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Austin cultural celebration highlights refugees' journeys

Free food, music, family fun surround naturalization ceremony at Bullock Museum

JUNE 3, 2013 (AUSTIN, TX) -- Whether their journey is 100 miles or 1,000, refugees all have a unique and individual story to tell. Saturday, June 22, 2013 marks the annual World Refugee Day festival in Austin as refugees who are becoming the nation's newest citizens gather with their families at the Bullock Texas State History Museum for a celebration of culture that is free and open to the public.

The United Nations established World Refugee Day to recognize the courage, resilience, and strength of refugee families and individuals who have fled their home countries because of conflict and persecution. The Austin celebration will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Bullock Museum, 1800 N. Congress Ave., and is sponsored by the Austin Refugee Roundtable which is comprised of a number of local agencies that work with refugees including: Caritas of Austin, Interfaith Action of Central Texas, Refugee Services of Texas, Multicultural Refugee Coalition, Amala Foundation, Center for Survivors of Torture and others.

The purpose of Austin's World Refugee Day is to celebrate refugees living in Central Texas and the surrounding areas. Austin families can revel in the region's dynamic cultural mix through an assortment of fun and free activities. An educational component will show the refugee's journey until they began life in America. Children can listen to stories from Africa told by a professional storyteller and make a mask or card to take home. Face painting, bead stringing and language games are all planned as part of the festival. Refugees are also given the opportunity to have family portraits made by photographer Seve Garza free of charge.

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Live music will fill the museum as refugees from Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Myanmar share their talents, along with performances by X8 Interactive Drumming, the Global Youth Voices and Kupira Marimba.

The spotlight will shine on refugees as about 20 people become U.S. citizens during a naturalization ceremony in the Bullock Museum's Texas Spirit Theater at noon.

The Austin World Refugee Day celebration is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.TheStoryofTexas.com or call (512) 936-8746.

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About the Bullock Museum

The Bullock Texas State History Museum in downtown Austin tells the unfolding story of the history, culture and people of Texas. One of the most popular attractions in Central Texas, the Museum has welcomed over 5 million visitors since it opened in 2001. The Museum and IMAX Theatre are located at 1800 N. Congress Avenue, between the State Capital complex and the University of Texas campus. For more, visit www.thestoryoftexas.com or call (512) 936-8746.

About the Austin Refugee Roundtable

The Austin Refugee Roundtable enhances collaboration between agencies, community groups and individuals who serve refugees, with the aim of making Austin a welcoming and supportive resettlement community. For more, visit www.austinrefugees.org or call (512) 386-9145 x 304.