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### **“Created Equal: America’s Civil Rights Struggle” at Mississippi State University Libraries**

MISS STATE – Later this month, the Mississippi State University Libraries and MSU’s African American Studies Program are proud to offer a series of film screenings, discussion forums, and scholarly presentations on the history of civil rights in America. “Created Equal: America’s Civil Rights Struggle” is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) which uses the power of documentary films to encourage community discussion of America’s civil rights history.

Each of the films was produced with NEH support, and each tells remarkable stories of individuals who challenged the social and legal status quo of deeply rooted institutions, from slavery to segregation. The MSU program will feature the films “The Abolitionists,” “The Loving Story,” and “Freedom Riders.” Each film will be screened and programs with noted scholars on the subject will be presented on the following day.

“The films effectively illustrate that the United States is a rising sun,” said Dr. Stephen Middleton, Director of African American Studies, Mississippi State University. “They not only show that the United States subordinated African Americans, they show the growth of the civil rights movement which led to the expansion of rights enjoyed by all Americans today!”

Stephen Cunetto, Administrator of Systems, MSU Libraries, said, “These films chronicle the long and sometimes violent effort to achieve the rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—for all Americans. We are pleased to receive a grant from NEH to provide programming around these films.”

On Wednesday, January 29 at 7:00 p.m. in the MSU Library Auditorium, the film “The Abolitionists” will be screened. “The Abolitionists” vividly brings to life the struggles of the men and women who led the battle to end slavery. On Thursday, January 30, 2014 at 3:00 p.m. Tiffany Patterson, Associate Professor of African American and Diaspora Studies, History and American Studies at Vanderbilt University, will conduct a lecture on slavery in the US and other areas of the Atlantic.

On Monday, February 10 at 7:00 p.m. in the MSU Library Auditorium, the film “Freedom Riders” will be screened. “Freedom Riders” tells the terrifying, moving, and suspenseful story of a time when white and black volunteers riding a bus into the Deep South risked being jailed, beaten, or killed, as white local and state authorities ignored or encouraged violent attacks. Join us on February 11 at 3:00 p.m. in the Library Auditorium for a dynamic presentation by Freedom Rider Dave Dennis followed by a panel discussion with Freedom Riders Dave Dennis, Mary Harrison Lee and Hollis Watkins. The session will be moderated by Dr. Stephen Middleton.

The final film “The Loving Story” will be screened on March 3 at 7:00 p.m. in the MSU Library Auditorium. This is a documentary that brings to life the struggles following a bi-racial marriage between Mildred and Richard Loving. The film documents the legal battle that followed through little-known filmed interviews and photographs shot for Life magazine. On Tuesday, March 4 at 3:00 p.m. in the Library Auditorium Steven Hobbs, Tom Bevill Chairholder of Law, University of Alabama Law School, will present the lecture “The Color of Loving - Marriage as a Constitutional Right.”

Mississippi State University is one of 473 institutions across the country awarded a set of films chronicling the history of the Civil Rights Movement. The powerful documentaries, “The Abolitionists,” “Slavery by Another Name,” “The Loving Story,” and “Freedom Riders” include dramatic scenes of incidents in the 150-year effort to achieve equal rights for all. Both “Freedom Riders” and “The Loving Story” have been awarded Emmys, and “The Abolitionists” was nominated.

The Created Equal film set, materials, and public programs have been made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of its Bridging Cultures initiative in partnership with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Created Equal programs bring communities together to revisit our shared history and help bridge deep racial and cultural divides in American civic life. Visit [www.createdequal.neh.gov](http://www.createdequal.neh.gov) for more information.

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is a nonprofit organization founded in 1994 that promotes excellence in the teaching and learning of American history. Programs include publications, teacher seminars, a national Affiliate School Program, traveling exhibitions, and online materials for teachers, students, and the general public. [www.gilderlehrman.org](http://www.gilderlehrman.org)

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities. NEH grants enrich classroom learning, create and preserve knowledge, and bring ideas to life through public television, radio, museum exhibitions, and programs in libraries and other community places. [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov)

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