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**MSU MUSEUM TO PRESENT SMITHSONIAN EXHIBITION EXPLORING
THE DIVERSITY OF AMERICAN RELIGIOUS LIFE THROUGH SOUND**

EAST LANSING, Mich. (January 25, 2023) – Choirs singing. Monks chanting. The reading of religious texts. These are religious sounds. But so too are the creaking of church pews and the clanking of pots during the preparation of a communal meal. *Sounds of Religion* is a Smithsonian exhibition that explores how rituals and gatherings of religious communities create a complex soundtrack of religions in America that teaches how people behave, how they’re different, and how they’re alike. Join us at the MSU Museum for an opening reception of the exhibition on Friday, January 27 from 4:00 – 7:00PM. The exhibition will be on view through June 30, 2023.

Sounds of Religion is organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service in cooperation with the [American Religious Sounds Project](#) of The Ohio State University and Michigan State University and made possible through the generous support of The Henry Luce Foundation. The exhibition was developed in collaboration with MSU Religious Studies Professor Dr. Amy DeRogatis and Dr. Isaac Weiner (OSU), and co-curators Vicki Brennan, Ely Lyonblum, Alison Furlong, and Lauren Pond.

“I am thrilled that the MSU Museum is the first place that the SITES posters will be exhibited. I am looking forward to bringing students back to campus who worked on the American Religious Sounds Project to celebrate the opening of this exhibition. Over the years our research initiative has taken us in many directions. It has been an incredible opportunity and privilege to partner with the Smithsonian to create this public-facing exhibition that draws from our sonic archive,” said DeRogatis.

Through 12 posters, the exhibition examines what religious sound is, how it can define a community, and where it can be found—from houses of worship and the home to public spaces and in acts of protest. It also looks at how it can be affected by events like COVID-19. Viewers are invited to listen for sounds that have religious content, religious context, or can be heard in religious communities, and to think about how religion permeates the everyday experiences of American life.

Since 2014, students and faculty in Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and elsewhere have worked together to document the sounds of local religious life. The poster exhibition features recordings and images collected during their work. Through QR codes on the posters, viewers can listen to eight contemporary recordings that serve as an audio portrait of the rich and dynamic differences that make religious life in the U.S. unique.

Americans practice a lot of different religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Wicca, Native American traditions, New Age traditions, and many more. Every tradition creates its own unique blend of music, prayer, voices, and silence, which together help define the beliefs and practices shared by the members of churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other places of spiritual devotion. The sounds of faith make some feel they belong, yet

they may cause others to feel excluded. The American Religious Sounds Project suggests that listening for the sound of religions in America can help people understand the country more deeply and provides insight into religion itself.

In addition, a companion sound installation featuring sounds collected, captured, and curated for the American Religious Sounds Project will be available in the New Horizons Gallery at the MSU Museum, and several programs are set throughout the exhibition including a bus tour where participants will travel to nearby religious spaces to experience religious sounds. To register and view the whole list of events visit museum.msu.edu

Sounds of Religion is distributed at no cost to schools, libraries, museums, and community organizations. It is organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service in cooperation with the American Religious Sounds Project of The Ohio State University and Michigan State University and made possible through the generous support of The Henry Luce Foundation.

Sounds of Religion is made possible at the MSU Museum in part by grants from Michigan Humanities and the Michigan Arts & Culture Council

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MSU Museum

As the state's first Smithsonian Affiliate, the MSU Museum is an innovative and experimental collaboratory that exists to catalyze creativity. A space where people can openly explore, express and experiment with ideas across disciplines and interests, and indulge their natural curiosity about the world. The Museum features three floors of special collections and changing exhibitions. The Museum is located on 409 West Circle Drive next to Beaumont Tower on the MSU campus. Visitor parking is available at metered spaces at the Grand River Ramp, one block away at the corner of Grand River Avenue and Charles Street. For more information, call (517) 355-2370 or see museum.msu.edu.

About the American Religious Sounds Project

The American Religious Sounds Project (ARSP) is a collaborative research initiative co-directed by Michigan State University Religious Studies Professor Amy DeRogatis and Ohio State University Comparative Studies Professor Isaac Weiner. It offers resources for documenting and interpreting the diversity of American religious life through newly produced field recordings, interviews, oral histories, and related materials. Visit religioussounds.osu.edu.

About the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES)

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 70 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. For exhibition description and tour schedules, visit sites.si.edu.