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PRESS RELEASE

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Diversity, connections focus of performance at UMass

AMHERST, Mass. – James H. Chapmyn wants to build bridges. But instead of concrete and steel, he's accomplishing his goal with words and images.

Chapmyn's play, "One Race, One People, One Peace," was created to bring diverse people together for a better understanding of our mutual connections. This thoughtful, moving performance comes to the University of Massachusetts Amherst Monday, Feb. 25, 7 p.m. in the Campus Center Auditorium; admission is free. The event is part of the university's recognition of Black History Month.

"One Race, One People, One Peace" takes an honest look at prejudice, racism, homophobia and terrorism through poignant monologues and poetic satire. Using video, poetry, improvisation and moving theatre, it highlights the power of dialogue and the healing that comes from reconciliation. It causes each person to look inside for the answers to very personal questions: "What have I done? What can I do? How do I respond?" An after-show discussion ends with a moving call to action that's sure to get you thinking.

James H. Chapmyn was born in 1960, spending most of his childhood in Oklahoma and Kansas. The son of a minister, he was greatly influenced by his parents' church, music and their involvement in the civil rights movement. By age 23, Chapmyn had fallen upon misfortune and was homeless, depressed and suicidal. It was then he wrote the bulk of his first work, "Our Young Black Men are Dying and Nobody Seems to Care." At 24, he moved to Columbus, OH; within two months, he was off the streets and on the road to a new life. He began directing plays in the basement of his church, the success of which led him to found Chapmyn Spoken Word, Inc. Today, this writer, actor, poet, minister and activist offers performances and workshops nationwide.

The performance is sponsored by the: African-American Studies Department 21st Century Scholars Program; African Students Association; Black Students Union; Cape Verdean Student Alliance; Committee for the Collegiate Education of Black and other Minority Students; Health Education at University Health Services; Iota Phi Theta fraternity; Malcolm X Cultural Center; Office of Programs and Services for ALANA Students; and the University of Massachusetts Amherst Student Bridges Program.

For more information, call Willie Pope at Committee for the Collegiate Education of Black and other Minority Students, 577-2937.