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Freedom Rides Museum opens in Montgomery, May 19-21

Fifty years later, to the hour, Freedom Riders are returning to Montgomery's Greyhound Bus Station.

On May 20, 1961, they stepped off a bus at 10:23 AM, aiming to end the illegal practice of forbidding black and white citizens from sitting together on buses and trains, or in stations and airports. They were attacked and beaten by an angry, police-sanctioned mob.

On May 20, Congressman John Lewis, Catherine Burks-Brooks, Jim Zwerg, Hank Thomas, Bernard Lafayette and other Freedom Riders will gather at the former bus station at 10 AM to help the Alabama Historical Commission reopen the former bus station as the Freedom Rides Museum.

Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange will provide special recognition for each of the Freedom Riders present. At 10:23 AM participants will honor the Freedom Riders with a moment of silent reflection.

The museum's opening exhibit, *Road to Equality—The 1961 Freedom Rides*, features artworks created to commemorate the 50th anniversary of this major turning point in American history.

A series of other events in Montgomery will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the rides.

- Freedom Rider Jim Zwerg will speak at the Rosa Parks Museum
- Historian J. Mills Thornton, III, will speak on *The Freedom Riders Come to Alabama*
- The U.S District Court will dedicate the Judge Frank M. Johnson Collection
- Congressman John Lewis and Montgomery Advertiser executive editor Wanda Lloyd will discuss nonviolent protest
- First Baptist Church on North Ripley will hold a mass meeting commemoration with Bernard Lafayette and other Freedom Riders

Special Civil Rights trolley tours and book signings are scheduled for Friday. The trolley tours and free admission to the museum continue on Saturday, May 21.

A schedule of events and background information are at www.freedomridemuseum.org.

Working with concerned citizens, The Alabama Historical Commission saved the station from demolition in the mid 1990s. In 2008, Freedom Riders helped the commission unveil award –winning interpretive panels on the front of the station.

The museum is located at the intersection of S. Court St. and Adams Ave.

The Alabama Historical Commission is the state agency that helps Alabamians protect, preserve and interpret Alabama's historic places.