

## **Mississippi Freedom Project Interviews to be Available on University of Florida Digital Collections for MLK Celebration, Freedom Summer Anniversary**

Gainesville, FL— On January 22, 2014, George A. Smathers Libraries and the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program will release the first round in a series of oral history interviews with civil rights veterans of the Mississippi freedom movement for UF's week of celebration surrounding Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The collection, "The Mississippi Freedom Project," will be available online through UF Digital Collections at <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/freedom/>.

In June, the archive will feature 64 completed interviews for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Freedom Summer, when SPOHP will present the transcripts to interviewees during reunion celebrations in Mississippi. Highlights from the upcoming collection release include an organizing workshop with Lawrence Guyot, Director of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964, and interviews with Liz Fusco, who served as Mississippi Statewide Coordinator of Freedom Schools, and Kelvin Williams, elected the first African American sheriff of Bolivar County since Reconstruction in 2011.

The Mississippi Freedom Project, initiated in 2004 in partnership with the Sunflower County Civil Rights Organization, focuses on interviews with civil rights veterans and notable residents of the Mississippi Delta. Every September, SPOHP sends a team of researchers to the Mississippi Delta to collect interviews and facilitate public workshops and lectures with veteran activists.

Students on the Mississippi Freedom Project research trip conduct oral history interviews in the Mississippi Delta and attend workshops on social justice issues at a variety of historically and culturally significant locations, including the Fannie Lou Hamer Civil Rights Museum in Belzoni and the Sunflower County Freedom Project in Sunflower, Mississippi, as well as others in Cleveland and Glendora. The research trip also sponsors a public history panel each year at Delta State University, and transcripts from these panels will also be made available online to accompany archived video.

The richly diverse thematic focus of the Mississippi Freedom Project interviews will help to promote a broad, interdisciplinary approach to the understanding of African American history, US social history, public policy, psychology, agriculture, and technological change, among other topics. Mississippi Freedom Project interviews are also archived with the Sunflower County Civil Rights Organization for educational use.

The Mississippi Freedom Project is currently being processed using a grant sponsored by George A. Smathers Libraries, in partnership with African American Studies librarian Jana Ronan. Future goals for the project include the development of a Freedom Summer LibGuide, two new podcasts, and a second phase which involves optimizing transcripts

and expanded Mississippi Freedom Project content on SPOHP's website throughout the year.

For more information about the Mississippi Freedom Project, please contact the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida, at 352-392-7168 or online at <http://oral.history.ufl.edu>.