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‘COLORING AMERICA’ A CAAM EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTING THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN SPORTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND LOS ANGELES

LOS ANGELES (November 1, 2012) If you Google Los Angeles’ Leimert Park’s history, you will only find half the truth about the heavily, Black populated neighborhood, encompassed of art galleries, eateries and beautiful homes. However, if you visit the California African American Museum’s (CAAM) newest exhibition, “Coloring America,” you will find the true history of a village whose relator used racially restricted covenants to keep Blacks out.

“Coloring America,” on view through March 24, 2012 is a testament to the varied and diverse contributions of African Americans and an overview of some relevant historical objects and artwork donated to or purchased by CAAM.

“How do we recolor America when we put Black back in history,” asked Javon Johnson, the exhibition’s curator.

“Coloring America” is a curator’s choice, with pieces selected from CAAM’s permanent collection. The exhibition’s installation is broken into four themes West Africa, local history, entertainment and sports. Tourist artifacts displayed in the West Africa section connects Americans to Africa, and are the first displays seen upon entering the gallery. One of the most notable artifacts from the West Africa section includes the “twin dolls,’ created for a twin to care for when their twin sibling passes.

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Not far from the West African artifacts are reminders of Los Angeles' local history. Some of the most profound pieces of the exhibition are displayed in this section, for example the laminated sign of the oldest and longest running African American newspaper, the *California Eagle*. The *California Eagle* represents the history made on the very street it produced its papers on, Central Avenue. With what used to be dubbed "the avenue" Central Avenue was the premiere scene for African American R&B, Jazz and comedy. Then there are the advertisements displayed for the then newly built Leimert Park Village strategically marketed toward middle class white people. Leimert Park relators used class and economics to keep Blacks from living in Leimert Park. Blacks moved in when Leimert Park began to accept Section 8, in the early 80s. Now the neighborhood is predominantly Black and has become permanent fixture in Los Angeles' African American culture.

Adjacent to the Leimert Park display is the entertainment section. Conveniently relevant to the local history, a movie poster of the classic Black film "Boys in The Hood" directed and produced by South Los Angeles native, John Singleton. Other pieces include a Bert Williams poster, who was known for wearing the controversial "Black Face". Charlie Chaplin is quoted saying Williams is "the funniest man I've ever met, but the saddest man I've ever known."

The Sports section displays rarely talked about African American sport greats including Sugar Ray Seals, whose boxing gloves, robe and shorts, are displayed; a signed baseball from Jacky Robinson when he was in high school; 1959s NBA Rookie of the Year, Los Angeles Lakers' Elgin Baylor; and Bill Spiller who faced opposition with the PGA as they changed their Open Tournament to Invitational. Spiller was to golf, what Jackie Robinson was to baseball and became the first African American to play in a PGA tournament.

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CAAM exhibitions are free and open to the public. CAAM is located at 600 State Drive, Exposition Park, 90037. For more information visit www.caamuseum.org, follow CAAM on Twitter @CAAMinLA and “like” CAAM at www.facebook.com/CAAMinLA

EXHIBITIONS IN THE CAAM GALLERIES:

“Shared Thread” in CAAM’s Courtyard through December 30, 2012

“African American Military Portraits from the American Civil War: Selected Images from the Library of Congress Collections” through April 14, 2013

“Legacy of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company: More Than a Business” through June 23, 2013

“Go Tell it on the Mountain” through April 7, 2013

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM

The California African American Museum (CAAM) researches, collects, preserves and interprets for public enrichment the history, art and culture of African Americans. Chartered by the California State Legislature in 1977, CAAM is a state supported institution and a partner with the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization Friends, the Foundation of the California African American Museum. In addition to its permanent collection of over 3,000 objects of art, artifacts and historical documents, CAAM also houses a research library containing more than 20,000 volumes, employs and trains high school students through its *Young Docents* program, and hosts in-house curated exhibitions and traveling exhibitions on a regular basis. The museum also tours CAAM exhibitions throughout California and the nation.

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