



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL OFFERS MONTHLONG TRIBUTE TO BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN FEBRUARY

WASHINGTON, DC, February 1, 2010– **Smithsonian Channel** honors the legacy of African Americans all February long with programming dedicated to Black History Month. From Muhammad Ali to Louis Armstrong to Zora Neale Hurston, the contribution to our nation's culture and history on behalf of Black Americans is immeasurable. Smithsonian Channel sheds light on some of those who have shaped our nation.

Smithsonian Channel Black History Month Programming:

SOUL OF A PEOPLE: WRITING AMERICA'S STORY – Tuesday, February 2 at 9pm ET/PT

This remarkable documentary explores one of the most controversial public assistance programs of the Great Depression. The Federal Writers Project was one of four arts programs created under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The project employed thousands of unemployed writers, including the future icons Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston and Ralph Ellison, to fan out across America, interview its citizens, and produce a portrait of the United States from the ground up, in a series of state travel guides. They captured a unique portrait of 1930's 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.

SMITHSONIAN SPOTLIGHT: NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY – Tuesday, February 2 at 10:30pm ET/PT

The idea of establishing a museum dedicated to presenting and preserving the African American experience was first considered not long after the Civil War. It took well over a century, however, before Congress, in 2003, finally mandated the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The building isn't finished yet, but the first exhibit is already assembled – an extraordinary collection of photographs of this country's most celebrated and influential African Americans. Museum director Dr. Lonnie Bunch discusses his efforts to not only design the museum, but to fill its shelves with objects, documents and artifacts that capture and reflect the African American experience.

SMITHSONIAN SPOTLIGHT: SCURLOCK STUDIO – Thursday, February 4 at 7:30pm ET/PT

Beginning in 1911, Addison Scurlock's photographs portrayed African Americans in a way that wasn't often seen. With the help of his two sons, George and Robert, the Scurlock Studio mastered the photographic portrait and captured the essence of Black Washington. Their portraits, photographs of weddings, graduations and families stand as

a visual record of not only Washington, DC, but of African American culture. The Scurlocks created images to resist the racial stereotypes of their time and, in the process, produced truly fascinating art.

LIVES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD: NELSON MANDELA – Saturday, February 6 at 8pm ET/PT

Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison for standing up for what he believed in. Slowly, from the remote prison on South Africa's Robben Island, he galvanized the world around his struggle to end apartheid. When Mandela was released from prison, he entered a world that had been profoundly shaped by his dream. *Lives That Changed The World: Nelson Mandela* tells the story of Nelson Mandela through the stories of nine people who were inspired by that dream, including F.W. DeKlerk, former Prime Minister of South Africa, and Mandela's daughter, Zindzi, who continues her father's legacy through her work with the children of South Africa.

LIVES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD: MUHAMMAD ALI - Saturday, February 6 at 9pm ET/PT

Muhammad Ali is considered one of the greatest athletes of all time. *Lives That Changed the World: Muhammad Ali* shows that he is also one of the most influential men of our era. This unique documentary tells the story of Ali through the human faces and voices of nine lives that he has inspired, including, his fight doctor, Ferdie Pacheco, and Etan Thomas, a professional basketball player and poet who was inspired by Ali to work for change.

SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL'S SOUND REVOLUTION: SOUNDS OF JAZZ - Premieres Monday, February 8 at 8pm ET/PT

Jazz was perhaps the first great American art form of the 20th Century. Award-winning actor Morgan Freeman tells the story of the first few decades of jazz, beginning at the mouth of the Mississippi, in the city widely acknowledged as its birthplace, New Orleans. He follows jazz's journey from its origins as a mixture of African, Classical European and Blues; through the great Dixieland days of Louis Armstrong and King Oliver; to the swing and big band eras of Duke Ellington and Count Basie, when it became the most popular music in the country.

ABOUT SMITHSONIAN NETWORKS

Smithsonian Networks (SNI/SI Networks L.L.C.) is a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution. It was formed to create new channels that showcase scientific, cultural and historical programming largely inspired by the assets of the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum complex. The network features original documentaries, short-subject explorations and innovative and groundbreaking programs highlighting America's historical, cultural and scientific heritage. Visit them on the internet at www.smithsonianchannel.com.

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