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Subject: Ferris Traveling Exhibit Sparks Conversation
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Included below is a press release regarding Ferris State University's traveling exhibition "Them: Images of Separation." Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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'Them' Exhibit Highlights Museum's Online Resource

BIG RAPIDS – Ferris State University's traveling exhibition "Them: Images of Separation," comprised of objects from its Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia running now through March 31 at Foundation Street Church in Grand Rapids, is sparking conversations in both the real and virtual worlds.

For several years, the Jim Crow Museum's Web site (www.ferris.edu/jimcrow) has been a resource both for scholars examining the historical and contemporary expressions of racism, as well as the general public looking for thoughtful answers to difficult questions relating to culture and race. To date, the site has had nearly 580,000 visits.

One recent viewer of "Them" provided the basis for the Web site's "Question of the Month" feature. Museum founder and Ferris' Chief Diversity Officer, David Pilgrim, responded to an exhibit visitor who pointed to the inclusion of a "white trash" costume as an example of political correctness and balance, asserting that "blacks and other racial minorities cannot be racist, just like women cannot be sexist."

Pilgrim's response draws upon his experience as a junior high school student in the early 1970s sent to integrate an all-white school and the words of Martin Luther King Jr. whose declaration that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," which Pilgrim credits with being a turning point in his thinking. "I had spent much of my life collecting objects that I could use to teach people about the racism faced by Africans and their American descendants. But King's words made me look at injustice and inequality in broader ways." Previous "Question of the Month" topics have ranged from "Elvis Presley and Racism" to "Jim Crow Etiquette" and "TV's First Interracial Kiss."

The Jim Crow Museum site also has Blogs, links to YouTube videos, virtual tours of the museum as well as "Them" and a second travelling exhibition, "Hateful Things."

Currently, the museum is fundraising to create a physical space on the Ferris State University campus in Big Rapids to allow for exhibition of physical artifacts that show how racism has been expressed in such everyday items of culture as postcards and children's games. The expansion would allow for greater exposure of the museum, whose purpose is to teach people how to talk about race in an honest and open way.

Hours for the Keeler Gallery at Fountain Street church are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday. Additionally, Pilgrim will be speaking at the Kalamazoo Valley Community College “Diversity: Perceptions and Realities” conference on Friday, March 27, at KVCC’s Texas Township Campus. More information is available at KVCC’s Web site.

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