

FREEDOM RIDERS

*a documentary from
American Experience*

*Coming May 16
to all public television stations*

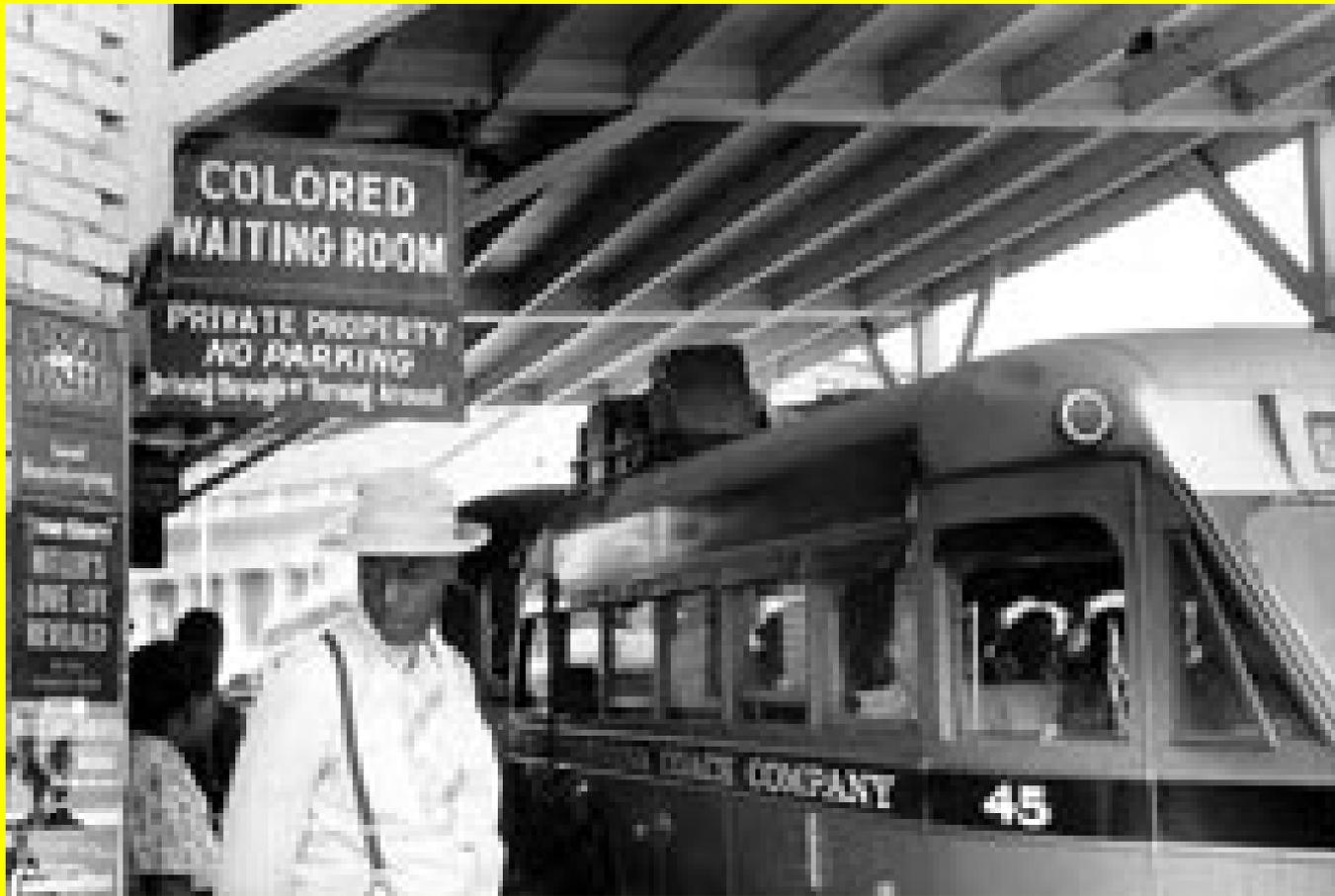
FREEDOM RIDERS

From May until November 1961, more than 400 black and white Americans risked their lives—and many endured savage beatings and imprisonment—for simply traveling together on buses and trains as they journeyed through the Deep South.

FREEDOM RIDERS

Despite two earlier Supreme Court decisions that mandated the desegregation of interstate travel facilities, black Americans in 1961 continued to endure hostility and racism while traveling through the Deep South.

FREEDOM RIDERS



FREEDOM RIDERS

The newly inaugurated Kennedy administration, embroiled in the Cold War and worried about the nuclear threat, did little to address domestic civil rights.



