



Freedom Riders National Monument Established!

- ***Region Unites: Freedom Riders Park Committee, City Council of Anniston and Calhoun County Commission, celebrate Presidential Proclamation establishing Freedom Riders National Monument in Alabama***
- ***ALABAMA gets TWO civil rights Monuments!***

Background

- Today, Freedom Riders National Monument and the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument were proclaimed by President Obama. The synergy of these units and others will establish Alabama as a top state for civil rights understanding and education.
- Freedom Riders National Monument consists of two locations associated with the 1961 Mother's Day attack, from the bus station to the grocery store, resulting in "the flames that helped ignite the civil rights movement."
- Donations that include the Greyhound Bus Station by the City of Anniston and by the Calhoun County Commission, the four acre site where the bus was burned, are now property of the Federal Government and ready for use as a single unit of the NPS.

Freedom Rider History

- On May 14th, 1961, seven members of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) boarded a Greyhound bus in Atlanta, bound for Birmingham. The Freedom Riders' journey challenged the segregation of interstate transportation.
- It was Mother's day when the bus reached Anniston, Alabama where an angry mob gathered at the Greyhound Bus Station. Tires were slashed and windows broken. The violent crowd followed the bus out of town until the driver stopped to change a tire at the Forsythe Store. There, by the side of a road, the mob torched the bus and attacked its passengers as they fled. Photographs of the bus station and the burning bus were among the most iconic images of the civil rights era.

Recent History

- Greyhound Bus Station looks just as it did in 1961 and the site of the bus burning is now a grassy, four-acre easement along Route 202 outside Anniston. Both sites will comprise the dual locations that will be Freedom Riders National Monument.
- A group of proactive citizens led efforts to acquire the sites and a national non-profit, The Conservation Fund, facilitated their donation from Anniston and Calhoun County to the National Park Service to create the nation's first park dedicated to Freedom Riders.
- The Anniston based Freedom Riders Park Committee was organized by State Representative Barbara Boyd and local educator Georgia Calhoun, Co-chaired by Freedom Rider Bill Harbour and Pete Conroy, of Jacksonville State University.
- The Freedom Riders Park committee is an Anniston-based non-profit 501(c)3 organization now seeking funds to assist with the Monument.
- DONATE HERE: <http://www.yourcommunityfirst.org/donate/>

New National Park for Alabama

- With support from US Senator Richard Shelby, the Freedom Riders Park committee worked closely with the National Park Service (NPS) to organize and conduct a Reconnaissance Survey of Freedom Rider sites in Anniston and Calhoun County. This first step helped to determine that the sites meet NPS feasibility and suitability criteria for a new National Park unit.
- U. S Representative Mike Rogers then filed HR 5882 to establish a Freedom Riders National Historical Park which furthered the effort again. Designating a Freedom Riders National Park unit will highlight the community's unity and respect for diversity, and potentially generate significant economic benefits through heritage tourism.
- Most importantly, the Monument will pay tribute to Americans who fought for civil rights to ensure that the story of the Freedom Riders is never forgotten.

Partnerships

- Also announced today, the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument, along with other civil rights sites and resources in Alabama will further establish Alabama as a rich and meaningful destination for heritage tourism and civil rights education.
- The addition of Freedom Rider National Monument to the National Park system will complement Alabama's existing NPS units including the Tuskegee Institute and Tuskegee Airman National Historic Sites, the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, and even the scenic Little River Canyon National Preserve in Fort Payne, Alabama.

QUOTES

Hank Thomas – The only living Freedom Rider from the Greyhound Bus. Featured on Oprah’s final show, as spokesperson for Freedom Riders. He is a veteran, a successful business entrepreneur and philanthropist living in Atlanta.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_James_Thomas

Call Rebecca Franklin (publicist) – 404-993-1451

“We are indebted to Rosa Parks who in 1956 started us on this journey and to the four N.C. A&T freshmen who began the sit-ins. Now thank you, Mr. President for recognizing the role of the Freedom Riders whose actions furthered the changing of America for all of her people.”

“Especially for black Americans, there’s no better time than right now for all to appreciate the importance of this new Monument. This is our Gettysburg!”

Charles Person – Freedom Rider from the Trailways bus that had entered Anniston just hours after the Greyhound bus was attacked. He was attacked, beaten and imprisoned.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Person

Call: 404-691-8180 or 404-909-3385.

“I used to avoid Anniston, but it’s emerged from hatred and bigotry. It’s a new city and the Freedom Riders are pleased with what it’s become as the place to tell our story, through America’s best story tellers, the National Park Service.”

Bill Harbour – Co-Chairman of the Freedom Riders Park Committee that coordinated efforts to engage the National Park Service. Selected to take part in the first Freedom Riders, imprisoned repeatedly, and cellmate with John Lewis.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_E._Harbour

Call #404-276-9667 or 404-344-0293.

“Thank you President Obama and thank you to those in Alabama’s Congressional delegation who helped us get to this great day.”

“I can’t believe we’ve come so far, from violence to victory for my fellow Freedom Riders.”

Pete Conroy – Co- Chairman of the Freedom Riders Park Committee, Jacksonville State University policy expert, engaged partners including Alabama’s congressional delegation to support National Park Service involvement. Previously, he led efforts to establish Alabama’s Little River Canyon National Preserve, Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge and Dugger Mountain National Wilderness.

http://www.jsu.edu/epic/about_us/epic_director.html

Call #256-282-5784 or 256-782-8010

“We are thrilled! This is one of America’s greatest untold stories. We hope it will help others to hit the reset button, express redemption, embrace diversity, and remember the Freedom Riders as the game changing pioneers they were.”

“Now our work begins, preparing to host interested guests from around the world to provide a meaningful and pleasant experience – we’ll need definitely help and more partners!”

Andrew Schock – The Conservation Fund

“The Conservation Fund is proud to work with the City of Anniston, Calhoun County, the National Park Service and other partners to facilitate the permanent protection of two key sites for this national monument destination to honor the Freedom Riders and their important role in America’s civil rights history.”

“The Antiquities Act continues to be an important tool to protect historical, cultural and ecologically essential places across America, and we thank Alabama's U.S. Congressional Delegation for their support.”

VIDEO & PHOTOGRAPHY

Dropbox link: Interview clips, site images and historic photos.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2xi0sztv45qovey/AAA6P8fbAKjAyHnmJYoAEEPTa?dl=0>

WEB SITES:

www.freedomriderspark.org

DONATION LINK

<http://www.yourcommunityfirst.org/donate/>

Freedom Riders National Monument

Friends and Supporters

U.S. Senator Richard Shelby

U. S. Senator Jeff Sessions

Governor Robert Bentley

US Representative Mike Rogers

Congressman Robert Aderholt

Former US Representative Glen Browder

Calhoun County Commission

Anniston Mayor Jack Draper

Former Anniston Mayor Vaughn Stewart

Anniston City Council

AL State Senator Del Marsh

AL State Representative Barbara Boyd

Jacksonville State University

Alabama Department of Tourism

Alabama Historical Commission

Omega Psi Phi fraternity

The Conservation Fund

Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce

Alabama Power Company

Solutia Inc.

Coosa Valley RC&D

Freedom Riders Park Committee

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