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FOOD FOR THOUGHT PRESENTATION ON NOVEMBER 17 AT NOON THE BLACK BELT: A CULTURAL SURVEY OF THE HEART OF ALABAMA PRESENTED BY VALERIE BURNES

Montgomery, AL (10/31/16) - *Food for Thought* continues another year of fascinating and informative lunchtime lectures on the rich history of Alabama at the **Alabama Department of Archives and History** on **Thursday, November 17 at 12:00 pm**. Valerie Burnes will present *The Black Belt: A Cultural Survey of the Heart of Alabama*.

Encompassing 23 counties in the heartland of Alabama, the people and culture of the Black Belt region, named for its dark, rich soils, have helped shape the history of the state. This month, through stunning photography and stories from her 2015 book, *Visions of the Black Belt*, Valerie Burnes will explore the region's complex cultural evolution from its days as the center of antebellum wealth to the historic architecture and rich arts traditions that remain today.

A native of Talladega, Valerie Pope Burnes began her sojourn in Alabama's Black Belt as a student at Judson College in Marion. Upon graduation, Burnes worked at Judson for two years before attending Auburn University, where she earned a PhD in history in 2012. Her dissertation examined the lives of African Americans in Perry County from slavery, through the Civil Rights Movement, and into the 21st century. After teaching at Judson, Burnes and her husband Brian, moved to Livingston to teach at the University of West Alabama (UWA), where Burnes is an Assistant Professor of History. She served as Director of the Center for the Study of the Black Belt at UWA from 2008 to 2014. During this time, she founded the Black Belt Archives, the Black Belt Hall of Fame, and the Black Belt Oral History Project. Her book, *Visions of the Black Belt: A Cultural Survey of the Heart of Alabama*, in conjunction with photographer Robin McDonald, examines the complex history of the region from an outsider who developed a love for her adopted land. It was published by the University of Alabama Press in 2015. Copies will be available for purchase at this Food for Thought presentation.

Food for Thought 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 brown bag lunch. Complimentary beverages are provided. **Admission to Food for Thought is always FREE.**

The Alabama Department of Archives and History is located in downtown Montgomery, directly across the street from the State Capitol. It is the state's government records repository, special collections library and research facility, and is home to the Museum of Alabama, the state history museum. The Archives and Museum are open Monday through Saturday, 8:30 to 4:30. To learn more, visit www.archives.alabama.gov or call (334) 242-4364.

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