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MPB RECOUNTS “FREEDOM SUMMER 1964” IN MISSISSIPPI

Jackson, Miss. – Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB) commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Mississippi Freedom Summer with a series of 53 public service announcements (PSAs) airing June 9 through August 28 on MPB TV.

By the mid twentieth century, Mississippi’s African Americans had suffered from nearly 75 years of Jim Crow discrimination. In order to break open the closed society and improve their lives, they needed to be able to vote. In the summer of 1964, hundreds of young white volunteers converged in Mississippi for a 10-week voter registration campaign. The results of their efforts still reverberate.

“The contribution of the Freedom Summer of 1964 was monumental to bringing about change in Mississippi and the South,” said Ronnie Agnew, Executive Director of Mississippi Public Broadcasting. “These glimpses into the lives of the people who gave up everything are important to understanding that contribution. Their roles deserve to be known.”

Titled “Freedom Summer 1964,” the series features interviews with individuals who were active in civil rights work that summer. The one-minute PSAs cover topics from the African-Americans struggle to register to vote, to the idea and organization of the Freedom Summer, to the Mississippi Freedom Democrat Party’s challenge in Atlantic City. The PSAs will air daily on MPB TV through August 28 and posted online at mpbonline.org/1964.

Hollis Watkins of Jackson, Mississippi, who helped organize Freedom Summer, remembers warning the young summer volunteers at their training session in Ohio. “If you’re coming to Mississippi, you must know that you should be prepared to be beaten, to go to jail, and to be killed.”

“This series will reacquaint older Mississippians with their history and simultaneously inform younger Mississippians with stories they may not know,” said Edie Greene, MPB producer of the PSA series. “Since I’m not from Mississippi, I didn’t study its history in school. This has been an amazing story to learn. I am honored to be the producer.”

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On Aug. 21, MPB will culminate its Freedom Summer commemoration with the original documentary "1964: The Fight for a Right," airing at 7 p.m. on MPB TV.

MPB's Freedom Summer series and documentary are part of a partnership with the Mississippi Humanities Council (MHC). The program is financially assisted by the National Endowment for the Humanities through the MHC.

Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB) provides instructional and public affairs programming to Mississippians through its statewide television and radio network. MPB enhances the work of educators, students, parents and learners of all ages by providing informative programming and educational resources. MPB's locally-produced programming focuses on the people, resources and attractions that reflect Mississippi's unique culture and diverse heritage. Children's television programs constitute a major portion of the daytime and weekend morning schedules. MPB provides a valuable resource to Mississippians in disseminating information as part of the state's emergency preparedness and response system. Since 1970, MPB has won over 400 national, regional and statewide awards, including Emmy®, Edward R. Murrow and Parents' Choice® Awards. For more information on MPB, its programs, mission or educational resources, please visit www.mpbonline.org.

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