



Contact: Christopher Williams, Assistant Director, James Farmer Multicultural Center,  
University of Mary Washington, [cwilli27@umw.edu](mailto:cwilli27@umw.edu);

Sonja Cantu, Public Information Officer, City of Fredericksburg, [spcantu@fredericksburgva.gov](mailto:spcantu@fredericksburgva.gov)

September 15, 2021 – For immediate release

### **UMW, City to unveil Historical Marker recognizing the Freedom Rides**

(Fredericksburg, Va.) -- The University of Mary Washington and the City of Fredericksburg on September 22 will unveil a historical marker commemorating Fredericksburg, Virginia as the first stop of the Freedom Rides on May 4, 1961. Dion Diamond, a Freedom Rider, will speak at the event.

The event will start at 2 p.m. adjacent to the Fredericksburg Fire Station #1 in the 600 block of Princess Anne Street, which is the site of the former Fredericksburg bus depot. The public is welcome and is asked to remain socially distant from other attendees.

Mr. Diamond participated in the Freedom Rides in Jackson, Mississippi in 1961. He was arrested with many others and spent 30 days as a cellmate to Dr. James Farmer in Parchman Prison in Mississippi. He will be among several speakers at the event.

The event is being organized by City of Fredericksburg staff with the assistance of Christopher Williams, assistant director of the James Farmer Multicultural Center at UMW. Williams will emcee the event, along with UMW professors Erin Devlin and Christine Henry, who will provide background information on the Freedom Rides and the historical marker program. Fredericksburg Mayor Mary Katherine Greenlaw and Vice Mayor Charlie "Chuck" Frye, Jr. will participate on behalf of the City. Mayo Carter, who provided the funding for the marker, will be speaking, as will Tim Roberts from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the State's historic preservation office erecting this marker. During the unveiling commemoration, the names of the 13 original Freedom Riders will be read.

The Freedom Rides, organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) with Dr. Farmer as the co-founder and director, challenged states throughout the south to recognize the 1946 and 1960 Supreme Court rulings banning segregated interstate travel. Because of the Freedom Riders' actions, new regulations prohibiting segregation in interstate travel became effective November 1, 1961.

Dr. Farmer would later become a distinguished professor of History and American Studies at Mary Washington College, now the University of Mary Washington, for 13 years, educating students about Civil Rights and his role in the movement.

Additional information on the Freedom Rides is available online at the James Farmer Multicultural Center by visiting <https://students.umw.edu/multicultural>. For more information about the unveiling ceremony, please call the City Manager's Office at 540-372-1010 or email [citymanager@fredericksburgva.gov](mailto:citymanager@fredericksburgva.gov).

###