

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Baker Donelson Lead Sponsor of Freedom Riders Exhibit at Mississippi Museum of Art**

**March 16, 2011**

(Jackson, Miss.) In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Mississippi Freedom Rides, the Mississippi Museum of Art presents *Breach of Peace: Portraits of the 1961 Freedom Riders*, an exhibition which documents the men and women whose bravery challenged racial injustice in 1961. The fifty-four foot long installation is composed of sixteen contemporary portraits of the Freedom Riders taken by Mississippi-native Eric Etheridge, along with prints of the original mug shots of more than 300 arrested Riders. The exhibition is on view March 19 – June 12, 2011.

The law firm of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC is the lead sponsor of the exhibition. Support is also provided by the Foundation for the Mid South, AT&T, and Sally and Dick Molpus.

"We are very proud to sponsor the *Breach of Peace* exhibit," said Bill Painter, Managing Shareholder of the Jackson Office of Baker Donelson. "Our firm has a history of strong support for the Mississippi Museum of Art. This particular exhibit is important to us because it marks one of the key events in the successful struggle for civil rights in our own community, and because it highlights the heroism of specific individuals who chose to make a difference at great risk. Those events and those heroes need to be remembered and honored."

In the Spring and Summer of 1961, several hundred Americans—black and white, men and women, some practically children—converged on Jackson, Mississippi, to challenge state segregation laws. The Freedom Riders, as they came to be known, were determined to open up the South to civil rights. More than three hundred people were arrested and convicted of the charge "breach of the peace." The name, mug shot, and other personal details of each Freedom Rider arrested were duly recorded and saved by agents of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission. By carefully recording names and preserving the mug shots, the Commission inadvertently created a testament to these heroes of the civil rights movement.

Etheridge, a nationally-recognized photographer, web-site designer, and magazine editor, published the official mug shots of those riders from negatives obtained by the opening of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission files in the 1998. After seeing these mug shots in 2004, Etheridge began his quest to meet the Freedom Riders, discuss their stories during and after the Freedom Rides, and to photograph them again, as dignified subjects of beautiful black and white portraits. These portraits, juxtaposed with the original mug shots and quotations from the Riders, were published in Etheridge's compelling book, *Breach of Peace: Portraits of the 1961 Mississippi Freedom Riders*, in 2008.

The exhibition will be mounted in Trustmark Grand Hall at the Mississippi Museum of Art on a wall visible from the Museum's entrance. There is no charge for admission. An interactive space will allow visitors the opportunity to respond to the exhibition and to capture their own mug shots, which will be compiled along with others to be displayed online.

Museum Director Betsy Bradley invites the public to view *Breach of Peace*. "We encourage everyone to witness this remarkable collection which documents and preserves our shared history. Indeed, many of the Freedom Riders were arrested at the Trailways bus station in downtown Jackson, only feet away from the Museum's front door."

Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 10 AM to 6 PM and Sunday, noon to 6 PM, with extended hours on Thursday until 8 PM. Closed Monday.

Admission is free to Breach of Peace exhibition.

For more information about the Mississippi Museum of Art's exhibitions and programs, please call 601-960-1515 or 1-866-VIEW ART (843-9278), or visit [www.msmuseumart.org](http://www.msmuseumart.org).