

Panel will discuss Civil Rights activism and the enduring legacies of individual action

Written by

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Can one person make a difference for civil rights? A panel consisting of a 1960s "Freedom Rider," community leaders who are longtime civil rights activists, and area teens will present "Civil Rights Then and Now: Actions and Legacies," a discussion of their experiences as champions of civil rights, at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 5 at Hennepin County Library - Brookdale, 6125 Shingle Creek Parkway, Brooklyn Center. Admission is free.

The topic of discussion is the 2008 theme for National History Day, "The Individual in History: Actions and Legacies" (<http://www.nationalhistoryday.org/>), a national academic competition to enhance classroom history education. The program is presented in collaboration with the Brooklyn Center Schools 21st Century Grant.

Panelists include:

- Dr. Josie Johnson, for whom the University of Minnesota established the annual Josie Robinson Johnson Human Rights and Social Justice Award "in recognition of her lifelong contributions to human rights and social justice, which guided her work with the civil rights movement, years of community service, and tenure at the University of Minnesota" (www.umn.edu). Dr. Johnson has been a community organizer and leader for civil rights, families, and fair housing and employment opportunities, working as a mayoral aide in Minneapolis and with other elected officials in several states. At the University of Minnesota, she has served on the Board of Regents, directed its All-University Forum as diversity director, and was responsible for minority affairs and diversity as the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. She is a Minneapolis Institute of Arts trustee, a Minnesota Medical Foundation trustee, and is on the advisory board of the Harriet Tubman Center. Dr. Johnson is a recipient of the Committed to the Vision Award from the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights and the African American Community Endowment Fund Award.
- The Honorable Judge LaJune Thomas Lange, a senior fellow with the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs' Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice. A retired State of Minnesota trial court judge, Judge Lange is "an expert on legal and constitutional standards for discrimination in state and federal courts" (www.umn.edu). An adjunct professor of civil rights and human rights at William Mitchell College of Law, Judge Lange is a former co-vice chair of the Minnesota Supreme Court Task Force on Racial Bias in the Courts, a former member of the Minnesota Supreme Court Task Force on Gender Fairness in the Courts, and a founding member of the Minnesota Minority Lawyers Association, as well as a member of many other legal and professional associations.

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· Peter Ackerberg, a 1960s "Freedom Rider" and a lawyer and journalist. "Freedom Riders" were volunteers who, despite threats and violence against them, rode public transportation in the racially segregated South in the early 1960s to test enforcement of laws that declared segregation illegal. Ackerberg, while working on a biography in Montgomery, Ala., as an extension of his studies at Antioch College in Ohio, was swept up in the civil rights movement in 1961 when he attended a meeting of Freedom Riders from Birmingham, Ala., and decided to join them on a bus ride to Jackson, Miss. Upon arriving in Jackson, the busload was arrested and jailed. Ackerberg's experiences are included in a new book, [Breach of Peace](#) by Eric Etheridge, which presents recent portraits of 80 Freedom Riders alongside their 1960s-era police mug shots. Ackerberg later majored in history at Antioch, earned a master's degree from the Columbia University School of Journalism, and reported for the Minneapolis Star. He later attended law school and worked in the Minnesota Attorney General's office.

For more information: 952-847-5600.