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NEWS RELEASE

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ARCHITREATS: FOOD FOR THOUGHT PRESENTATION *THE FREEDOM RIDERS COME TO ALABAMA* BY MILLS THORNTON AT THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

ArchiTreats: Food for Thought continues another year of informative talks on Alabama History at the Alabama Department of Archives and History. Join us at **noon** on **Thursday, May 19, 2011** as **Mills Thornton** presents *The Freedom Riders Come to Alabama*. This presentation is in conjunction with the statewide *Becoming Alabama* initiative.

May 20th marks the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Rides, when racially integrated groups of volunteers attempted to ride interstate buses from Washington to New Orleans to test newly enacted court orders prohibiting segregation in bus seating and terminals. The riders were met with extreme violence in Alabama – first in Anniston, where the bus was attacked and set afire, and in Birmingham and Montgomery, where mobs attacked and savagely beat the riders. This talk will describe the origins of the riots and will focus on their impact on the city of Montgomery. It will also seek to explain why the riots became the turning point in the history of race relations in Montgomery.

Montgomery native Mills Thornton recently retired as professor of history at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Thornton received his bachelor's degree with high honors from Princeton University in 1966, and his doctorate from Yale University in 1974, joining the faculty of the University of Michigan in that year. His book, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860*, published in 1978, received the Dunning Prize of the American Historical Association. His second book, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma*, published in 2002, received the Liberty Legacy Prize of the Organization of American Historians. During 2007-08, he served as the Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions at the University of Cambridge in England. He is currently working on a new book which examines the evolution of the Democratic Party in Alabama during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

This commemoration event is one in a series of programs affiliated with *Becoming Alabama*, a statewide partnership of state agencies, historical groups, and cultural organizations to commemorate the coinciding anniversaries of the Creek War and War of 1812, the Civil War, and major events in the civil rights movement. For more information on *Becoming Alabama*, visit <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/BA/>.

This ArchiTreats presentation is made possible by the Friends of the Alabama Archives and a grant from the Alabama Humanities Foundation, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The public is invited to bring a sack lunch and enjoy a bit of Alabama history. Coffee and tea will be provided by the Friends of the Alabama Archives. For more information, call (334) 353-4726.

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