

PRESS RELEASE



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Challenging perceptions: *The Human Race Machine* First time in Canada, at Vanier College

What if you could change the color of your skin or put yourself in someone else's place? Students at Vanier College will be able to do just that when *The Human Race Machine* comes to Vanier, February 19 to 23. This will be the very first time *The Human Race Machine* comes to Canada. Created by artist Nancy Burson, the multi-media creation is a unique tool that shows users how they would look as six different races, represented as Asian, white, black, Hispanic, East Indian or Middle Eastern. The machine will be installed in the Student Mall every day between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The "machine" is a one-of-a-kind computer that looks a lot like a mall photo booth—the user sits down and has their photo snapped and the contours of their face mapped. Within seconds, *The Human Race Machine* generates an approximation of what they would look like as a different race. The machine also has other programs to modify facial features, such as a person's age, gender or facial deformities. The aging program uses the same technology the FBI and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children use to help locate kidnap victims.

The concept for *The Human Race Machine* grew from an amazing fact: the DNA of any two humans is 99.97 percent identical. The only reason we do have differences is that humans have adapted to their different environments in terms of skin color and hair. According to machine creator Burson, "There is only one race, the human one. The concept of race is not genetic, but social. There is no gene for race. *The Human Race Machine* allows us to move beyond differences and arrive at sameness." She sees the machine as a "prayer for racial equality."

Peggy McCoy, Coordinator of Vanier Student Services who is responsible for bringing the device to Vanier College, hopes that "By using *The Human Race Machine*, students will imagine, even just for a moment, how by a simple change, their life experiences might have been completely different. Does the color of our skin change the essence of who we are? I want them to ask "what if?"

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