

OFF-AIR event series 2010-2011

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OFF-AIR SERIES CELEBRATES THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FREEDOM RIDES WITH FOUR DEBUT PERFORMANCES Congo Street Theatre, Free Street Theatre, Neighborhood Writing Alliance and Young Chicago Authors Inspired by the 1961 Freedom Rides

DuSable Museum of African American History – Saturday, May 7 at 3:30pm

CHICAGO (March 29, 2011) –Chicago Public Media (WBEZ 91.5 FM) continues its *Off-Air Series* and in collaboration with the Illinois Humanities Council celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the Freedom Rides by producing **Traveling Down Freedom's Main Line: The Freedom Rides at 50** at the DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 East 56th Place, **Saturday, May 7 at 3:30pm**. The event is free, but reservations are required.

From May to November 1961, over 400 black and white Americans risked their lives and freedom to challenge the Jim Crow travel laws that remained in force throughout the South. This historic movement became known as the Freedom Rides, an event that inspired people in both the north and south to become involved in the civil rights movement. These 'Freedom Riders' were committed to non-violent action, yet faced savage beatings, angry mobs, and imprisonment on their journeys; however, their courage and resilience ultimately prompted Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to confront the Interstate Commerce Commission, ending Jim Crow laws in interstate public transportation.

To celebrate the 50th Anniversary and the courage of these 'Riders', four organizations have been commissioned to create new works of literature and theater that will debut at **Traveling Down Freedom's Main Line: The Freedom Rides at 50**, hosted by WBEZ's **Richard Steele**. The works were inspired by the Freedom Riders and honor the legacy of the movement. The four organizations include: **Congo Square Theatre**, an ensemble theatre company that produces definitive and transformative theatre spawned from the African diaspora as well as other world cultures; **Free Street Theater**, which teaches acting and writing skills to youth so they can open their potential to be creative, active participants in their own lives; **Neighborhood Writing Alliance** that provokes dialogue and promotes change by creating opportunities for adults in Chicago to write, publish, and perform works about their lives; and **Young Chicago Authors** that encourages self-expression and literacy through creative writing, performance and publication.

As inspiration for their work, each commissioned group screened *Freedom Riders*, a new documentary directed by Stanley Nelson, a 2002 MacArthur Fellow known for groundbreaking historical documentaries, and produced by WGBH Boston's *American Experience*. Clips from the film will also be screened at the event.

The event is free, but reservations are required. To reserve your seat and for more information, visit www.wbez.org/events.

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In advance of this event, WBEZ will also sponsor the Chicago Premiere of *Freedom Riders* at the DuSable Museum of African American History on **Saturday, April 9 at 2pm**. Following the film will be a post-screening discussion with Director Stanley Nelson and former Freedom Riders Genevieve Hughes Houghton, Thomas Armstrong and Dan Stevens. For more information about this screening or the Illinois Humanities Council *Freedom Riders* series, visit www.prairie.org/freedomriders.

About Off-Air Event Series

The **Off-Air Series** is a production of Chicago Public Media (WBEZ-Chicago), through collaborations with our Partners and friends, designed to bring together public radio fans, their friends and anyone else we can find to experience the rich traditions of Chicago culture. The 2011 season concludes with *What's Your Art? Celebrating the Art Centers of Chicago* on June 4. The print/online media sponsor for the *Off-Air Series* is The Chicago Reader. For tickets and a complete listing of all 2010-2011 events go to: www.wbez.org/events

About Chicago Public Media

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