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Freedom Riders Latest Stop: Sundance Film Festival

(St. Petersburg, Fla.) January 12, 2010 – From the 862 films submitted to the Sundance 2010 U.S. Documentary Competition, only 16 were selected to compete at the acclaimed film festival. And one – Freedom Riders – is based on the similarly named book by Raymond Arsenault, the John Hope Franklin Professor of Southern History and graduate director of the Florida Studies Program at USF St. Petersburg.
The documentary is scheduled to premiere on PBS in February 2011, in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Rides. The release will coincide with a number of events including an interactive Web site with additional footage, a 20-city museum exhibition tour, a new abridged version of the book, and several university symposia. Arsenault will lead a two-week re-creation of the freedom rides with a group of college journalists documenting the journey.

The film’s director, Stanley Nelson, is a 2002 MacArthur Fellow known for groundbreaking historical documentaries. He won a Primetime Emmy in Best Direction, nonfiction, for his film, The Murder of Emmett Till, which was broadcast nationally on PBS’s flagship American history series American Experience and helped reopen the investigation of a 14-year-old black boy murdered by white supremacists in Mississippi in 1955. The American Experience series is produced by WGBH Boston, the source of one-third of prime-time PBS programming, including Nova, Frontline, Antiques Roadshow, Arthur, Masterpiece Theatre and This Old House.

The documentary is part of the National Endowment for the Humanities’ We the People project, an initiative to encourage and strengthen teaching, study and understanding of American history and culture through projects that explore significant events and themes in U.S. history and culture.

Arsenault is a specialist in the political, social and environmental history of the American South. Freedom Riders, the product of extensive research over many years, is widely recognized as the definitive work on the Freedom Rider movement.

-USF St. Petersburg-

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