



## news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# New Documentary Detailing Ohio Civil Rights Story to Premiere on PBS Western Reserve

*Panel discussion addressing race-related voter registration issues  
will follow premiere*

KENT, OH — Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022 — TRAINING FOR FREEDOM, a new documentary that tells the story of how idealistic college students and Black activists came together in 1964 in Oxford, Ohio, on a civil rights mission, will premiere exclusively on PBS Western Reserve (WNEO / WEAO) on Monday, Feb. 14, at 9 p.m. A panel discussion event on the subject will follow on Sunday, Feb. 20.

Produced by Kathy Conkwright in partnership with Miami University, the half-hour documentary weaves intimate personal stories from participants and area residents with critical historical analysis from noted historians and scholars. It explores how people from dramatically different worlds broke down barriers of race, class and gender to organize the most comprehensive campaign of the civil rights movement. “It is an honor for PBS Western Reserve to be the presenting station for this production because it tells a civil rights story that I would venture to say is not taught in the classroom,” said Trina Cutter, president and CEO. “I am truly inspired by the program and hope that it inspires our viewers to do their part to end the racial divide.”

PBS Western Reserve will host a free virtual event on [PBSWesternReserve.org](https://www.pbswesternreserve.org) on Sunday, Feb. 20, at 7:30 p.m. that is open to all and includes a streamed presentation of TRAINING FOR FREEDOM followed by a one-half-hour prerecorded panel discussion that addresses race-related voter registration issues that persist to this day. Ben Holbert, mayor of Woodmere Village, will moderate the panel discussion. Panelists will be Bruce Watson, author of Freedom Summer; Nishani Frazier, PhD, associate professor, Department of American Studies and History, University of Kansas; and James Brown, president of the Youngstown branch of NAACP.

Educational resources related to the program will be available on [PBSWesternReserve.org](https://www.pbswesternreserve.org) prior to the TRAINING FOR FREEDOM premiere date of Feb. 14. Additional air dates for TRAINING FOR FREEDOM can be

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found at [PBSWesternReserve.org](https://www.pbswesternreserve.org), and the documentary and panel discussion also will be available there for free viewing on demand.

## **Biographies of Panel Participants**

James Brown, certified workforce development professional, served on the national board of National Association of Workforce Development Professionals and helped to develop relevant policy and procedures for those agencies that utilize Department of Labor funding. He is president of the Youngstown branch of the NAACP and is chairman of the organization's Economic Empowerment; Reentry; and Political, Media & Communication committees. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Youngstown State University and a Master of Public Administration from Texas Southern University.

Nishani Frazier, PhD, is associate professor, Department of American Studies and History at University of Kansas. She previously held positions as associate curator of African American history and archives at Western Reserve Historical Society; assistant to the director of the Martin Luther King, Jr., archives at The King Center; and personal assistant for Dr. John Hope Franklin, before and during his tenure as chair of former President Bill Clinton's advisory board on One America Initiative.

Ben Holbert, panel moderator, started his second term as mayor of Woodmere Village in January 2022. He is a member of the Cleveland Leadership Center's Class of 2020 and has served as president of the Valley Enforcement Regional Council of Governments. His career in journalism and communications spans over 35 years, including serving as a reporter/anchor at media outlets WKYC TV-NBC, WVIZ-PBS, WUAB-TV-43/WOIO-CBS and WJMO-1490-AM. Holbert graduated in 1984 with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Kent State University. He earned an MBA from University of Phoenix in 2012.

Bruce Watson is the author of four well-reviewed books on American history, each enlivening forgotten or neglected periods in the nation's past. *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season that Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (Viking) received rave reviews when published in 2010. Watson's most recent book is *Light: A Radiant History from Creation to the Quantum Age*. It traces humanity's fascination with light through the lenses of mythology, scripture, philosophy, art history, photography, and physics. Watson has also written three dozen feature articles for Smithsonian on topics ranging from the history of Coney Island to Ferraris to fallout shelters. His work has appeared in the Boston Globe, the Los Angeles Times, the Wall Street Journal and more. Now retired from freelancing, Watson produces the online magazine *The Attic*.

## **About PBS Western Reserve**

PBS Western Reserve is the brand name of Northeastern Educational Television of Ohio, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

A trusted community resource, PBS Western Reserve uses the power of commercial-free television and related services to enrich the lives of people through high-quality programming and educational services that teach, illuminate and inspire. It serves the largest population of Ohio's eight PBS member stations.

PBS Western Reserve (WNEO 45.1 / WEAO 49.1), a service of the organization, is the only broadcast television service that reaches all of Northeast Ohio. It is available to 4.9 million people in the Cleveland and Youngstown designated market areas. In an average month, more than 1 million people tune in. The organization also operates two standard definition channels: Fusion (WNEO 45.2 / WEAO 49.2) and FNX (WNEO 45.3 / WEAO 49.3).

### **About PBS**

PBS, with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 120 million people through television and 26 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS's broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. Decades of research confirms that PBS's premier children's media service, PBS KIDS, helps children build critical literacy, math and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality educational content on TV—including a 24/7 channel, online at [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org), via an array of mobile apps and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, or by following PBS on Twitter, Facebook or through our apps for mobile and connected devices. Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom) or by following PBS Pressroom on Twitter.

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