

# Utah's Freedom Riders Script

## **NARRATION**

FIFTY YEARS AGO, THE NATION'S NEWS WAS FILLED WITH IMAGES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE IGNITING THE SOUTH.

## **FRANCE DAVIS**

And particularly for me was the engagement of black and whites working together on those freedom rides, getting on the bus up north and riding across the Mason-Dixon Line into the south

## **NARRATION**

A HANDFUL OF ADVOCATES FIGHTING FOR THEIR NOTION OF CIVIL JUSTICE. IN AN EXTRAORDINARY TIME IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

## **BETTY SAWYER**

It was exciting to me. it was one of those things you're being a part of history. It wasn't like you were watching. So we couldn't wait to be able to get out there and do something. When do we get to stand, and when do we get to sit in? When do we get to do those things?

## **FRANCE DAVIS**

And there were some great people of all types, all colors, all races, all religions who came alongside and said hey this is a worthwhile cause, I want to participate, I want to do my part.

## **ARCHIVAL FILM, SELMA MARCH, NUN:**

These ideals expressed here by these people have been mine for a long time. I have an opportunity to do something about it now.

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## **JOHN FLOREZ**

And it's I guess it's kind of like th-how this country was started-people who were willing to sacrifice their lives, that's a movement when you when you get fever that that fever that takes place and once that takes place it's difficult to stop,

## **NARRATION**

THE FEVER WOULD SPREAD. JUMPING STATE LINES. JUMPING RACE, COLOR AND CREED. SOON, FREEDOM RIDERS WERE FOUND IN EVERY CORNER OF THE NATION.

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# TITLE: UTAH'S FREEDOM RIDERS

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## DARIUS GRAY

We often like to point at the southern states in this nation and say that they had a problem, no here in Utah we had a problem in accommodations, in in jobs...

## JOHN FLOREZ

And a t that time the only jobs that the African American person could get was primarily on the railroad, those labor jobs or government job was the post office.

## DARIUS GRAY

There was discrimination in hotels here.

Nat King Cole was denied accommodation at the hotels here and had to stay with black families. Lagoon the amusement park up in Davis County had a restricted swimming pool - blacks were not allowed in the swimming pool or on the ballroom floor.

## JOHN FLOREZ

We'd go over to the Capitol Theatre- which they had the Perils of Pauline, and Tarzan- that series you'd go to every Saturday morning and you get there early, but it just so happened that um when we got there all the Mexicans and all the black kids would, had to go up in the balcony. So, right away blacks or Mexicans up here and all the rest of the white people down there.

## MARY GREEN

I can remember at ... age 8... because I remember the movie... **Home of the Brave**. And there was a black actor in it.

I just remember my mother saying, why are they showing that movie, saying we're the home of the brave and the land of the free? And we're not!

But it just gave me a funny feeling about being an American, and there were so many things I couldn't do.

And we picketed because, you know, we had to sit upstairs. So, 8 years old on the picket line. Because it was like in my household, you made some kind of statement.

## NARRATION

THROUGHOUT THE 1950'S, UTAH'S CIVIL RIGHTS BANNER WAS CARRIED BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE, OR THE NAACP. THEY FOUGHT DISCRIMINATION IN STORES AND BOWLING ALLEYS. BUT MUCH OF THE STATE STILL REMAINED SEGREGATED – PARTICULARLY HOUSING.

## **EXCERPT FROM THE GHETTO (KUTV)**

### **PATTI CARPENTER**

One fellow for instance said he had vacant apartments, but he didn't have any facilities for negroes.

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### **JOHN FLOREZ**

What realtors basically did is, they put all the Negroes and foreigners over on the west side, and all the whites would go over on the other side. So in essence you didn't want to mix the people.

### **NARRATION**

FOR A YOUNG PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH, SEGREGATION WAS A FACT OF LIFE. AS A YOUNG STUDENT IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH, FRANCE DAVIS HAD FOUGHT AGAINST RACIAL INTOLERANCE WITH MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR IN THE MARCH FROM SELMA TO MONTGOMERY.

### **FRANCE DAVIS**

The real challenge for that march was that it was kind of a fearful activity because we were guarded by the federalized Alabama national guard wearing their confederate flags on their shoulders, but also standing beside them off times was people in a different uniform - the Ku Klux Klan, and there bayoneted guns for the soldiers and then them having their rifles. So, it was kind of scary in that sense, but it was also a sense that we would bringing about the kind of change that would affect everybody - not just African Americans, but everybody in the community so we were excited about that, and as a student we didn't have any vested interest - we didn't own property, we didn't have jobs that we could lose or houses that would be at stake if we couldn't pay the bills. So we could risk and that's what students did in those days.

