

MEDIA RELEASE

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FREE SCREENING OF “SOUL OF A PEOPLE: WRITING AMERICA’S STORY”

KENNEBUNK, Maine – On Thursday, November 12, the Kennebunk Free Library in conjunction with the Brick Store Museum is proud to present the powerful new documentary “Soul of a People: Writing America’s Story” which premiered nationwide on September 6 on the Smithsonian Channel. This video explores the Federal Writers’ Project, one of the most controversial public assistance programs of the Great Depression. The screening will take place at 7 p.m. in the Library’s Reading Room located at 112 Main Street. Admission is free and the screening is open to the public. The companion book to the documentary is also available for checkout at the Library.

The 1930s was a time when millions of Americans faced unemployment, vanishing life savings, banks foreclosing on homes and a general loss of hope. However, through government grants for programs such as the Federal Writers’ Project, the Great Depression also created opportunities for thousands of unemployed writers including Richard Wright, Saul Bellow and John Cheever. These writers fanned out across America, interviewing its citizens and producing a portrait of the USA from the ground up in a series of state travel guides. But the Federal Writers’ Project also ignited a storm of controversy when writers portrayed not only the triumphs of America, but also its tragedies.

At its peak, the Project employed over 6,600 people including a handful of published authors, old newspaper reporters, former school teachers and others. Two of its better-known workers, Studs Terkel (in one of his last interviews before passing away in October 2008) and Stetson Kennedy, appear in this documentary. In addition, the documentary features interviews with a diverse group of leading authors, poets, and historians, including Douglas Brinkley and David Bradley, who provide witty and heartbreaking insights into the Project.

Filmed entirely in high definition, “Soul of a People” is a Spark Media Production produced for Smithsonian Networks™ with a major funding grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is produced and directed by Andrea Kalin and based on the book, “Soul of a People,” by David A. Taylor. Taylor also serves as co-producer and co-writer for the documentary. Award winning actress Patricia Clarkson is the narrator.

For more information on this program contact the Library at 207-985-2173 or the Museum at 207-985-4802 or visit www.kennebunklibrary.org or www.brickstoremuseum.org.

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