



Groundbreaking Augmented Reality Exhibit to Open in Joan Lorentz Park

Cambridge, MA, November 2, 2020 --- The Cambridge Public Library STEAM Academy will launch a groundbreaking augmented reality (AR) exhibit examining systemic racism on Thursday, November 5, at Joan Lorentz Park in front of the Main Library. Titled *This Should Not Be*, the exhibition will enable community members to engage in an immersive, augmented reality experience that examines systemic racism particularly in the United States and in light of the coronavirus epidemic. Walking through Joan Lorentz Park, participants will encounter several display cubes. To access the AR component, they must download and open the free Hoverlay app on their smartphones. When they are in range of one of the display cubes, a digital display will appear in the application, enhancing the physical space of the park with virtual images and video content.

This Should Not Be is a first for the Library, for Cambridge, and it is also groundbreaking in the field of augmented reality worldwide. “This breakthrough technology and resource is a brilliant way to engage residents on social justice issues and systemic racism,” said Cambridge Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui of the exhibit. “I’m incredibly proud that our young people from the Cambridge Public Library’s STEAM Academy led the way in creating this critical exhibition, and I can’t wait to experience it.”

“I am excited that the Library is hosting this exhibition, which explores racism using AR technology,” said Dr. Maria McCauley, Director of Libraries for the City of Cambridge. “I hope this exhibition will inspire us to think not only about how we can deploy technology to address structural racism in our country but also how to make technology more accessible to our community members.”

Inspired by America’s racial reckoning following high-profile incidents of brutal violence against George Floyd and many others, the exhibit results from a STEAM Academy project that required the young designers to develop an answer to the question, “How might we awaken people to the injustices in our society and inspire them to help us create a world that we ALL can believe in?” The project went from concept to implementation in five months with support from world-class instructors, powerful computers loaned from the Library, and community feedback offered through formal design reviews.

About the exhibit, Hoverlay co-founder and CEO Nicolas Robbe remarks, “For the first time, a public space hosts a digital overlay, not created by professionals, but directly by members of the community - teens nonetheless, to share their vision about social issues.”

STEAM Academy, a partnership between the Library and Innovators for Purpose (iFp) launched in January 2020 to offer high-quality immersive STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) learning opportunities to youth and emerging adults. Funding for the STEAM Academy is provided by the City of Cambridge’s Office of Workforce Development, Cambridge Trust, Cambridge Public Library Foundation, the Margret and H.A Rey Curious George Fund, Eric and Jane Nord Family Fund, and Verizon.

The STEAM Academy is an important element of the Cambridge STEAM Initiative, a partnership between the City’s Department of Human Service Programs, the Cambridge Public Library and Cambridge Public Schools. The Cambridge STEAM Initiative is committed to creating, enhancing, and expanding equitable access to quality STEAM learning experiences from birth to adulthood.

Michael Dawson, co-founder and iFp CEO says this project is the most complex topic his designers have ever addressed stating, “Our young people have been up to the challenge by researching and discussing this topic. Now, they better understand the problem and have strong views on how to create a more equitable country.” He adds, “In addition to the complex subject matter, this human-centered design project incorporates cutting edge technology including augmented reality, sonification (making meaning of data with sound), data visualization, and 3D animation.”

About the Cambridge Public Library:

At the Cambridge Public Library, we welcome all, inspire minds and empower community. We support a Cambridge where everyone has equitable opportunities to learn, people live their best lives, and democracy thrives. During the Covid-19 health crisis, we are offering a variety of programs and services. [Visit our website](#) to learn the details.

Media Contact:

Muna Kangsen, Manager of Communications, Programs and Events

Office: 857-235-9809

Mobile: 617-461-3708

Email: mkangsen@cambridgema.gov