

Spotlight



Jackson-area participants in "Mississippi Freedom": (l to r) James Green, Veronica Ins Harvey, Sadat Muhammad, Shelia Richardson and Sameerah Muhammad (not pictured).

World premiere of Jackson-based "Mississippi Freedom" theater production May 29-30

On Friday and Saturday, May 29 and 30, at 8 p.m. the Smith Robertson Museum in Jackson will be the site of the premiere of "Mississippi Freedom," a new theater production that will draw on the personal stories of living Mississippians as a way of exploring the legacy of race relations in the state over the last three decades. Created by award-winning New York theater artist Robbie McCauley in collaboration with 11 actors, storytellers and musicians from the Jackson area, "Mississippi Freedom" place special emphasis on the "freedom riders" in Jackson and the voting rights struggle of the 1960s as a watershed of change for the entire country. The work is being presented by The Arts

Company of Cambridge, MA, in association with Potpourri Theater Company of Jackson.

For the past six months, McCauley and her multiracial collaborators have been collecting oral histories from people in the state and elsewhere which will form the basis of much of the dialogue in the piece. This will be combined with the performers' own stories and interaction among themselves and with McCauley. Various storytelling styles, local music, historical and contemporary slides and media footage will contribute to the social resonance of the work.

The 11 cast members of "Mississippi Freedom" are African American and Cauca-

sian, range in age from early twenties to mid-sixties and live now in the Jackson area, though the original homes of many of them are located throughout the state. Most were involved in or have personal memories of the voting rights struggle in the 1960s. They are: Ona Banks, Veronica Cooper, Leroy Divinity, James Green, Deborah Imboden, Dick Johnson, Kent Lambert, Sadat Muhammad, Sameerah Muhammad, Sheila Richardson and Kay King Valentine. Along with Robbie McCauley, they will participate in discussions about "Mississippi Freedom" with interested audience members after each performance.