### **NARRATION**

WHEN HE ARRIVED IN UTAH, HE DISCOVERED THE BATTLE WAS FAR FROM OVER.

### **FRANCE DAVIS**

Well, the first thing that hit me right in the face was the University had helped me to secure an apartment, I had paid a deposit, had a telephone installed, and when I showed up to move in the landlord said 'absolutely not'. So it was first of all a housing issue. Once the housing issue was solved as I went about the community eating at various restaurants being stared at and called names.

So it was a like coming into a place where that had been closed off from the rest of the world and many of the changes that had occurred in Berkeley or that had taken place in Alabama-Selma to Montgomery had not yet happened here.

### **NARRATION**

IN 1961, 1500 PEOPLE PACKED THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH UNION BUILDING TO HEAR

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING. THE RHYTHMIC CADENCE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST PREACHER INSPIRED HIS AUDIENCE.

## MARY GREEN

I mean, I was awe-struck. Martin Luther King expressed things that I felt, and could not say. Things that I wish I could've said, with such power.

## NARRATION

AND STEADY VOICES CALLED FROM THE HEADLINES OF THE TIMES. IN 1964, THREE CIVIL RIGHTS WORKERS DISAPPEARED IN MISSISSIPPI. AND A UNIVERSITY OF UTAH STUDENT HEARD A CALL TO ACTION.

## STEPHEN HOLBROOK

It just sort of energized me and I said I, you know they can't get away with this, and so I called friends in Salt Lake associated with NAACP and asked them if there was a way for me to go down to Mississippi and be part of the effort

There were several thousand students um of all races and religions and who went in to Mississippi those several summers-the freedom summers, and I think that they all had a sense of that this is something bigger than myself.

But there was a sense down there of um of a real you know daily what's gonna happen next? As I recall there were about fifty churches burned or bombed to the ground that summer and several thousand people were arrested in various parts of Mississippi.

My own experience that first summer was that I took a an African American woman down to register to vote in the Hinds County Courthouse -and I went around and started taking pictures of the 'whites only' sign-white only fountains, white only restrooms-that sort of thing, and a gentleman that turned out to be the Sherriff of Hinds County came up and arrested me for breach of the peace, and then eventually they took us into a cell that I was later told was called the hot box. It was the middle of summer and apparently they had a means to turn the heat on in this particular cell. So I was there for two or three days.

And it was a very good example of the of the terrific strategy that the civil rights movement had planned, and getting students from the north who if something happened to them somebody would care and somebody would do something about it-

It really was a very impressive experience to see basically over the state thousands of people who are out taking risks and these were people who they couldn't leave, I mean they were there. So, whatever was going to happen was going to happen to them, whereas we white kids were able to leave. We had people, you know, caring about us and some sort of sense of protection.

When I came back to Utah from Mississippi I felt part of a larger movement because of my experience there with people from all over the country. I certainly was aware that you know we had a relatively small group in Utah but my sense was that we all felt that we were part of something bigger than ourselves and bigger than our locality - that everything that we did was part of something that was contributing to the whole.

## **NARRATION**

IN UTAH, ADVOCATES KNEW THEIR PROGRESS WOULD BE MEASURED BY THE ENGAGEMENT OF THE STATE'S LARGEST AND MOST INFLUENTIAL CULTURAL INSTITUTION.

## **STEPHEN HOLBROOK**

The most important institution in the state in terms of its impact locally and internationally is the LDS church, and our awareness of the needs of people who suffer whether it be because of race or poverty is frequently either enhanced or ignored because of what the largest institution in the state decides to do.

## **DARIUS GRAY**

Well, it played much the same role as the white churches played in the south - it didn't play, it didn't want to be involved. It was the same attitude here, with the LDS Church. It was a civic matter, and it wasn't religious. And the church did not participate or support openly or say things openly one way or the other.

As you would expect not everyone held the same view, and there were those who were more progressive and those who were more conservative; there were those spoke at least privately against civil rights, and then those who were trying to champion civil rights privately and behind the scenes, and so yeah there was that split but I think it was reflective of the sort of situation we had in the nation as a whole. We were trying to find our way and it didn't come easily.