FREEDOM RIDERS

Deliberately violating Jim Crow laws, the Freedom Riders met with bitter racism and mob violence along the way, sorely testing their belief in nonviolent activism.

FREEDOM RIDERS



A Freedom Rider is searched by a police officer in Jackson, Mississippi after being charged with “breach of peace.”

FREEDOM RIDERS

The film features testimony from the Riders themselves, state and federal government officials, and journalists who witnessed the Rides firsthand.

The two-hour *American Experience* documentary is based on Raymond Arsenault's book *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*.

FREEDOM RIDERS



A local headline the day after the Greyhound bus burning outside Anniston, Alabama

FREEDOM RIDERS

“I got up one morning in May and I said to my folks at home, I won't be back today because I'm a Freedom Rider. It was like a wave or a wind that you didn't know where it was coming from or where it was going, but you knew you were supposed to be there.”

— Pauline Knight-Ofuso, Freedom Rider

An Original Freedom Rider

Claire O'Connor

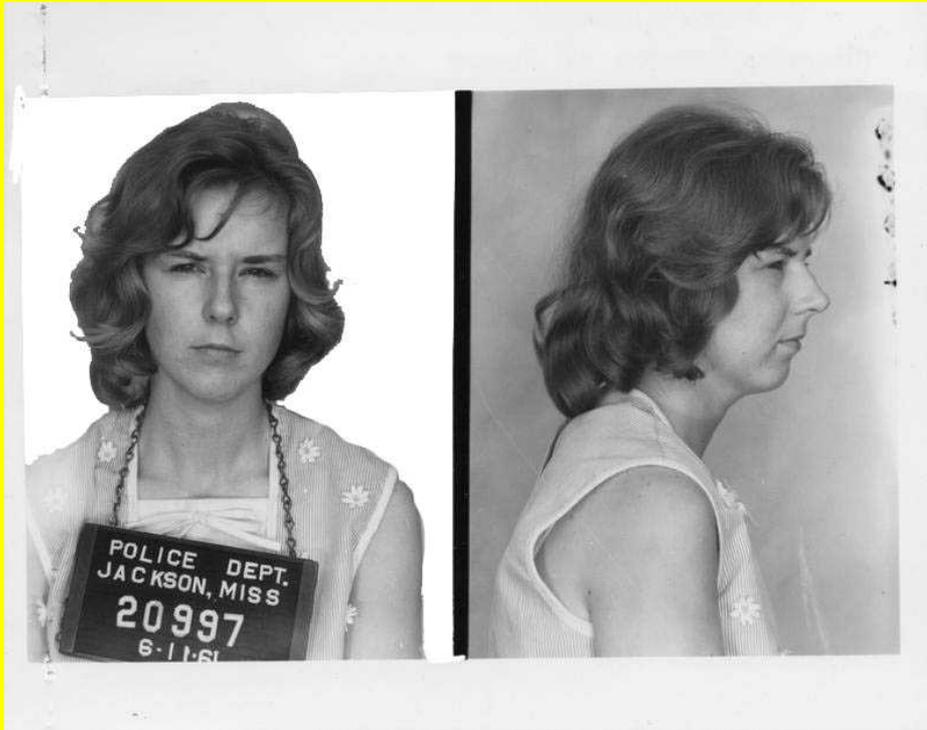
Claire rode from Nashville, TN to Jackson, MS on June 11, 1961 at age 22

She was a nurse and a student at the University of Minnesota

Claire continues to be involved in issues related to racism, poverty, and social and economic inequality in both the grass-roots and policy levels.

She now lives in Eden Prairie, MN

Claire is joining us via phone tonight!



