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The African American Imprint

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THE STORY OF WE, THE PEOPLE.

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**AMERICA I AM: *THE AFRICAN AMERICAN IMPRINT* EXHIBITION
MAKES WORLD DEBUT TODAY
AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER**

Philadelphia, PA (January 15, 2009) – The **America I AM: *The African American Imprint*** exhibition, celebrating nearly 500 years of African American contributions to our country, made its world debut today at the National Constitution Center. The exhibition opened with a special ribbon cutting ceremony featuring exhibition presenter Tavis Smiley; National Constitution Center President and CEO Joseph M. Torsella; Tyrone Ried, Senior Director of Multicultural Marketing at Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.; and the eighth grade class of Universal Charter School, who were the first visitors to see the exhibition. The exhibition will run at the Center through May 3, 2009, before continuing its national tour.

Covering more than 13,000 square feet at the Center, the exhibition presents 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. The more than 200 artifacts and information within the exhibition provides context to how African Americans have contributed to and shaped American culture across four core areas: economic, socio-political, cultural, and spiritual, up to present-day events, including the inauguration of the first African American president.

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ADD ONE/AMERICA I AM TO DEBUT AT NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

America I AM: *The African American Imprint* is developed in partnership with Tavis Smiley, and is organized by Cincinnati Museum Center and Arts and Exhibitions International (AEI), which also organized the King Tut exhibition that was the most attended touring exhibition in the world in 2007.

“America I AM: *The African American Imprint* encourages all people to connect in a meaningful way with the foundations of democracy, cultural diversity, exploration, and free enterprise, which began when the first Africans arrived in Jamestown,” said broadcaster Tavis Smiley, who is presenting the exhibition. “By telling the stories of the events of the past, we can help the leaders of the future set the stage for active participation in the democratic process for years to come.”

“The National Constitution Center is proud and honored to be the premiere venue for this groundbreaking exhibition,” said National Constitution Center president and CEO Joseph M. Torsella. “The Center is dedicated to telling the story of ‘We the People’ in ways that inspire visitors to become active citizens. This exhibition conveys the struggles, contributions, and triumphs of African Americans in a way that will inspire all Americans to engage in an important cultural and historical dialogue.”

Visitors can experience shared U.S. culture and history through an unprecedented collection of rare historical objects, documents, religion, music, narration, photos, and media that tell this uniquely American story. An interactive area allows 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.

Through more than 200 artifacts culled from every period of U.S. history and 12 exhibition galleries, **America I AM** conveys a journey from struggle to triumph to celebration. Among the poignant pieces in the exhibition are:

- “The Doors of No Return” from the Cape Coast Castle in Ghana, which enslaved Africans passed through to board ships to the “New World”
- The typewriter Alex Haley used to write the groundbreaking book, *Roots*
- Objects representing the African American troops that fought and impacted the outcome of major U.S. wars
- Malcolm X’s diary and personal Koran

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ADD TWO/AMERICA I AM TO DEBUT AT NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

- The door key and stool from the Birmingham jail cell that held Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he authored “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
- Frederick Douglass’ clothing and letter from President Lincoln that enabled him to move among Union lines recruiting black soldiers
- The robe that Muhammad Ali wore during the “Rumble in the Jungle,” where he defeated world heavyweight champion George Foreman
- And many other important items from the beginnings of our nation through contemporary popular culture

Exhibition organizers have worked with some of the most notable scholars in the field to develop this exhibition, one of the broadest on this subject ever mounted. John Fleming, president of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History and director emeritus of museums at the Cincinnati Museum Center, serves as executive producer.

In addition, the National Constitution Center has created a local advisory panel with the goal of highlighting the wealth of African American history found in Philadelphia. These representatives from other museums, arts organizations, and community groups that tell stories like those found in **America I AM** are working to identify and develop collaborative programming to supplement the exhibition and carry the experience outside of the Center’s walls.

To further augment the exhibition, the Center’s education and public programming staff in the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach has developed a variety of resource materials, special programs, and family activities. Also in keeping with the Center’s mission to foster discussion and citizen engagement, a variety of evening programs discussing historical and contemporary themes related to the exhibition are planned.

“We are proud to premiere this exhibition about the history of a people at the National Constitution Center, a museum that tells the story of ‘We the People’ every day in an inspirational way,” said John Norman, president of AEI. “Our hope is that visitors will leave uplifted and informed, with a richer understanding of the culture and history of this country, and those who have affected its course.”

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ADD THREE/AMERICA I AM TO DEBUT AT NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

America I AM is made possible by Walmart Stores, Inc., which serves as its presenting sponsor. The exhibition is sponsored by Northern Trust and is presented locally by Coca-Cola. CBS 3 is the official media partner for the Center's showing of **America I AM**. Microsoft is the technology partner for the tour.

"All of us at Walmart are proud to be a part of **America I AM**," said Hank Mullany, SVP & President for the Northeast Division of Walmart Stores, Inc. "Our support is an extension of our commitment to honoring the contributions that African Americans have made to our great nation. These words, sounds, images, and artifacts bring to life 400 years of the African American experience. We are excited to play a role in presenting history to our Philadelphia area associates, customers, and partners, who will be among the first to experience this extraordinary exhibition."