## **NARRATION**

IN 1963, MORMON CHURCH APOSTLE HUGH B BROWN – OFTEN IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THE MOST PROGRESSIVE MORMON VOICES—SPOKE ON THE SUBJECT OF CIVIL RIGHTS.

## **[NEWSREEL FOOTAGE]**

## **HUGH B. BROWN**

We call upon all men everywhere, both within and outside the Church, to commit themselves to the establishment of full civil equality for all of God's children.

BUT CONCERNS WITH CHURCH DOCTRINE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR WOULD PLAGUE THE MORMONS FOR 15 MORE YEARS.

IN 1965, THE CHURCH WAS ASKED TO OPENLY AND ACTIVELY DISAVOW DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING.

## **STEPHEN HOLBROOK**

There were people who were telling us that one of the reasons that the legislature wasn't anxious to pass the bill opening housing up to all races was that BYU was concerned about that they might have to integrate the dorms.

## **NARRATION**

300 MARCHED TO PRESSURE THE CHURCH INTO SENDING A MESSAGE OF SUPPORT TO THE STATE LEGISLATURE.

## **STEPHEN HOLBROOK**

As I recall, what happened was that the message was conveyed and not too long thereafter legislators changed their minds and passed the law.

## **NARRATION**

AS THE 60'S GAVE WAY TO THE 70'S, ACTIVISTS SHIFTED THEIR FOCUS TO THE LDS CHURCH POLICY OF EXCLUDING MEN OF COLOR FROM HOLDING THE LDS PRIESTHOOD.

## **DARIUS GRAY**

What it really said when you could not hold the priesthood and it was judged that you could not because of race was that you were less than, that God supposedly had decided that you were to be deprived of this right, this authority, and it also spread then to the broader community in how people looked at you and related to you, and it may be a poor example but often I've thought it was how a leper would feel, you know, you don't really want to touch because you don't want to get it, you don't want to get that blackness

## **FRANCE DAVIS**

If you're cursed on Sunday, then on Monday you can't be the boss man, you can't be in charge, you can't give the orders. If you can't give the orders religiously then you can't give them socially and economically, and that I think was the greatest effect of it all. The impact on everyday life, not just in terms of the religious segment of life.

## **DARIUS GRAY**

During the late sixties, the black athletes from some of the schools that played the BYU sports teams those athletes protested the LDS church policy of restricting the priesthood to blacks

## **ARCHIVAL FILM – WYOMING STUDENT**

The issue of BYU and the Mormon Church is such an important issue to black students. Lynn, myself and others risked our education to stop BYU from wrestling here, that's how strong we felt about it.

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## **STAN WATTS, COACH, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY**

Church doctrine cannot be changed by man. It comes through God through revelation, which most people don't understand, they think through pressure we can change it overnight.

## **NARRATION**

STUDENTS PROTESTED IN CALIFORNIA, WYOMING, AND OVER 2000 MARCHED IN DENVER. SOON RUMORS SPREAD THAT MILITANT GROUPS, INCLUDING THE BLACK PANTHERS, WERE POISED TO INVADE UTAH.

## **DARIUS GRAY**

But it was that fear, that expectation that blacks were going to come into the valley, pillage the temple, rape the women, and it was a fear that was so real.

Plans were made for the Governor to activate the National Guard, to have them stationed and bivouacked at certain locations-West High was one of them.

And I was at this one gun shop in town and there were two men who weren't more than eight feet away and they were talking loudly enough for me to hear and one of them said to the other 'well I have a temple recommend from my stake president and I'll be in the east towers of the Salt Lake Temple', and he explained what weapon he had you know thirty aught six you know with a ten power scope, or and he said 'I'll be able to pick a nigger off down main street for so many blocks', and then they turned to look at me to make sure I had heard, and indeed I had heard.

And while I was a shooter I bought additional ammunition, went up to the gun range, sighted in all of my weapons in preparation. The paranoia of others transferred to me.

## **NARRATION**

THE INVASION NEVER CAME.

IN 1978, CHURCH PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL ANNOUNCED A REVELATION THAT ALL WORTHY MEN COULD HOLD THE PRIESTHOOD IN HIS CHURCH—REGARDLESS OF COLOR.

## **NARRATION**

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT SERVED AS A BEACON TO MANY. A PATHWAY AND PROCESS TO TAKE A PLACE AT THE NATION'S TABLE.

## **ARCHIE ARCHULETA**

The NAACP was carrying on marches, gathering money for the for the movement in the South, and even gathered money for the freedom marches So, that was going on-in the meantime then the Latino movement began to wake up as well. And the Chicano movement that was happening in California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas spread, and we were part of that here in Utah.

