

1-8-2008

Press release : 2008 : 01 : 08 : Acclaimed Civil Rights Advocate Visits USF St. Pete

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Recommended Citation

Marquez, Melanie, "Press release : 2008 : 01 : 08 : Acclaimed Civil Rights Advocate Visits USF St. Pete" (2008). *USFSP News and Press Releases*. 728.

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Acclaimed Civil Rights Advocate Visits USF St. Pete



Filed under [eNews Newsletter](#), [College of Education](#), [Lecture Series](#), [Homepage Articles](#) on Tuesday, January 08, 2008 by Author: Melanie Marquez.

(St. Petersburg, Fla.) Jan. 8, 2008 – Morris Dees has been working for more than 35 years to eliminate bigotry and increase racial tolerance in the United States and beyond through his work with the Alabama-based civil rights group he founded.

He will share his message of social justice on Jan. 23 with USF St. Petersburg and the community through the generous support of the Debbie and Brent Sembler Florida Holocaust Museum Lecture Series at the College of Education. Dees will speak at 7 p.m. at the Campus Activities Center.

An Alabama native who witnessed the rise of the Civil Rights movement, Dees sold his successful book-publishing company in the 1960s to dedicate himself full-time toward the fostering of racial equality. In 1971, he started the Southern Poverty Law Center, a firm that has become known for its tolerance education programs, its legal victories against white supremacists and its tracking of hate groups, according to the group's Web site, www.splcenter.org.

Dees is the fifth speaker visiting USF St. Petersburg through the lecture series sponsored by Debbie and Brent Sembler.

"The goal of the lecture series is to increase tolerance through education, so in selecting a speaker for this year, we decided that Morris Dees' legacy of civil rights advocacy and tolerance education provided the ideal combination," said Dr. Vivian Fueyo, dean of the College of Education.

A movie was made and aired on NBC about Dees' successful fight against the Ku Klux Klan. It featured a \$7 million settlement against the United Klans of America on behalf of the mother of a young black man lynched by the Klan in Mobile, Ala. Other victories have included several multi-million dollar suits for the sake of social justice.

Dees has published three books and serves as the Chief Trial Counsel for the Southern Poverty Law Center. He devotes his time to suing violent white supremacist groups and developing ideas for the center's tolerance education project, according to the group's Web site.

"We wanted to bring someone whose message has broad appeal for the university and the local community," Dr. Fueyo said. "One of the most important goals I have for the College of Education is that we build partnerships between the college and the community because that's what quality education is all about."

For more information contact Katie Ramsberger with the College of Education at (727) 873-4155.

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