

FREEDOM RIDERS

THREATENED.
ATTACKED.
JAILED.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE ANNOUNCES MAJOR OUTREACH CAMPAIGN FOR STANLEY NELSON'S "FREEDOM RIDERS" PREMIERING MAY 2011

— Students Will Be Selected to Travel with Original Freedom Riders to Retrace Historic Bus Route on "2011 Student Freedom Ride" —

(October 21, 2010) — Boston, MA — PBS's AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, America's most-watched history series, today announced the launch of the **2011 Student Freedom Ride**, a journey retracing the historic civil rights bus rides that changed America. Accompanied by original Freedom Riders, forty college students will be chosen to participate in the bus ride which will take place from May 6 - 16, 2011 in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the original rides. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for college students committed to learning from history and applying those lessons today, the ride is also a catalyst for a national conversation about the role of civic engagement today. The **2011 Student Freedom Ride** is the centerpiece of a major outreach campaign leading up to the May 2011 PBS broadcast of Stanley Nelson's acclaimed film **FREEDOM RIDERS**, the powerful and inspirational story of the more than 400 black and white men and women who, using non-violent tactics, risked their lives to challenge segregated facilities in the South in 1961.

Kicking off in Washington, DC with a major public event that will gather many who were involved in the original Rides, the **2011 Student Freedom Ride** will roll through Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi, stopping along the way at historically significant locations. The students will spend time with original Freedom Riders who will share their memories of this bold and dangerous experiment in the fight for equal rights. Students will also meet with today's leaders in civic engagement.

Says director Stanley Nelson, "We hope that the film and the ride will inspire young people to see that the past was made up of courageous, ordinary people who were able to make great changes. One of the things that the film shows is that success was not inevitable and only came from perseverance. And sometimes to do any great thing, it's important that we step out alone."

"A year-long outreach and engagement campaign that will bring the inspirational message of **FREEDOM**

EXCLUSIVE CORPORATE FUNDING FOR AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IS PROVIDED BY LIBERTY MUTUAL. MAJOR FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION.
MAJOR FUNDING FOR **FREEDOM RIDERS** IS PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES.
ADDITIONAL FUNDING PROVIDED BY LYNN BAY DAYTON, RODGER & DAWN NORDBLOM, THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING
AND PUBLIC TELEVISION VIEWERS. AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IS PRODUCED FOR PBS BY WGBH BOSTON.



ANY VIEWS, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, OR RECOMMENDATIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS PROGRAM DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THOSE OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES.

RIDERS to citizens everywhere is something that would only be found in public media,” says Paula Kerger, President and CEO of PBS. “Our mission has always been to use the power of public media to transform lives, and FREEDOM RIDERS represents a tremendous opportunity to do just that by uniting all Americans around the importance of civic engagement.”

“FREEDOM RIDERS tells the story of an overlooked piece of not only civil rights history but American history,” says Mark Samels, Executive Producer of AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. “It’s a story that we knew had to be told. The film touches and inspires everyone who sees it and it’s an honor to be presenting it.”



AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is seeking college students from a broad range of backgrounds who will lend diverse voices to the journey. Students will be encouraged to share their experiences and must be eager to learn from their peers, from pioneers in the civil rights movement, and from today’s civic leaders. Students should have strong written communication skills and a commitment to civic engagement.

The **2011 Student Freedom Ride** will provide these students with an opportunity to take part in an inter-generational conversation about the very idea of civic engagement. What form does civic engagement take today? What has changed since 1961? What would inspire today’s students to “get on the bus?” A moving digital media platform, the **2011 Student Freedom Ride** will facilitate the students’

use of both social and traditional media to share their experiences, bringing others along on their journey, and encouraging their friends and classmates to think more seriously about civic activism and the role that it plays in a thriving democracy.

Applications for college student participation are being accepted starting today through January 17, 2011 and can be accessed at <http://www.pbs.org/freedomriders>.

Freedom Riders Forums

In addition to the **2011 Student Freedom Ride**, the outreach initiative will feature a series of public screenings and forums in cities across the country, bringing together original Freedom Riders, historians, filmmakers and today’s civic leaders to share their stories with audiences that may not know the inter-racial, inter-generational, and geographically diverse story of the Freedom Rides.

Freedom Riders Traveling Exhibit

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE has partnered with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to create a large-scale traveling exhibit devoted to the Freedom Rides of 1961. A “mini-museum” of sorts, the exhibit will visit twenty cities across the country in 2011 and will offer an audio guide, accessible from visitors’ cell phones, featuring the voices and stories of the Freedom Riders themselves.

Freedom Riders Online

The first comprehensive online resource for information on this pivotal event in the Civil Rights Movement, *Freedom Riders* online is an invaluable resource for information about the 1961 Freedom Rides. The *Freedom Riders* website offers students, teachers and the general public an interactive site to explore this event and more meaningfully engage in the content and the role of civic engagement in the shaping of society. In addition to a stream of the full film, the site will offer twelve original short films, a fully animated map of the Rides, an interactive roster of the 436 original Riders, nearly two hours of video that illustrates the people, issues and timeline of the Freedom Rides, the application for the **2011 STUDENT FREEDOM RIDE**, and daily dispatches from the ride in May 2011.

Freedom Riders in the Classroom

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE has partnered with Facing History and Ourselves, an international educational and professional development organization, to create comprehensive *Freedom Riders* curriculum materials that will be distributed to high school classrooms nationwide. Through a combination of in-person and online workshops, Facing History will train more than 650 teachers to use **FREEDOM RIDERS** in the classroom, and will present the film and curriculum at multiple educational conferences across the country. Curriculum materials will be available in February 2011. Educator trainings will occur over the course of 2011. AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is also working with Teachers' Domain to develop digital resources for middle and high school students and educators that will enhance the use of **FREEDOM RIDERS** in the classroom.

About AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Television's most-watched history series, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE has been hailed as "peerless" (*Wall Street Journal*), "the most consistently enriching program on television" (*Chicago Tribune*), and "a beacon of intelligence and purpose" (*Houston Chronicle*). On air and online, the series brings to life the incredible characters and epic stories that have shaped America's past and present. Acclaimed by viewers and critics alike, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE documentaries have been honored with every major broadcast award, including twenty-four Emmy Awards, four duPont-Columbia Awards, and fourteen George Foster Peabody Awards, one most recently for *Two Days in October*.

Exclusive corporate funding for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is provided by Liberty Mutual. Major funding provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Major funding for Freedom Riders provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Documentary Investment Group: Lynn Bay Dayton and Rodger & Dawn Nordblum, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and public television viewers. Funding for the 2011 Student Bus Ride provided by Lynn Bay Dayton and the Fledgling Fund. AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is produced for PBS by WGBH Boston.

About PBS

PBS, with its nearly 360 member stations, offers all Americans — from every walk of life — the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches more than 118 million people through television and nearly 21 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS' broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS' premier children's TV programming and its Web site, pbskids.org, are parents' and teachers' most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org <<http://www.pbs.org.org>> , one of the leading dot-org web sites on the Internet.

Complete information on FREEDOM RIDERS and the outreach campaign is available online at pbs.org/freedomriders.

CONTACTS:

Cara White, CaraMar Publicity, Tel: 843-881-1480; cara.white@mac.com
Mary Lugo, CaraMar Publicity, Tel: 770-623-8190; lugo@negia.net

Carrie Johnson, PBS, Tel: 703-739-5129; cjohnson@pbs.org

For photos and additional information, visit pbs.org/pressroom and <http://pitch.pe/38907>