



## News Release

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***IN JUNE, AFI-DISCOVERY CHANNEL SILVERDOCS DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL PRESENTS TWO SPECIAL EVENTS ABOUT AFRICAN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE UNLOCKING OF FORGOTTEN FAMILY HISTORIES***

**Award-Winning Filmmaker Thomas Allen Harris Offers A Fresh Look at African American Archives; Washington-Area Residents Are Encouraged to Bring Family Photos and Tell Their Own Stories**

**Silver Spring, Maryland, May 19, 2009**— AFI-Discovery Channel SILVERDOCS Documentary Festival today announced two special presentations about a new model of participatory nonfiction filmmaking where the public contributes content to uncover hidden or forgotten histories.

On Saturday, June 20, from 1:00--3:00 pm, award-winning filmmaker Thomas Allen Harris will introduce his new media platform, **DIGITAL DIASPORA FAMILY REUNION**, which taps into a vast US network of black photographic archives to bring a fresh look at African American history and community. The presentation is part of the Festival's concurrent International Documentary Conference with this year's theme, "Storytelling In An 'Always On' World."

During Mr. Harris' presentation, participants will learn about the latest in Web 2.0/interactive tools for uploading, sharing and exploring black family stories, both contemporary and historical. Mr. Harris will also discuss how this novel approach to digital archives is shaping his new film about black photography entitled, **THROUGH A LENS DARKLY**. Mr. Harris will also discuss how this novel approach to digital archives is shaping his new film about black photography entitled, **THROUGH A LENS DARKLY**. He will also screen clips of his award-winning films **THAT'S MY FACE** and **TWELVE DISCIPLES OF NELSON MANDELA** – both inspired by his own family history and photographic archives.

On Tuesday, June 16, Wednesday, June 17 and Thursday, June 18, from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., Washington-area residents are invited to become part of the **DIGITAL DIASPORA FAMILY REUNION** by bringing in samples of their family photos to scanning stations that will be set up in the AFI Silver Theatre lobby. Participants will have the opportunity to share their stories with the filmmaking

team, learn about the value of their family archives, and gain tips about preserving their own photo collections. Scanned images will become part of the **DIGITAL DIASPORA FAMILY REUNION** and be considered for possible use in the film, **THROUGH A LENS DARKLY**.

Pre-registration for this unique opportunity is required and space is limited. Please email: [ThroughALensDarkly@gmail.com](mailto:ThroughALensDarkly@gmail.com) or call (212) 281-6002 to make an appointment.

By merging family photo collections with public archive holdings, these two projects have the potential to present a more complete historical record of African Americans as told through the lives, and lenses, of the people who actually lived it.

The SILVERDOCS festival runs June 15-22 at the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in the Washington, DC area. SILVERDOCS presents eight days of programming showcasing 100 films plus special screenings, music performances and dozens of panel discussions featuring hundreds of filmmakers, subjects and media professionals. Now in its seventh year, SILVERDOCS—along with its concurrent International Documentary Conference—is the pre-eminent documentary Festival in the US.

#### **WHATS NEW FOR SILVERDOCS 2009**

**The Good Pitch.** *The Good Pitch*, an innovative documentary pitch forum for filmmakers will be featured for the first time in the US at SILVERDOCS. Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation, in partnership with Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program created *The Good Pitch* in 2008 to give filmmakers a unique opportunity to pitch social-issue documentary projects with associated campaign strategies to NGOs, Charities, foundations, campaigners, advertising agencies, brands and media. It will make a stop at the Toronto Documentary Forum May 6-7 as part of the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival ]before coming to SILVERDOCS.

**Guggenheim.** The Festival's signature program, the Charles Guggenheim Symposium, honors the legacy of artistic excellence, profound respect for humanity and democratic values of the late four-time Academy Award winning Guggenheim. In 2009, the Symposium will fete the legendary pioneer of "direct cinema" Albert Maysles in person for his extraordinary body of work, including *THE SALESMAN*, *GIMME SHELTER*, *GREY GARDENS* and last year's *THE GATES*.

#### **About SILVERDOCS**

AFI-Discovery Channel SILVERDOCS Documentary Festival is an eight-day internationally recognized event that honors excellence in filmmaking, supports the diverse voices and free expression of independent storytellers and celebrates the power of documentary to improve our understanding of the world. Now in its seventh year, the festival runs June 15-22 at the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in the Washington, DC area. The 2008 Festival featured 108 films from 63 countries presented to over 25,000 attendees, including the influential

audiences of the nation's capital and media professionals from around the world. The concurrent five-day SILVERDOCS International Documentary Conference presents thought-provoking presentations and engages a diverse group of over 1,000 filmmakers and industry leaders concerned with the future of non-fiction storytelling, production and distribution. For more information, go to [SILVERDOCS.com](http://SILVERDOCS.com).

#### **About the American Film Institute**

AFI is a national institute providing leadership in screen education and the recognition and celebration of excellence in the art of film, television and digital media. Additional information about AFI is available at [AFI.com](http://AFI.com).

#### **About Discovery Communications**

Discovery Communications is the world's number-one non-fiction media company reaching more than 1.5 billion cumulative subscribers in over 170 countries. Discovery empowers people to explore their world and satisfy their curiosity through 100-plus worldwide networks, led by Discovery Channel, TLC, Animal Planet, Science Channel, Planet Green, Investigation Discovery and HD Theater, as well as leading consumer and educational products and services, and a diversified portfolio of digital media services including [www.HowStuffWorks.com](http://www.HowStuffWorks.com). Discovery Communications is owned by Discovery Holding Company (NASDAQ: DISCA, DISCB), Advance/Newhouse Communications and John S. Hendricks, Discovery's founder and chairman. For more information, please visit [www.discoverycommunications.com](http://www.discoverycommunications.com).