

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER RECEIVES NEH GRANT FOR DOCUMENTARY ON THEMES OF *LINCOLN: THE CONSTITUTION AND THE CIVIL WAR* EXHIBIT

Philadelphia, PA (July 15, 2005) - The National Constitution Center announced today that it has won a highly competitive \$30,000 planning grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to work on the beginning stages of a three-part television documentary on the themes of the Center's new changing exhibit, *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War*. The three themes of the exhibit are secession, abolition of slavery and the curtailment of civil liberties in the time of war. The series is planned for 2009 to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

The National Constitution Center is developing the project with critically acclaimed film director Stanley Nelson, who, with his wife Marsha Smith, leads Firelight Media. Nelson's most recent documentary "Sweet Honey in the Rock," was a PBS "American Masters" film and premiered June 29, 2005. "Sweet Honey in the Rock" is a Grammy Award-winning African American female a cappella ensemble.

"This is truly an amazing opportunity for the National Constitution Center," said Richard Stengel, President and CEO of the Center. "It is an honor to work with the talented Stanley Nelson in developing this documentary to honor Lincoln's legacy. Our new exhibit gives visitors a glimpse into the life and times of Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. This series will provide an even deeper look into the themes it explores, the enormous challenges Lincoln faced, how the Constitution guided the course he steered for the nation, and how that course put us on the path to becoming the country we are today."

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ADD ONE/ NEH GRANT FOR LINCOLN DOCUMENTARY SERIES

Nelson is perhaps best known for his groundbreaking historical documentary films that illuminate critical but overlooked history. His 2003 film, "The Murder of Emmett Till," was broadcast nationally on PBS's "American Experience" to rave reviews, and Nelson went on to win the Primetime Emmy for Best Directing, nonfiction; the Special Jury Prize at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival; a coveted award from the International Documentary Association; and the highest honor in broadcast journalism, and the George Foster Peabody award, among many others.

But Nelson's work spans the range of documentary forms. His 2004 "A Place of Our Own," semi autobiographical look at the African American middle class, moved audiences to tears at the Sundance Film Festival documentary competition and in national broadcast on PBS's acclaimed series "Independent Lens." His 2001 film, "Running: the Campaign for City Council," highlighted the impact of campaign finance reform on local elections in New York City and was honored with the Henry Hampton award from the Council on Foundations and a CINE Golden Eagle. Nelson is also a 2002 MacArthur "genius" Fellow.

Nelson cites as his greatest achievement the impact of his film "The Murder of Emmett Till" in the recent reopening of the investigation of the 1955 murder of a 14 year-old black boy for whistling at a white woman. In its announcement of this historic move, the U.S. Justice Department cited the presence of witnesses unearthed in the film as the major factor in their decision. The massive card and letter-writing campaign engineered by Nelson's production company doubtless made a difference as well. In the investigation, Emmitt Till's body was recently exhumed.

Located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, the National Constitution Center is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and its relevance to Americans' daily lives. Opened on July 4, 2003, the museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising".

ADD TWO/NEH GRANT FOR LINCOLN DOCUMENTARY SERIES

From June 10 through November 4, the museum is also featuring its first new traveling exhibition, *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War*. The Center is open seven days a week, and admission is \$9 for adults and \$7 for seniors ages 62 and up, children ages 4-12, and active military personnel. Children ages 3 and under are free. Group rates are also available. For more information, call 215.409.6600 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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