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The Lewis Celebrates the History of the Montgomery Bus Boycott with a Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition

September 3, 2009 – (Baltimore, MD) The Lewis announces the opening of *381 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story*, an exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution in collaboration with the Troy University Rosa Parks Library and Museum. *381 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story* will run from September 5, 2009 through January 3, 2010 and is made possible through the generous support of AARP.

381 Days commemorates the Montgomery Bus Boycott that would become the genesis of the modern Civil Rights Movement. The exhibition also documents a key victory for the use of non-violent action to empower social and political change. The Montgomery boycott, ignited by the courageous acts of Rosa Parks, influenced subsequent, powerful events such as the Woolworth lunch counter sit-in in Greensboro, N.C., the Freedom Rides and the Birmingham demonstrations that all led to the eventual passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The exhibition combines photographs, quotes and historical text in a multidimensional collage to convey the vitality of the Civil Rights era. Visitors can immerse themselves in the language, imagery and emotional response to the nation's growing awareness that its founding tenet "all men are created equal" could possibly apply to the entire population.

The historical significance of the exhibition is not lost on Dr. David Taft Terry, executive director of The Lewis and a scholar of the modern Civil Rights movement. "I am excited to bring this powerful exhibition here to Baltimore, so that visitors to the museum can explore, rediscover and reclaim one of the important 20th century American experiences from a fresh perspective." Terry explains, "As one of the only two African American museum Smithsonian Affiliates in the country, we are pleased to be working with the Smithsonian to feature this dynamic exhibition."

African Americans, like Rosa Parks, who rode Montgomery's buses were considered second class citizens, undeserving of basic respect from white drivers and passengers and they were defenseless against the humiliations. After Parks' arrest, professors, doctors, lawyers and preachers stood alongside students, domestic workers and blue-collar laborers and refused to board the buses. A volunteer-based transportation system was developed that effectively shut down the public transit system. The boycott was initially a one-day protest to mark Parks' December 5 court appearance and to register the weariness of those who endured daily assaults to their humanity. The boycott lasted 381 days and evolved into a strategic act of faith and determination that galvanized a people who refused to give up hope.

MORE

Dr. Michelle Wilkinson, Director of Collections and Exhibitions comments “With this exhibition, the museum honors the thousands whose footsteps carried a movement forward.”

“AARP is pleased to underwrite *381 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story*,” said Jennie Chin Hansen Smith, president of AARP. “As an advocacy organization for social change, we hope that our participation in this exhibit will serve as a reminder that activism is an American tradition—one that many of our members who lived through this era experienced, and one that we want to pass down to future generations.”

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people over the age of 50 have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. The organization produces *AARP The Magazine*; *AARP Bulletin*; *AARP Segunda Juventud*; *NRTA Live & Learn*; and a website, www.aarp.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors.

Situated on the historic site of Rosa Parks’ arrest, the Rosa Parks Library and Museum was built in tribute to both Parks and the Civil Rights Movement in Montgomery. This state-of-the-art museum is committed to educating audiences about the boycott’s momentous turning point in our country’s history and its continued effect on society. Visit the museum online at <http://montgomery.troy.edu/museum>.

“Rosa Parks’ extraordinary act was a profound turning point in the civil rights movement,” stated Anna Cohn, director of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES). “We are extremely proud to share this American story of 50,000 courageous people who forced a segregated bus system to open its doors to equality.”

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 50 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. For exhibition description and tour schedules, visit www.sites.si.edu.

The Lewis adds a lineup of innovative and educational programs during the run of the exhibition beginning with a concert by the nationally-renowned performers, **The Freedom Singers on Friday, September 4**. Formed in Albany, Georgia by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1962, this group carries the legacy of African American music through the performance of traditional spirituals, protest songs, and stories of the Civil Rights Movement. On the exhibition opening day, **Saturday, September 5, Ms. Rutha Harris**, one of the original Freedom Singers, will lead a Master Class teaching participants the history of the Civil Rights Movement and traditions of protest songs.

381 Days Programs and Events:

September 2009

Friday, Sept 4, 7:30 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Concert: The Freedom Singers

Hear protest songs and stories of the Civil Rights Movement by the activist singing group, the Freedom Singers. Audiences will be engaged by this musical and oral presentation that raises awareness of the movement.

Free, no museum admission required

MORE

Saturday, September 5, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Master Class with Rutha Harris

Join Freedom Singer, Rutha Harris, to get the behind history of the Civil Rights Movement and traditions of protest songs. Ms. Harris is one of the original coordinating Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Freedom Singers.

