



IZIKO SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUM

# HUMANITY

August 2023 • Cape Town

# WHAT ARE WE DOING

## *Permanent exhibition celebrating human past & present*

Humanity is a permanent exhibition at the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town opening in August 2023.

It puts visitors – human beings today – at the centre of the **human evolution story**. It takes them back through time to show how we evolved to be in the skin we live in.

Humanity makes learning about our deep history exciting, inspiring and thought-provoking with fossils and artefacts from the past displayed alongside audio storytelling, clever artwork, digital displays and kinetic projections.





# WHY DOES IT MATTER?

## *We all share the origin story*

Considering the divisions in our society - from Black Lives Matter to the scars of Apartheid- Humanity is a reminder that **we all share the same origin story.**

Humanity uses science and evidence-based ideas to show that we are **more united than divided**, though we may look different.

Recognising that we have shared past origins, and that a great deal of what we **know about human evolution comes from South Africa and Africa**, visitors gain pride in their current African origins.

Visitors can picture themselves as part the **next generation of scientists** making discoveries in this field - which they have been excluded from until now.





## HOW ARE WE DOING THIS?

### HERITAGE

Well-known **South Africans** **share stories about their heritage** – and how DNA analysis impacts that perspective.

We ensure **all South African visitors are represented** in the exhibition. And we show that science, through genetics, gives us a way to go back in time to **understand diversity and human evolution**.

### SCIENCE

Visitors **engage with scientific concepts of human evolution** through animation and games.

Presenting science in multiple learning styles (visual, interactive, textual) we **establish these concepts as relevant** in the present and past.

### EVOLUTION

We present a ‘picture in time’ from 100,000 years ago showing **what our ancestors were cooking, painting, crafting and doing** then. We also show skeletons of ancient ancestors from 2m years ago including: **Homo erectus & Australopithecus sediba**.

We show visitors there was an **unprecedented intelligence & diversity** of human ancestors in past Africa – just like today.





# THE IMPACT

*Pride in our country, our  
continent & ourselves as humans*

- **Pride** in our connectedness and diversity as humans.
- **Apprciation** of South Africa & Africa's rich archaeological heritage.
- **Representation** of different backgrounds & experiences.
- **Curiosity** about science & personal heritage.
- **Promote & support** national education cirriculum.



# DECOLONISING SCIENCE

# FUTURE OF MUSEUMS

Humanity reframes our origin story to **centre on African diversity**. Specifically, we examine the issue of race through the lens of skin colour and modern South African diversity before going back in time to reveal ancient evidence of past peoples on the continent - and their diversity

We do not take the traditional route of telling this story. That centres on the succession, competition and conquest of **foreign, male, often white researchers**. We change this narrative by highlighting the complexities of human connectedness through time.

We aim to make this one of the **first decolonised exhibitions in a South African museum**. This was a process made possible through collective workshops, consultations and public engagements around the exhibition theme and content with community leaders of all kinds.



# OUR AUDIENCE

# 1M

Visitors to Iziko Museums  
online and digital exhibitions

## *Our learners, our future*

Humanity targets learners aged 8-16 years old.

The exhibition **builds on concepts learned in the classroom** and helps them think deeper about important issues of diversity, inclusivity and human evolution today.

Humanity will host a **public programme of events** including: curator tours, research-focused events, and learner activities.





# HOW ESEB MADE THIS POSSIBLE



The European Society of Evolutionary Biology (ESEB) Outreach funds made it possible to for the *Humanity* exhibition team to work with experienced science communicators to deliver:

- **Content research & planning:** including literature reviews and interviews with academics, as well as developing a deep understanding of public communication around sensitive topics and socially controversial themes.
- **Exhibition content:** including exhibition text, display panels, interpretive object labels, video/audio scripts and overall exhibition storytelling.



# ABOUT US



The Human Evolution Research Institute (HERI) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) aims to drive exceptional palaeoscience with diverse teams that are welcome, supported and dedicated to uncovering how and why we became human.

HERI supports African-led research on human evolution at UCT and across the continent with the belief that with diverse teams, we can ask deeper questions and get better answers to our origin story.



The museums that make up Iziko Museums of South Africa Iziko are spaces for cultural interaction. We are proud to ignite connections between our shared history, our heritage, and each other.

Iziko seeks to celebrate our heritage whilst generating new cultural legacies for future generations. These are made accessible to learners and the public through exhibitions, education, and public programmes, behind the scenes tours and other public events.



# THANK YOU

*wblack@iziko.org.za • heri.uct@gmail.com*



**iziko**  
museums of cape town



**HERI**  
HUMAN EVOLUTION  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

