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## Airport Exhibit Pays Homage to Civil Rights Activism in Philadelphia

*Individuals and events commemorate 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*

**PHILADELPHIA** – The Civil Rights Act of 1964 – signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson 50 years ago today – is one of the most significant pieces of legislation in our nation’s history. In the centuries leading up to the landmark Act, which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin and strengthened voting rights, and in the decades since its enactment many individuals and noteworthy events have helped to shape the civil rights narrative in Philadelphia.

From William Penn who governed on the principles of equality and tolerance in the late 1600s, to Benjamin Franklin’s activism for American independence in colonial Philadelphia, to Lucretia Mott’s and William Still’s fight to abolish slavery in the 1800s, to gay activist Barbara Gittings and women’s rights advocate Ernesta Ballard in the 20th century, to Asian students organizing to promote tolerance and multi-cultural awareness as a result of their treatment at a city public high school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Philadelphia has occupied a prominent place in the nation’s civil rights fabric.

*Civil Rights in Philadelphia: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, an exhibit unveiled today at Philadelphia International Airport (PHL), pays homage to 55 individuals and historic events that characterize Philadelphia’s proud civil rights history over the centuries. The exhibit, which is in Terminal A-East and accessible to ticketed passengers, is on display until June 2015. The unveiling took place in a special ceremony that is part of the official program of Wawa Welcome America!, the City’s week-long festival that culminates with a spectacular celebration on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

“Philadelphia has been at the forefront of the fight for civil rights whether it was the right to freely practice the religion of one’s choice, or the right for equal access to education, employment, housing, and public facilities, or the right to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of one’s race, color, religion, sex or national origin,” said Mayor Michael A. Nutter. “This exhibition is a fitting tribute to a proud tradition of freedom fighters, civil rights champions and bold activism that have characterized the civil rights movement in our City and beyond.”

Several individuals depicted in the exhibit were in attendance at the unveiling including Jacob Bender, Executive Director of the Council of American Islamic Relations, Philadelphia Chapter; Wei Chen, a founder of the Asian Student Association of Philadelphia and a student organizer of the 2009 Asian American Student Boycott; Mark Segal, gay rights activist and founder of numerous gay rights organizations as well as the Philadelphia *Gay News*; Sister Mary Scullion and Joan McConnon, co-founders of Project HOME.

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Family members and others were also in attendance representing individuals in the exhibit. The late Clarence Farmer, who was Executive Director and the longest running chair of the Commission on Human Relations, was represented by his 2 grandchildren as well as members of the CHR. In 1951, Philadelphia was the first city in the U.S. to establish a Commission on Human Relations. The Reverend Mark Tyler represented Richard Allen and Mother Bethel AME. Richard Allen founded Bethel, the first independent black denomination, in 1794. Kemah Washington represented his father, the late Father Paul Washington, the longtime Episcopal Rector at the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia, who was involved in a variety of civil rights causes over the course of several decades in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“Philadelphia has a proud history in the ongoing efforts to attain and preserve civil rights for all, and we are pleased to share this legacy with visitors from all over the world,” said Airport CEO Mark Gale. “Our acclaimed exhibitions program features exhibits that showcase the talents of local artists and entertain visitors as well as provide a means to educate and inform. We are pleased to commemorate one of the most important events in our nation’s history through this exhibit.”



*Mayor Michael A. Nutter (back row, 3rd from left), Airport CEO Mark Gale (2nd from right) and Exhibitions Director Leah Douglas (far right) celebrate the unveiling of the exhibit on Philadelphia's civil rights activism with honored guests.*

Philadelphia International Airport is owned and operated by the City of Philadelphia. The Airport is a self-sustaining entity that operates without the use of local tax dollars. It is one of the largest economic engines in Pennsylvania, generating an estimated \$14.4 billion in spending to the regional economy and accounting for more than 141,000 jobs.