"On behalf of Northern Trust, I am thrilled to help celebrate the vital contributions African Americans have made to our society," said Rick Waddell, president and chief executive officer of Northern Trust. "In supporting initiatives like **America I AM**, Northern Trust strives to further cultural education and awareness. We hope this exhibit inspires viewers here in Philadelphia and around the world to cherish the diversity and heritage of all our communities. "

Admission to **America I AM** is \$17.50 for adults, \$15.50 for seniors ages 65 and up, and \$9 for children ages 4-12. A voucher for a \$2.50 discount off two adult tickets is available at www.walmart.com/ourvoice. Group rates are also available. Admission to the Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*, including the award-winning theater production "Freedom Rising", is included. Active military personnel and children ages 3 and under are free. There is no upcharge for school groups to tour **America I AM**. iPod audio tours are also available and cost \$2 for members and \$3 for non-members. For ticket information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org. More details about the exhibition, including a gallery walkthrough moderated by Tavis Smiley, are available at www.AmericaIAM.org.

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ADD FOUR/AMERICA I AM TO DEBUT AT NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

ABOUT The Smiley Group, Inc.

Founded in 1998 and based in Los Angeles, The Smiley Group, Inc., (TSG) is a communications corporation dedicated to supporting human rights and related empowerment issues. The mission of TSG is to achieve positive results through advocacy and education on issues of concern to African Americans and other people without substantial economic or social standing. TSG is the holding company for Tavis Smiley Presents, Smiley Radio Properties, High Quality Speakers Bureau, TS Media, and SmileyBooks. The Tavis Smiley Foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides leadership development training for youth. Tavis Smiley is the host of *Tavis Smiley* on PBS and *The Tavis Smiley Show from PRI* and the author/editor of 11 books including the *New York Times* best sellers *Covenant with Black America*, *What I Know for Sure: My Story of Growing up in America*, and *THE COVENANT In Action*. For more information, visit www.tavistalks.com.

ABOUT Arts and Exhibitions International (AEI)

Founded in 2003 by president John Norman and international vice president Andres Numhauser, AEI produces the award-winning exhibition “Diana: A Celebration” in association with the Althorp Estate in the United Kingdom, two touring exhibitions dedicated to the treasures of King Tutankhamun and “Real Pirates: The Untold Story of the Whydah from Slave Ship to Pirate Ship.” Norman and Numhauser have nearly 40 years combined experience in the entertainment and exhibition business, working over the years on such projects as “Titanic: The Artifact Exhibit” and “Saint Peter and the Vatican: The Legacy of the Popes.” The company has relationships with the most important museums in the world and has presented traveling exhibitions on four continents. AEI is part of AEG Exhibitions, an affiliate division of AEG LIVE. AEG LIVE is a collection of companies dedicated to all aspects of live contemporary music performance and the live-entertainment division of Los Angeles-based AEG, one of the leading sports and entertainment presenters in the world. For more information, log onto www.artsandexhibitions.com.

ABOUT the National Constitution Center

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. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

ABOUT Cincinnati Museum Center

Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal is home to the Cincinnati History Museum, Duke Energy Children's Museum, the Museum of Natural History & Science, the Robert

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D. Lindner Family OMNIMAX® Theater, and the Cincinnati Historical Society Archives & Library. It is a nationally recognized educational and research resource and one of the top cultural attractions in the Midwest. With more than one million visitors each year, Museum Center is the top cultural attraction in Cincinnati and the most visited museum complex in the State of Ohio. Originally built in 1933 as the Union Terminal train station, the building is a national historic landmark and was renovated and reopened as Cincinnati Museum Center in 1990. For information, call 513-287-7000 or 1-800-733-2077 or visit www.cincymuseum.org.

ABOUT Walmart Stores, Inc. (NYSE: WMT)

Every week, millions of customers visit Walmart Stores, Supercenters, Neighborhood Markets, and Sam's Club locations across America or log on to its online store at www.wal-mart.com. The company and its Foundation are committed to a philosophy of giving back locally. Walmart (NYSE:WMT) is proud to support the causes that are important to customers and associates right in their own neighborhoods, and last year gave more than \$270 million to communities in the United States. To learn more, visit www.walmartfacts.com, www.walmartstores.com, or www.walmartfoundation.org.

ABOUT Northern Trust

Northern Trust Corporation is a leading provider of investment management, asset and fund administration, fiduciary and banking solutions for corporations, institutions and affluent individuals worldwide. Northern Trust, a financial holding company based in Chicago, has a growing network of 85 offices in 18 U.S. states and has international offices in 15 locations in North America, Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. As of September 30, 2008, Northern Trust had assets under custody of US\$3.5 trillion, and assets under investment management of US\$652.4 billion. Northern Trust, founded in 1889, has earned distinction as an industry leader in combining exceptional service and expertise with innovative products and technology. For more information, visit <http://www.northerntrust.com>.

ABOUT Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

ABOUT CBS 3

CBS 3 (KYW-TV) and The CW Philly 57 (WPSG-TV) are part of CBS Television Stations, a division of CBS Corporation.

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