



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

THE GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

**San Diego Public Library**



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **SAN DIEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY TO HOST NATIONAL EXHIBITION ON 1961 FREEDOM RIDERS**

*Exhibit is a Companion to Forthcoming AMERICAN EXPERIENCE Film Freedom Riders*

**San Diego, CA** – The San Diego Public Library is pleased to announce that it will host the national traveling exhibition “*Freedom Riders*,” which looks at six months in 1961 when more than 400 courageous Americans - old and young, black and white, men and women, Northern and Southern - risked their lives to challenge segregated facilities in the South. The Exhibition, which will be on display from March 1 to March 31, is a companion to the May 2011 PBS broadcast of AMERICAN EXPERIENCE film ‘Freedom Riders’, directed by Stanley Nelson. San Diego’s own, the Honorable Congressman Bob Filner of California’s 51<sup>st</sup> Congressional District is one of the two most notable surviving Freedom Riders along with Congressman John Lewis of Georgia.

The *Freedom Riders* exhibition combines powerful photography and news coverage of the 1961 Freedom Rides and examines the movement from many perspectives - that of the Riders, the Kennedy administration, and the international community. To enhance the experience, visitors can use their cell phones to access powerful first-hand audio accounts of this dangerous experiment in the fight for civil rights.

The Freedom Riders had a simple but daring plan: to board buses in small interracial groups to test and challenge segregated facilities in the South. The Freedom Riders endured savage beatings, humiliation, and imprisonment, but ultimately, their brave actions and commitment to nonviolence changed America forever. *Freedom Riders* explores this little-known chapter in civil rights history, and explains how the selfless actions of the Freedom Riders laid the groundwork for some of the most important civil rights legislation in our nation’s history.

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The exhibition, created by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and PBS’s flagship history series, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, is funded through a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. “We are pleased to have been selected as a site for this exhibition,” said Library Director Deborah Barrow. “The 1961 Freedom Rides are an inspiring example of what ordinary individuals can accomplish. The actions and the bravery of the Freedom Riders provide invaluable lessons for our young people today, and for anyone who hopes to make a difference in our community, country, or world.”

San Diego Public Library is one of twenty sites nationwide selected to host the Freedom Riders exhibition. The site is sponsoring programs and other events for the public in connection with the exhibition. Please visit the library’s website [www.sandiegolibrary.org](http://www.sandiegolibrary.org) for more information.

*Freedom Riders* is a traveling exhibition developed by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in partnership with AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. Major funding for the traveling exhibition provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Exclusive corporate funding for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is provided by Liberty Mutual. Major funding provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Additional funding provided by Lynn Bay Dayton, Rodger & Dawn Nordblom, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and public television viewers.

#### **About AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

Television’s most-watched history series, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE has been hailed as “peerless” (Wall Street Journal), “the most consistently enriching program on television” (Chicago Tribune), and “a beacon of intelligence and purpose” (Houston Chronicle). On air and online, the series brings to life the incredible characters and epic stories that have shaped America’s past and present. Acclaimed by viewers and critics alike, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE documentaries have been honored with every major broadcast award, including twenty-four Emmy Awards, four DuPont-Columbia Awards, and fourteen George Foster Peabody Awards, one most recently for Two Days in October.

#### **About the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History**

Founded in 1994, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is a nonprofit organization improving and enriching American history education through a wide range of programs and resources for students, teachers, scholars, and history enthusiasts throughout the nation. Gilder Lehrman creates and works closely with history-focused schools; organizes summer seminars and development programs for teachers; produces print and digital publications and traveling exhibitions; hosts lectures by eminent historians; administers a History Teacher of the Year Award in every state and U.S. territory; and offers national book prizes and fellowships for

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scholars to work in the Gilder Lehrman Collection as well as other renowned archives. Gilder Lehrman hosts [www.gilderlehrman.org](http://www.gilderlehrman.org), serving as the gateway to American history online and featuring the quarterly online journal History Now, designed specifically for K-12 teachers and students.

**About the National Endowment for the Humanities**

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, new technologies, museum exhibitions, and programs in libraries and other community places. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available on the Internet at [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov).

Learn about other events at the San Diego Public Library's Central Library and 35 branches, find links to numerous additional resources, or search for materials in the Library's catalog online at [www.sandiegolibrary.org](http://www.sandiegolibrary.org).

*The City of San Diego Public Library – Your Link to the Past and Gateway to the Future*

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