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SOUL OF A PEOPLE: WRITING AMERICA'S STORY
SCREENING AT LOUISIANA STATE EXHIBIT MUSEUM ON
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2009 AT 12:30, 1:30 & 2:30 PM

Smithsonian Channel and Louisiana State Exhibit Museum revisit FDR'S Federal Writers Project in this powerful new documentary

Shreveport, LA – (Oct. 26, 2009) – It was a time of unparalleled national crisis. As millions of Americans faced unemployment, vanishing life savings, banks foreclosing on homes and feeling a general loss of hope, Americans turned to a newly elected President to lead them out of this turbulent time.

It sounds eerily like today's current events. But the Smithsonian Channel's "Soul of a People: Writing America's Story," screening at the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum on Saturday, November 14th at 12:30, 1:30 & 2:30 PM shows that the Great Depression also created a unique opportunity to capture the essence of America. The documentary explores one of the most controversial public assistance programs of the Great Depression.

The Federal Writers Project was one of four arts programs under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Project employed thousands of unemployed writers, including Richard Wright, Saul Bellow and John Cheever, to fan out across America, interview its citizens, and produce a portrait of the USA from the ground up in a series of state travel guides. They captured a unique portrait of 1930s Americana. But what began as a program to create guidebooks for every state ended up igniting a storm of controversy when writers sought out not only the triumphs of America, but also its tragedies.

At its peak, the Project employed over 6,600 people in all 48 states. They included a handful of published authors, old newspaper reporters and former school teachers. Two of its better-known workers, Studs Terkel (in one of his last interviews before passing away in October 2008) and Stetson Kennedy, are interviewed for the documentary.

In addition to Kennedy and Terkel, the documentary features interviews with a diverse group of leading authors, poets, and historians, including Douglas Brinkley and David Bradley, who provide witty and heartbreaking insights into the Project.

Filmed entirely in high definition, "Soul Of A People: Writing America's Story" premiered on Smithsonian Channel on September 6th. It is a Spark Media Production produced for Smithsonian Networks™ with a major funding grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is produced and directed by Andrea Kalin and based on the book, "Soul Of A People," by David A. Taylor. Taylor also serves as co-producer and co-writer for the documentary. Award winning actress Patricia Clarkson is the narrator.

"This is the perfect show for Smithsonian Channel," said David Royle, Executive Vice President of Programming and Production. "It defines our mission of telling America's stories with our distinctive voice. This is a story that speaks to our times."

"Soul of a People" is screening at the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum on Saturday, November 14th at 12:30, 1:30 & 2:30 PM. For more information, call Cindy Grogan @ (318) 632-2020 or cgrogan@sos.louisiana.gov or visit www.friendsoflsem.com and <http://www.SmithsonianChannel.com>.