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Freedom Riders Documentary Nominated for Three Emmy Awards

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ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (September 13, 2011) – The documentary based on Ray Arsenault's award-winning book, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*, has won awards in three categories of the Primetime Emmy Awards from the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

The award categories for the documentary *Freedom Riders*, directed by Stanley Nelson and produced by Laurens Grant, are Exceptional Merit in Nonfiction Filmmaking, Outstanding Writing for Nonfiction Programming and Outstanding Picture Editing for Nonfiction Programming.


The production of the documentary was made possible through a \$1 million grant awarded to WGBH Boston from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The documentary, which aired on the PBS American Experience program, 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, the John Hope Franklin Professor of Southern History at USFSP and a founder of the university's Florida Studies graduate program, spent nearly 10 years researching the *Freedom Rides*, interviewing the Riders and immersing himself in a movement that ultimately desegregated interstate travel and launched a wave of Civil Rights reform.

His book, first published in 2006, was re-published in a 2011 abridged edition. In addition to working on and appearing in the documentary, Arsenault helped curate a traveling museum exhibit and led *Freedom Ride 2011*, a commemorative bus tour with 40 college students from across the country. The book and the documentary inspired Oprah Winfrey to host a *Freedom Riders* reunion on her TV program in May 2011. Arsenault attended and appeared on the show.

Named an Editor's Choice by the *New York Times* and one of the best books of 2006 by the *Washington Post*, *Freedom Riders* won the Southern Historical Association's Frank L. and Harriet C. Owsley Prize as the most important book published in the field of Southern history in 2006. Arsenault is a specialist in the political, social and environmental history of the American South.

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