and the National Theater Institute. She joined the Annenberg Public Policy Center in November 2005, after working as a news researcher at *Congressional Quarterly* on issues of defense, foreign policy, intelligence, and homeland security. Previously, she served as a production assistant at PBS' "NOW with Bill Moyers."

This installment of *The Exchange* will coincide with the **America I AM: The African American Imprint** exhibition, which will make its world debut at the National Constitution Center from January 15 through May 3, 2009. Presented by Tavis Smiley, the exhibition will present a historical continuum of pivotal moments in courage, conviction, and creativity that solidifies the undeniable imprint of African Americans across the nation and around the world.

Featuring more than 200 artifacts culled from every period of U.S. history, the exhibit will include objects, texts, religion, music, narration, and media. An interactive component of the exhibition will allow visitors to leave their own video "imprints," and this collection will grow throughout the life of the exhibition with the potential to become the largest recorded oral history project in U.S. history.

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ADD TWO/THE EXCHANGE JANUARY 2009

Prior to *The Exchange*, schools will receive a curriculum poster developed by the Education staff at the Center. The front side of the poster initiates the student conversation with a Town Hall Wall, a format pioneered at the Center and used in its permanent exhibition. The opposite side of the poster displays the curriculum designed to encourage students to look at the issue of affirmative action from a variety of perspectives and then find political, social, and economic measures to address the issues of fairness and inequality.

Previous *Exchange* programs have focused on issues such as religious expression in schools, school violence, and the balance of school safety and students' constitutional rights in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings. The most recent *Exchange* programs allowed participants to create a student agenda and platform for the next President of the United States.

The Exchange is made possible with support from the Annenberg Foundation.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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