

# NAACP NEWS

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Derrick Johnson  
State President



Mississippi State Conference

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NAACP, PRINCETON STUDENTS, MOVEMENT VETS GATHER ON MISSISSIPPI HUMAN and CIVIL RIGHTS NEEDS

**May 8, 2012 - Jackson, MS** - Two-day “**We the People**” conference aimed at both reflecting on past civil rights struggle in Mississippi and addressing the unfinished needs of civil rights today opens **Wednesday, May 9, 2012** at **Tougaloo College**.

All sessions will take place in **Holmes Hall** on the campus of Tougaloo College. The sessions are free and open to the public, and conference planners are urging community activists and young people looking to make a change to attend.

“**Freedom Summer: Setting the Stage for the 1964 Summer Project**” kicks off the series of forums and will highlight the work of those local networks in Mississippi that were essential to the Summer Project. That session begins at **9 a.m.**

Bob Moses, former director of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) and also Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Mississippi Project Director in the 1960s, initiated the conference idea. “During the morning session, we will introduce the field secretaries of SNCC and CORE as well as the local NAACP folks who housed these volunteers. That network of people is not part of the historical record. So, we will figure out to get their stories out,” explains Moses.

Currently a visiting professor at Princeton University, Moses is bringing his Princeton class to Mississippi for the conference.

Another participant will be former Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights John Doar, whose efforts in Mississippi’s civil rights struggle have become almost legendary. In a **2-4 p.m.** afternoon session, “**The U.S. Department of Justice and the Struggle for Civil Rights**,” Doar will address the role of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department in establishing the enforcement provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

According to NAACP Community Liason Frank Figgers, Doar and others taking part in that forum will pay particular attention to the current situation of voter identification in Mississippi. “We will look at the attack on voting for disenfranchised people then and now,” says Figgers.

“Having people understand more deeply how we got the enforcement provision (in the Voting Rights Act of 1965) is crucial to working on identifying a strategy for an affirmative provision for the right to vote today,” adds Moses.

The evening session beginning at **6:30 p.m.**, **“Where Do We Go From Here: The Path Forward,”** will continue that discussion. “Right now, we’re on the defensive with state laws trying to restrict voting through Voter ID laws. We need to explore how to establish voting as an affirmative right in the Constitution like the Second Amendment’s right to bear arms,” says Moses.

**“Mississippians’ Economic Struggle: Slavery by Another Name”** is the last session on **Thursday, May 10, 2012** from **9-11 a.m.** Participants will examine the issue of work, focusing on how African-Americans have been generally assigned a certain kind of work or are basically overlooked in terms of works, says Moses. Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP President Derrick Johnson, author Douglas Blackmon (*“Slavery by Another Name”*), United Auto Workers President Bob King, and African-American Civil War Museum President Frank Smith will lead the discussion with the aim of to developing an offensive strategy in Mississippi suitable for the 21st century.

“The right to work and the right to unionize are the same thing. How the country extended slavery right into World War II in Alabama and Mississippi is crucial to looking for strategies that will provide work for people in the 21st century,” says Moses.

Figgers agrees. “The issues we faced back then are the same issues we face today. We don’t have an in-depth understanding and haven’t developed an appreciation of where we are and how we got here. This continuing struggle for openness and inclusion affects everyone.”

To register in advance or if you have any questions, please contact Cynthia Woodall at 601.720.3346 or via email to [cfwoodall@gmail.com](mailto:cfwoodall@gmail.com). Partners for “We The People” are the Mississippi NAACP, Tougaloo College, Center for African American Studies at Princeton University, The Algebra Project, The Young People’s Project, Veterans of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement, and the SNCC Legacy Project.

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