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UCSB Joins USC, MIT To Present "Race in Digital Space 2.0," A Conference To Explore Digital Technology and Minorities

Digital technology presents minority Americans with a new array of opportunities and challenges. And since the events of Sept. 11, 2001, it presents new dangers as well.

At "Race in Digital Space 2.0," a three-day conference co-sponsored by the University of California, Santa Barbara, the University of Southern California and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, concerned artists, activists, academics, researchers, and others will examine the effects of digital technology on minority communities in post-Sept. 11 America. They also will pay tribute to the contributions of minorities in this emerging field.

The conference will be held Thursday, Oct. 10 through Saturday, Oct. 12 at USC and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

It is free and open to the public, but registration is required.

"Unfortunately, the tragic events of September 11, 2001 have changed public perceptions about race and new digital technologies drastically," said Anna Everett,

co-organizer of the conference and an associate professor of Film Studies at UCSB. "After 9-11, concern about race and bridging the so-called digital divide has shifted to a concern about racial profiling and the threat of digital terrorism.

My fear now is that even limited public support for democratizing new technologies will be eroded.

"My hope is that our 'Race in Digital Space 2.0'â conference will help to refocus public attention on 'e-racing' barriers to universal access, and that race matters in digital space can be resolved in less divisive and disabling terms."

The conference is the second in a series begun last year.

"UCSB is pleased to join the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Southern California's Annenberg Center for Communication in putting on a conference to celebrate the important contributions that members of minority groups have made to the advancement of digital technology, and to examine access and participation in technology," said UCSB Chancellor Henry Yang.

"We are very proud of the leadership role our distinguished colleague Anna Everett has played in planning this important national event and in placing UCSB in the forefront of this research and public discussion."

This year's topics range from the digital divide to advancements in digital entertainment, from digital tracking and racial profiling to teen use of new technology.

Other topics include threats posed to civil liberty and privacy, digital technology in the classroom, digital technology and social activism, and digital technology and hate speech.

There will also be sessions dealing with digital representations of art, and the conference will feature films, art and music performances, and online art exhibits.

Everett will moderate a panel titled, "Entertaining Race: Representin' Race in New Media Environments." Other UCSB faculty and staff participating in the conference include Chela Sandoval (Department of Chicano Studies), Kip Fulbeck (Art Studio), Hsiu-zu Ho and Judith Green (Gevirtz Graduate School of Education), Lisa Parks (Film Studies), Claudine Michel (Black Studies), Elizabeth Robinson (advisor, campus radio station KCSB), and Sylvia Curtis (Black Studies and dance librarian).

Everett began researching African American participation in digital technology in the early 1990s. She found that so much attention was being focused on the digital divide that the accomplishments of minority entrepreneurs and technical innovators were being ignored.

"I realized that there was this whole vibrant sector of black people who were on line using this technology," Everett said. "They weren't being noticed because of the emphasis on the digital divide."

As she began to present her findings at various conferences, Everett encountered others who shared her interests and concerns. Three of those are co-organizers of "Race in Digital Space," Tara McPherson and Christiane Robbins of USC and Henry Jenkins of MIT.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.