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USF St. Petersburg's Professor Raymond Arsenault Garners Honor from ACLU

ST. PETERSBURG, FLA (March 31, 2003) – Nationally acclaimed chronicler of the civil rights movement and University of South Florida St. Petersburg professor, Dr. Raymond Arsenault, will be honored by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Florida at its 24th Annual Nelson Poynter Civil Liberties Award Dinner on May 10.

Arsenault, a noted scholar and former president of the ACLU of Florida, will be presented with the 2003 Nelson Poynter Civil Liberties Award for his outstanding contributions to the advancement of civil liberties. As the John Hope Franklin Professor of Southern History and the director of the University Honors College at USF St. Petersburg, Arsenault has taught political, social and environmental history of the American South since 1980.

“Dr. Arsenault has distinguished himself as a leading authority on southern culture,” said Dr. Gary Olson, interim associate vice president of academic affairs. “His continuing research has established him as an expert that led to his being featured in Newsweek, and the New York Times, on national radio programs, and on ABC’s Nightline.”

Paul Pohlman, president of the Pinellas Chapter of the ACLU of Florida, stated, “Ray is an inspiration to all of us who are committed to defending the principles of social justice, equality and fairness.” He called Arsenault “an outstanding leader” in Florida and in the Tampa Bay area who “captures the lives and struggles of the brave activists who fought for change during the Civil Rights Movement.”


Well known for his involvement in local and national organizations related to public policy, historic preservation and social justice, Arsenault served as president of the ACLU Pinellas Chapter (1985-97). During his term, he organized a lecture series to commemorate the bicentennial anniversary of the Bill of Rights and was a frequent speaker on the importance of preserving individual liberties under the U.S. Constitution.

Immediately following the award’s dinner, Arsenault will moderate an interactive discussion on how the civil rights movement evolved in Florida, and how it has been remembered and represented. Featured panelists include: John Hope Franklin, professor emeritus of Duke University and one of the world’s most distinguished scholars of the American South and the African-American experience; Eugene C. Patterson, former editor of the St. Petersburg Times, the Washington Post, and the Atlanta Constitution, and renowned editorial writer, especially on the topics of race issues and religion; and Bernard LaFayette, Jr., a native of Tampa and former “Freedom Rider” who currently devotes his efforts to international workshops on nonviolent social change.

Located on the vibrant downtown St. Petersburg waterfront, USF St. Petersburg is a rapidly growing, fiscally autonomous, urban campus of the University of South Florida, a Carnegie-designated Doctoral/Research Extensive University. Over 4,000 students enroll in 45 undergraduate and graduate degree programs through the Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Business, and Education.

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