

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER TO LAUNCH INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION FEATURING WORK OF STUDENTS IN PHILADELPHIA AND AFGHANISTAN

Project Made Possible by American Association of Museums Grant

Philadelphia, PA (July 13, 2009) – The American Association of Museums (AAM) has awarded a Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad (MCCA) grant in the amount of \$105,000 to the National Constitution Center to support a civic photography education program and exhibition titled *Being “We the People:” Afghanistan, America and the Minority Imprint*. Students from Constitution High School in Philadelphia, PA and Marefat High School in Kabul, Afghanistan will collaborate on the exhibition, to be hosted at the National Constitution Center and the National Museum of Afghanistan, as part of the Center’s International Engagement Project. The Project is dedicated to establishing international exchange and promoting constitutional principles to emerging democracies through educational and civic learning initiatives.

“The MCCA grant is designed to enable students who live on opposite sides of the globe to create and exchange images of freedom and democracy from their respective lives,” said Linda E. Johnson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Constitution Center. “This international collaboration reflects the Center’s intent to spread its mission beyond America’s shores, promoting open discussion and educational exchange that will ultimately enrich the experiences of Constitution Center visitors. We are extremely proud of this initiative and look forward to seeing it flourish.”

“The Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad program is emblematic of the commitment to education and public service embraced by museums everywhere,” said Ford W. Bell, president of AAM. “This initiative between the National Constitution Center

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and the National Museum of Afghanistan illustrates the essence of the work of museums: to make us think, discover, and celebrate the common humanity of all the world's citizens."

To launch *Being "We the People:" Afghanistan, America and the Minority Imprint*, the Center will provide students from Constitution High School and Marefat High School with the education and equipment they need to conduct documentary photography. The students will interpret, through photography, the role of minorities in a democracy. The project is designed to explore how minorities in different types of democracies perceive themselves as citizens, and how they define the concept of citizenship. By documenting their interpretations of civic themes through photography, the Center believes students in both the U.S. and Afghanistan might transcend the language and cultural barriers currently limiting the exchange of ideas between the two countries.

"I believe the proposal submitted by the National Constitution Center in collaboration with the National Museum of Afghanistan exemplifies the MCAA goals of engendering lasting ties between U.S. communities and their counterparts all over the world," said Congressman Robert Brady (D-PA).

Throughout the process, students from both schools will share their progress and ideas via video conferences, ultimately producing reciprocal exhibitions to be displayed in Spring 2010.

Being "We the People:" Afghanistan, America and the Minority Imprint will explore key civic concepts such as justice, liberty, and free expression. For the exhibition, pairs of Afghan and American students will take pictures representing one of the themes. The students also will write accompanying essays explaining the circumstances under which the photograph was captured, why it is a visual interpretation of the particular concept, the history of the subject, and the photographer's background.

"As a student body comprised of mostly minority pupils focused on the study of active citizenship and democratic deliberation, our school community welcomes the opportunity

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to interact with young people in Afghanistan,” said Tom Davidson, Principal of Constitution High School. “As the Afghan students clarify their own rights and responsibilities in a fledgling democratic nation, Constitution High School students can share their unique experiences with American democracy. Through various forms of media, including digital photography, electronic correspondence, and video conferencing, the world will become much more intimate and familiar to its next generation of leaders.”

“This project will open a window for the students in Afghanistan, giving them a better understanding of the United States, as well as the changes that have occurred in our own society,” said Aziz Royesh, Director of Marefat High School. “These students have traumatic memories from the time of the Taliban, and they hear many negative things about their country. *Being “We the People”* gives them a chance to understand and show that, while some things have gone backwards in our country, Afghanistan has experienced positive change in many respects. This project will give the students strong hope and optimism, and the analytical tools to allow them to think for themselves, and then share what they are thinking with their peers in the United States.”

About the Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad Grant

Museums & Communities Collaboration Abroad (MCCA) is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State in partnership with the American Association of Museums. MCCA works to empower museums to connect people in the U.S. with people abroad, while at the same time, strengthening ties between the museums and their communities.

About the American Association of Museums

The American Association of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. With more than 15,000 individual, 3,000 institutional and 300 corporate members, AAM is dedicated to ensuring that museums remain a vital part of the American landscape, connecting people with the greatest achievements of the human experience, past present and future. For more information, visit www.aam-us.org.

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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.

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