

**AMERICAN EXPERIENCE Presents *Freedom Summer***

Premieres Tuesday, June 24, 2014

9:00-11:00 p.m. ET on PBS

TCA Panelists



**David J. Dennis, Sr. (Dave Dennis)**, who was arrested 30 or more times in relation to civil rights activities in the 1960s, was a Freedom Rider on the first freedom bus ride from Montgomery, Alabama to Jackson, Mississippi in 1961 and served as field secretary for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in Mississippi and Louisiana from 1960 to 1964. In 1963, he established the first African American cooperative in the South, the Ruleville Mississippi Quilting Cooperative, comprised of 18 women from the town of Ruleville.

As co-directors of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), Dennis and Bob Moses led the challenge to the Democratic National Convention in 1964 that resulted in members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party being seated at the convention. Dennis, along with Bob Moses, co-directed the organizing of Mississippi Freedom Summer 1964.

Following Freedom Summer, Dennis continued to organize voters as field secretary for the Southern Education Defense Fund for Racial Equality. In 1972, he organized a successful challenge to the Louisiana Democratic Party structure that resulted in an African American chairman and a majority African American delegation being sent to the national convention—the first time since Reconstruction.

A retired attorney, Dennis has devoted his personal and professional life since the early 1990s to improve education. In 1991, he began working with Bob Moses, the founder of the Algebra Project, to bring an innovative middle school mathematics program to students in areas of Mississippi to increase participation of low-performing students, especially minority students, in the gatekeeper course Algebra I by or before the eighth grade. Without early access to Algebra I, students cannot complete a heavy mathematics program in high school enabling them to go into careers in science and technology. Demand for a program based on this philosophy has expanded Dennis' work efforts over the years to multiple sites in Louisiana, South Carolina, Alabama, North Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas and Virginia through the Southern Initiative Algebra Project.

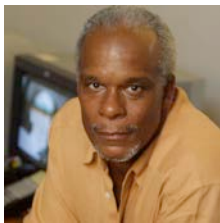
Through public appearances, Dennis shares his experiences in the Civil Rights Movement from 1960-1965, using those experiences to frame his personal analysis of the impact of the movement on society. He also offers his personal observations on education derived from his involvement with the Algebra Project and the impact of that work on current and future education systems in America.



**Linda (Wetmore) Halpern**, raised in Hanover, Massachusetts, entered Beaver College (now Arcadia University) in 1962 and joined the campus chapter of the YWCA. In her sophomore year, the New York YWCA chapter sponsored volunteers, including Linda, to register voters in Raleigh, North Carolina during spring vacation, and it was during that week that Bob Moses and Howard Zinn presented the plans for the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign. Her interest in social justice piqued, Halpern applied and was accepted. After Freedom Summer, Halpern returned to college with an

intense commitment to the “struggle.” After graduation she joined the Peace Corps and taught in West Africa for two years. Although she loved Togo, she decided that her real commitment to social change had to be fulfilled in the U.S.

Upon returning to the states, she taught in Newark, NJ while working on her graduate degree at NYU. After receiving her Master of Arts in Teaching, she moved to Oakland, California, where she taught English for 36 fulfilling years at Castlemont High School. Through sabbaticals, Fulbrights and a leave of absence, she taught in St. Lucia and Costa Rica and studied in South Africa and India, all with the intention of increasing her knowledge and understanding of the cultures that grew out of the African diaspora. She always brought these experiences to the students. To her, this was where she could contribute most effectively as an agent of change. Currently, she mentors new teachers entering Oakland, always with an eye on creating a teaching force that understands how relevant education can be a tool for change.



**Stanley Nelson (Producer/Director/Writer)** is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, MacArthur “genius” Fellow and member of the Academy of Motion Picture Art & Sciences. Nelson is the director of 12 documentary features, including *Freedom Riders*, *Jonestown: The Life and Death of People’s Temple* and *The Murder of Emmett Till*. He is also co-founder and executive director of Firelight Media, which provides technical education and professional support to emerging documentarians. With seven of his films having premiered at Sundance Film Festival and multiple industry awards to his credit, Nelson is acknowledged as one of the premiere documentary filmmakers working today. Nelson is currently in production on *The Black Panthers: Seize the Time*, which is the first in a series of three films Nelson will direct as part of a new multi-platform PBS series entitled *America Revisited*.



**Mark Samels (Executive Producer)** was named executive producer of AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, PBS’ flagship history series, in 2003. Under Samels’ leadership, the series has been honored with nearly every industry award, including the Peabody, Primetime Emmys, the duPont-Columbia Journalism Award, Writers Guild Awards, Oscar nominations, and Sundance Film Festival Audience and Grand Jury Awards. Samels served on the Board of Governors at the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Prior to joining WGBH, Samels worked as an independent documentary filmmaker, an executive producer for several U.S. public television stations and as a producer for the first co-production between Japanese and American television. A native of Wisconsin, he is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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