Western Reserve Historical Society Joins Smithsonian National Youth Summit on Freedom Summer

Students connect legacy of voting rights with modern civic engagement during day-long seminar at the WRHS History Center in University Circle

Cleveland, OH—On Wednesday, February 5, 2014 (12 pm EST) Western Reserve Historical Society will participate in the National Youth Summit on Freedom Summer, an online outreach program organized by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. Coinciding with Digital Learning Day, the event at Western Reserve Historical Society will link middle and high school students from across the country in an engaging program centered on the history and legacy of the 1964 youth-led effort for voting rights and education known as Freedom Summer.

The Northeast Ohio Regional Youth Summit held a WRHS will include local guest panelists such as Earnest Harris, Gayle Gadison, Susan Hall, and Leslie Wright. For biographies on each participating panelist can be found on the WRHS website. John Grabowski, the WRHS Senior Vice President of Research and Publications, will facilitate the discussion.

“Participation in the National Youth Summit on Freedom Summer is incredibly important for the Western Reserve Historical Society,” said Kelly Falcone-Hall, Interim CEO of WRHS. “Cleveland’s history in the civil rights movement is a crucial piece of the city’s timeline, and it relates directly to what minority groups in other states were experiencing at the time. It is the responsibility of WRHS to continue participating in the conversation surrounding civil rights movements of the past so that we can continue working toward an equal future.”

While the story of Freedom Summer is one part of the nation’s ongoing struggle to provide equal opportunities for all of its citizens, it is a story that began in Mississippi. As such, the Smithsonian has partnered with the Old Capitol Museum to present the National Youth Summit from Mississippi and to incorporate the perspective of students living in the state five decades
after the youth-led effort to end political disenfranchisement and to improve educational opportunities.

Western Reserve Historical Society is one of 11 Smithsonian Affiliate organizations simultaneously hosting Regional Youth Summit Conversations with local Freedom Summer movement veterans, scholars, and youth. Affiliate Summit sites enable young people from across the country to participate in the conversation originating from the Old Capitol Museum, allowing them to submit questions for the national panel through the webcast’s online chat. The event includes a panel with experts, scholars, and activists such as Dr. Robert Moses, Project Director for Mississippi Freedom Summer [TBC]. Participants can visit http://americanhistory.si.edu/freedom-summer to register, find more information, and to view the program streaming live.

The National Youth Summit is designed to provide students with an opportunity to share their views and debate an issue, and the program aligns with the Common Core Standards for Speaking and Listening. Panelists and the audience will explore the 1964 youth-led effort to end the political disenfranchisement of African Americans and race-based inequity in education in Mississippi. The program will also focus on the role of young people in shaping America’s past and future. Classroom teachers and other participants will receive a conversation kit, designed to provide ideas for leading discussion topics in age-appropriate ways.

This National Museum of American History program is presented in collaboration with AMERICAN EXPERIENCE/WGBH, which airs on PBS stations, and Smithsonian Affiliations. The project is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Verizon Foundation.

About the Western Reserve Historical Society
The Western Reserve Historical Society History Center is located in Cleveland’s University Circle at 10825 East Boulevard. Museum hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm; Sunday, Noon to 5 pm. Admission is $10/adult and $5/child age 3-12. Western Reserve Historical Society members and children two years and under are admitted free of charge. Group rates are available. The History Center is handicap accessible, and includes an elevator to various levels of the museum.

About Smithsonian Affiliations
Smithsonian Affiliations is a national outreach program that develops long-term collaborative partnerships with museums, educational, and cultural organizations to enrich communities with Smithsonian resources. More information is available at www.affiliations.si.edu.
About the National Museum of American History
Through its collections, research and public outreach, the National Museum of American History explores the infinite richness and complexity of American history. It helps people understand the past in order to make sense of the present and shape a more humane future. The museum is currently renovating its west exhibition wing, developing galleries on business, democracy and culture. For more information, visit http://americanhistory.si.edu.

Founded in 1867, Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) is Northeast Ohio’s premier storyteller based on its vast collection of the tangible history of Northeast Ohio—such as: automobiles, airplanes, archives, books, carousel horses, ceramics, decorative arts, diaries, furniture, gardens, garments, genealogical resources, historic buildings, letters, maps, paintings, photographs, shoes, toys, uniforms, and weapons. It is one of the oldest and largest nonprofit regional historical societies in the nation. It presents the lives and activities of 19th-Century settlers through historic Hale Farm & Village in Bath, Ohio, and it presents the glitter and industry of the Gilded Age through the history of Cleveland’s millionaires and entrepreneurs. WRHS offers a wealth of resources to research your family heritage at the History Center in University Circle, Cleveland. For more information on the Western Reserve Historical Society, 10825 East Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44106 visit: http://www.wrhs.org/ or contact Jane M. Mason, Vice President of Communications and Marketing jmason@wrhs.org, 216-721-5722, x 1501.

WRHS is supported in part by the residents of Cuyahoga county through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Sponsorships, bequests, grants, admissions, and other funding are used by WRHS to preserve and enrich the region’s artistic and cultural heritage.

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