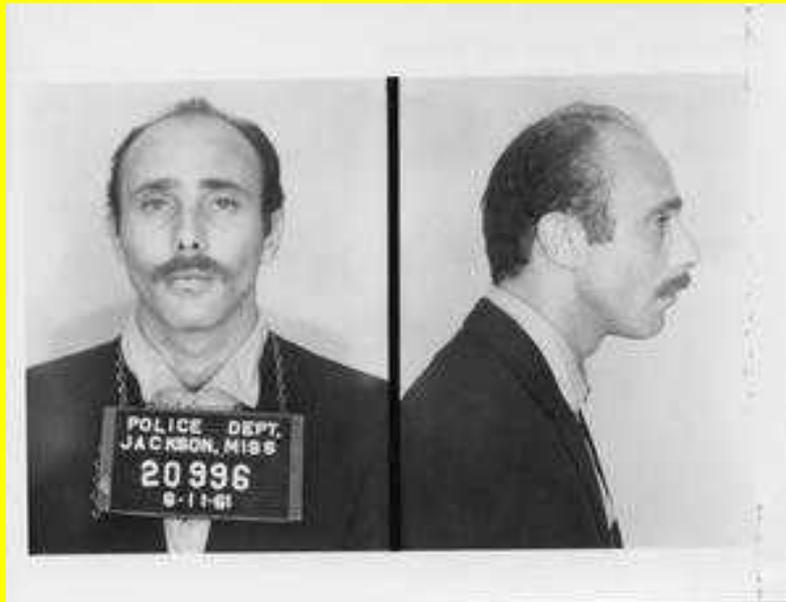
FREEDOM RIDERS

Prospective
Freedom Riders
volunteer to
travel to
Jackson, MS



An Original Freedom Rider

Marv Davidov



Marv rode from Nashville, TN to Jackson, MS on June 11, 1961 at age 29.

He was an art dealer at the time

Marv has devoted his life to the peace movement

He is a professor at St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN

FREEDOM RIDERS



Police in Jackson,
MS arrest the
Freedom Riders
as they attempt to
integrate the bus
station facilities

FREEDOM RIDERS

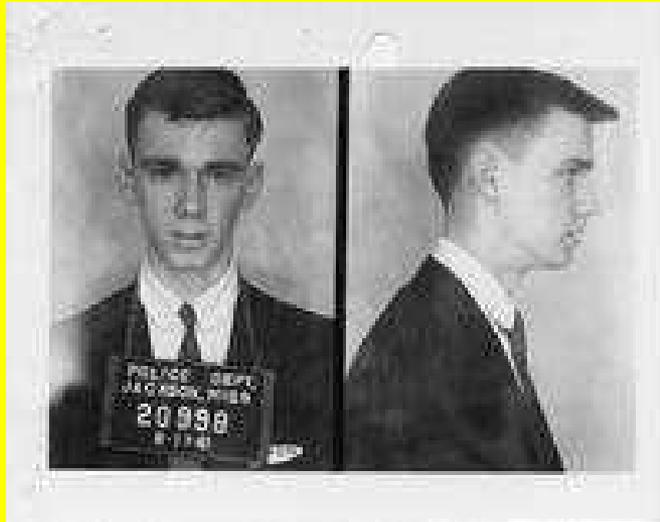
"The people that took a seat on these buses, that went to jail in Jackson, that went to prison, they were never the same. We had moments there to learn, to teach each other the way of nonviolence, the way of love, the way of peace. The Freedom Ride created an unbelievable sense: Yes, we will make it. Yes, we will survive. And that nothing, but nothing, was going to stop this movement."

- --- Congressman John Lewis, an original Rider

An Original Freedom Rider

Gene Uphoff

Gene is originally from
Minneapolis, MN



He rode from Nashville, TN to
Jackson, MS on June 11, 1961
at age 19

Gene was a student at the
University of Minnesota

He had a career as a physician

He now is retired and living in
Portland, Oregon

FREEDOM RIDERS

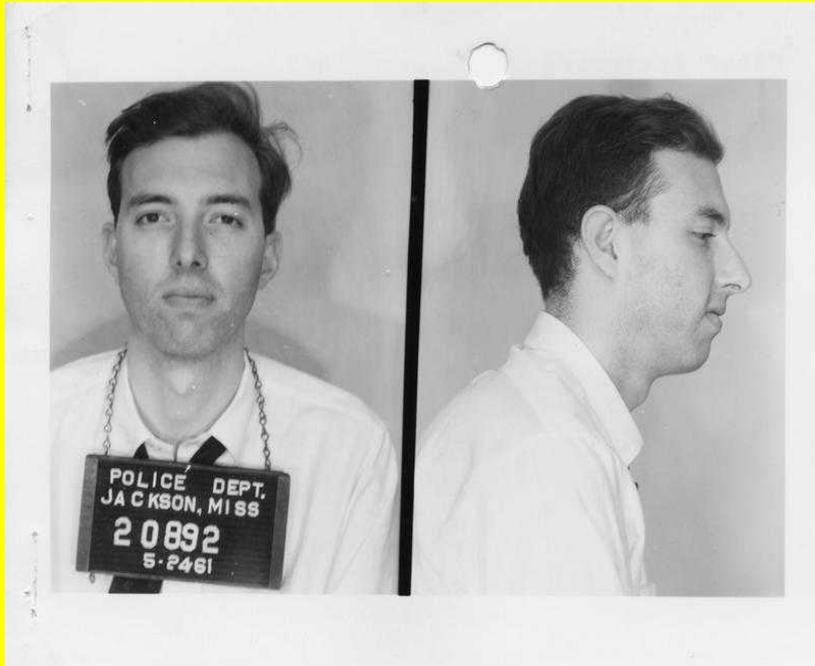
Freedom Riders are held in jail after refusing to post \$500 bonds.