## **JOHN FLOREZ**

We started just talking about organizing. The whole idea we had to have our own voice, we had to have our own people that spoke. In essence to speak on issues, and the rights of Chicanos at that time.

In the 60's black people knew their place, as did Mexicans. But the ones that really came out were the younger people who knew that I ain't going to take this crap. So they they started coming out, and after that other people became empowered little by little,

## **ARCHIE ARCHULETA**

There had been a number of cases of police killings. We viewed that as something that was unacceptable.

So several of the younger activists came up with the idea of a sit-in at the police station.

So everything went okay for a couple hours and then it got deathly quiet because all of a sudden coming down the stairway were two rows of policemen coming down with their helmets on and their shades and their and their billy clubs, and the clip clop of their feet and the stern visages, and surrounded by people who are dressed to do combat really, and that was the scariest feeling you've ever felt to - it was just a big knot in your stomach that says RUN (laughter).

So the movement was on and it was strong and it worked on schools, it worked at the university, it in a variety of places. We were able to bring administrators into the school districts, and opened up many of the schools at the university.

La Onda we called it - the wave. There was a wave of exhilaration because of hope -- the hope was that we would be accepted and not just tolerated. That we would be part of the whole, rather than a part outside.

Unfortunately that hasn't quite developed - parts of it have, we have more upward mobility for individuals, but we still have a relatively large prison population and youth incarceration. We have a relative high drop out rate - not relative, it's damned high.

As you know we have not yet reached that mountain that Dr. Martin Luther King saw.

But we count on the fact that each time, each movement, each... each step that mankind takes, we're progressing. At times it's ugly, progress isn't always clean and beautiful, but it's happening, and we can count on it.

## **NARRATION**

THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN NATION IS A HISTORY OF CHANGE AND PROGRESS. A TORCH PASSED FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT. A CHALLENGE TO CONVENTIONS, A NEW UNDERSTANDING. A NEW SENSE OF INCLUSION. A NEW DREAM.

## **FRANCE DAVIS**

I think we've lost sight of that vision that we did have. We think in many cases that we've arrived, and the new generation don't know the tragedy of separate but equal in lynching's and all of that negative things that went along with that, and so they sense that things are okay as they are and they don't look underneath the carpet to see the trash that's underneath and that's where we got to start looking.

## **BETTY SAWYER**

Many of us during the sixties and seventies thought that we had fought the battles, won the war, we could relax a little bit, but while we were relaxing other people who had different ideas and wanted the country to go back to where it was, and we hear that same rhetoric 'we need to go back to the good ol' days', and I'm like, whose good old days are you talking about? Because mine weren't the same as yours.

I think students are beginning to raise their level of their voices a little higher, a little stronger to kind of

mirror that and recognizing that if we don't do something we'll begin to go back and lose the rights that others have fought so hard to gain for us.

## **NATSOT IMMIGRATION RALLY**

### **ARCHIE ARCHULETA**

The youth are really beginning to move...

There are a group of people that are working very hard to bring about equality. They see it doesn't exist yet and they have to fight for it, and they want to give it to everybody.

I think Jefferson said it well ... freedom requires vigilance but beyond that it requires vigilance and action.

## **NATSOT RALLY CHANTING**

### **ARCHIE ARCHULETA**

Youth is always hopeful, youth is a, and has so much energy - that's the beauty of it. I look and I say, my gosh, was I ever that active? (chuckle)

### **ARCHIE AT A RALLY**

Looking up at you, as a group, I see ourselves 20 years ago... thirty, or more.

## **DISSOLVE TO NATS OF SELMA MARCH**

### **JOHN FLOREZ**

We have to get back to some basic values. We do have to look after each other. I mean, not as minorities but as individuals that we have to find the dignity in every individual, and that society begins with us-it just must we shouldn't end with us.

### **FRANCE DAVIS**

It's like the little boy in the-in the boat with his dad laughing that his dad's end of the boat is sinking and he doesn't stop to think that if his dad's end of the boat sinks then surely his will also, and we've got to think of our society in that way. If there's one people that's left out, left behind, doesn't get the best education, doesn't have the same opportunity then all of us will end up with the same sort of negative effect.

### **ARCHIE ARCHULETA**

And you never give up on the... almost the sacredness of mankind, and womenkind.

There's just something about us that says, "we ain't there yet, but we're getting there."