Free with museum admission

Saturday, September 12, 11a.m. - 1 p.m.

Story Hour: *Delivering Justice, W.W. Law and the Fight for Civil Rights* by Jim Haskins

Children will listen to a story about Civil Rights activist Westley Wallace Law who led the Great Savannah Boycott to end racial discrimination in the south. Participants will learn freedom songs and create protest posters.

Free with museum admission

Saturday, September 12, 3 p.m.

Exhibition Talk by Marquette Folley

Join Marquette Folley for a discussion and gallery walk of the latest exhibit, *381 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story*. Folley will discuss the significance of the boycott in the Civil Rights Movement and the heroes who helped make it a success. Marquette Folley, project director for this exhibition has over 25 years of cultural research and exhibition development experience with the Smithsonian Institution.

Free with museum admission

Saturday, September 26, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Animation Workshop with Kids on the Hill

Children will view a short animation of the Montgomery Bus Boycott developed by youth from Kids on the Hill, a social change organization; then create their own animated work about social issues.

Free with museum admission

Saturday, September 26, 3 p.m.

Lecture: Women Behind the Movement

Dialogue with historian Elsa Barkley-Brown about female leaders prominent during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Dr. Barkley-Brown is Associate Professor of History and Women's Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. **Free with museum admission**

October 2009

Saturday, October 24, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Illustrator Program with Bryan Collier

Become an illustrator for a day with award-winning children's illustrator Bryan Collier. Collier will read excerpts from his book *Rosa*, discuss how to illustrate stories and have children create their own books. Collier will be available to sign books following the program. Collier's works include *Rosa*, *Uptown*, *Martin's Big Words* and *Visiting Langston*. He has received several Coretta Scott King medals for his books.

Free with museum admission

Friday, October 30, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**The Reginald F. Lewis Museum and TransAfrica Forum Presents
One World, One Freedom**

Join the Museum and the TransAfrica Forum for a symposium examining the quest for racial equality between the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the African Liberation Movement during the 1950s-1960s. This program is in conjunction with the exhibition.

Free program, no museum admission required

November 2009

Saturday, November 7, 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

“Get On the Bus” Museum Bus Trip

The museum hosts a bus trip from Washington DC’s Busboys & Poets to visit the exhibition. Participants will tour the exhibition and participate in a talk with Smithsonian Project Manager Marquette Folley. Price includes transportation, museum admission, a continental breakfast and lunch. For more information, contact 443-263-1829. Bus departs from Busboys & Poets in Washington, DC on 14th and V at 10 a.m. For more information, contact 443-263-1829.

Trip cost, \$35

Thursday, November 12, 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Journey in History School Program- Rosa Parks

Meet the “Mother of the Civil Rights Movement” who helped bring the movement to the forefront with a quiet act of defiance in a one-woman show portrayed by Verna Day Jones.

\$5

Saturday, November 21, 2 p.m.

Poetry Reading with The Black Writers’ Guild of Maryland

The guild presents poetry commemorating Civil Rights activists who participated in the Montgomery Bus Boycott Movement during the 1950s. Poetry readings will take place in the exhibition.

Free with museum admission

Sunday, November 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29; December 6 & 13, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Film Showcase: The Civil Rights Era

- November 1
- **Boycott: Montgomery, Alabama, 1955**
- November 8
 - Let Freedom Sing and Freedom Song**
- November 15
 - 4 Little Girls**
- November 22
 - American Experience - The Murder of Emmett Till**
- November 29
 - Let Freedom Sing and Selma, Lord Selma**
- December 6 and December 13
 - Let Freedom Sing**

Free with museum admission

December 2009

Friday, December 4, 8 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Rebel Music: A Celebration for the People

A celebration of the culture of protest, featuring multicultural music performances ranging from spirituals to jazz, reggae and Afrobeat.

Cost, \$\$ TBD

The Reginald F. Lewis Museum is Baltimore’s premier facility highlighting the history and accomplishments of African Americans with a special focus on Maryland’s African American community. A Smithsonian affiliate, the museum is the East Coast’s largest African American museum occupying an 82,000 square-foot facility with ample permanent and special exhibition space, interactive learning environments, auditorium, resource center, oral history recording studio, museum shop, café, classrooms, meeting rooms, outside terrace and reception areas. The museum is located near Baltimore’s Inner Harbor at the corner of Pratt and President Streets. For more information, please call 443-263-1800 or visit the museum’s website at www.AfricanAmericanCulture.org