They were arrested on charges of unlawful assembly after trying to get service at a coffee shop in a train station



An Original Freedom Rider

Peter Ackerberg



Peter was from Brooklyn, NY and was a student at Antioch College in OH when he rode from Montgomery AL to Jackson, MS

He was a journalist and lawyer, and he continues to work on legal issues related to racism

Peter now lives in St. Paul, MN

FREEDOM RIDERS

"We were past fear. If we were going to die, we were gonna die, but we can't stop. If one person falls, others take their place."

Joan Trumpauer-Mulholland,
original Freedom Rider

FREEDOM RIDERS



Freedom Riders
prepare to get
on the bus at
Jackson, MS

An Original Freedom Rider

Robert Baum

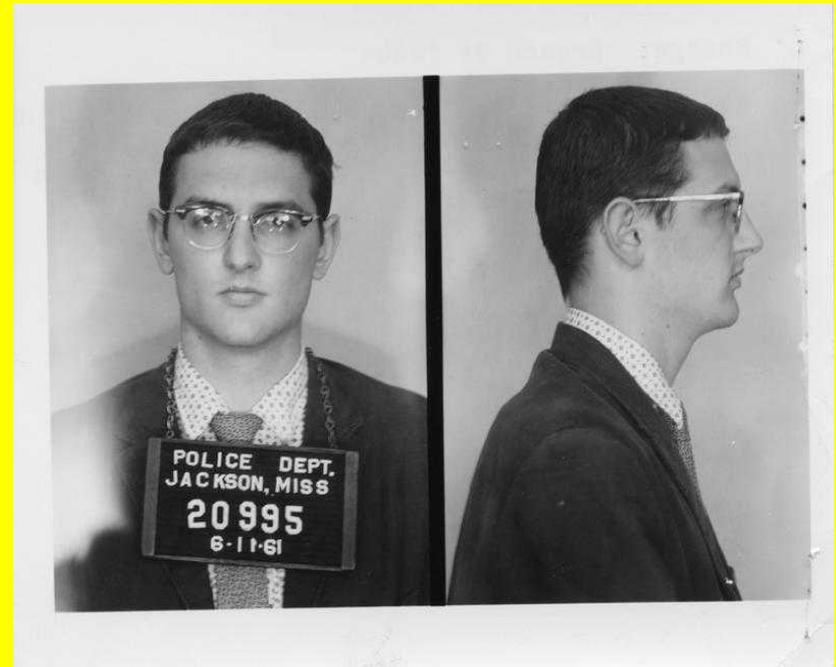
Bob is from Excelsior, MN and
was a student at the U of M

At age 19, Bob rode from
Nashville, TN to Jackson, MS
on June 11, 1961

and another leg

from Monroe, NC from August 17-
Sept. 1, 1961

Bob continues to live and work in
the Twin Cities



FREEDOM RIDERS

The story of the Freedom Riders was broadcast around the world. The Kennedy administration found itself on the defensive. In response, Robert F. Kennedy addressed the *Voice of America* claiming that great progress had been made on the issue of race relations, and that a person of color might one day be president of the United States.

FREEDOM RIDERS



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- On September 22, 1961, after six months of protests, arrests, and press conferences by the Freedom Riders, the Interstate Commerce Commission finally outlawed discriminatory seating practices on interstate bus transit and ordered the removal of "whites only" signs from interstate bus terminals by November 1.

FREEDOM RIDERS

The “Colored Only” signs came down. More than simply a moral victory or a public relations coup, the victory won by the Freedom Riders changed the everyday lives of black travelers throughout the South, through the remainder of the 1960s and beyond.

FREEDOM RIDERS

The Freedom Rides demonstrated the power of nonviolent direct action to achieve strategic victory. Along with the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 and the student lunch counter sit-ins of 1960, the Freedom Rides were one of the earliest demonstrations that Gandhian principles of nonviolence could prove effective in the United States Civil Rights Movement.