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Furman's Global Visitor's Center to host international artist delegation

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by Erikah Haavie, Contributing Writer

One is a comic book author from Angola. Another is a Muslim comedian from Australia, known for his work in the touring comedy duo, "Fear of a Brown Planet." A third is the art director from one of the most popular performing arts theaters in Croatia.

All three will experience the Greenville arts scene and share their unique perspectives with arts community leaders Friday as part of a cross-country trip sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and hosted locally by The Global Visitors Center at Furman.

Greenville is one stop for the group of six artists and writers who will also travel to Washington, San Francisco and Charleston while participating in the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program, a professional exchange initiative started in 1940 and designed to build mutual understanding between the United States and other nations.

Delegates include Carlo Trivelli Avila, a newspaper arts editor from Peru; Kateryna Botanova, an art center director and art journal editor from the Ukraine; Madhusree Chatterjee, a news editor from India; Nazeem Hussain, a comedian and volunteer counselor from Australia; Sergio Picarra, a graphic artist, comic book author and cartoonist from Angola; and Marko Torjanac, an art director from Croatia.

The delegation will be studying the importance of the arts and arts education in celebrating the richness of a multi-cultural society. It will also examine how innovative arts programming can be instrumental in managing conflicts, personal and community healing, and promoting peace, tolerance and mutual understanding.

"Greenville has such a vibrant arts community," said Bianca Walker, program manager for the Global Visitors Center at Furman. "We hope our guests will be able to gain a different perspective on the value of the arts and take home best practices to implement in their local communities."

During their stay in Greenville Thursday through Saturday, visitors will tour the Fine Arts Center of Greenville County, see a performance of *The Rocky Horror Show* at The Warehouse Theatre, and explore the Andrew Wyeth collection at the Greenville County Museum of Art. Their round table discussion Friday at the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities includes panelists Julie Allen, the school's dean of vice president of arts and academics; Ross McClain, art department chair at Furman; Alan Ethridge, executive director of the Metropolitan Arts Council; Anne Tromsness, director of education at The Warehouse Theatre; and Mary Harris Edwards, vice president of development at The Peace Center for the Performing Arts.

"Visits by delegations present a great opportunity for faculty to network and establish relationships with international leaders," said Jill Fuson, manager of programs and events at The Riley Institute. "We hope such visits will expand Furman's reputation around the world."

In time, the program could also create additional opportunities for Furman students to study abroad and for international students to study at Furman.

The Global Visitors Center at Furman hosted its first delegation of six visitors from India in February for a study of "NGO Management in the United States," which included meetings with Furman faculty and staff and presentations to students taking classes in history, poverty studies and Asian studies.

The Global Visitors Center at Furman, a joint program of the Riley Institute and the Office for Study Away and International Education established in 2011, is a member of the National Council of International Visitors, a network of universities, organizations, and individuals that support citizen diplomacy in the United States. NCIV members design and implement professional programs, provide cultural activities and offer home hospitality for foreign leaders, specialists and scholars participating in the U.S. Department of State's International Visitors Program and other exchanges.

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Furman faculty are invited to attend a roundtable discussion with art community leaders and delegation guests from 9 a.m.-10 a.m. Friday, Sept. 7, at the S.C. Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. Please RSVP to Bianca Walker. Faculty interested in hosting future guests for a meal or sharing their expertise with a future group of visitors are also encouraged to contact Walker at bianca.walker.furman@gmail.com or (512) 689-4222.