

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: zamlersfilms@gmail.com

PROTAGONIST OF AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY “COME HELL OR HIGH WATER: THE BATTLE FOR TURKEY CREEK” NAMED “RIVER HERO”

Derrick Evans, the protagonist of *Come Hell or High Water: The Battle for Turkey Creek*, the critically acclaimed documentary about the struggle for justice in a coastal Mississippi community settled by former slaves, has been named 2016 “River Hero” by the national River Network. Evans will be presented with the award on the final day of the annual River Rally, held this year May 20-23 in Mobile, Alabama. The film will be screened earlier that day on Monday, May 23 at 2:00 pm followed by a Q&A with Derrick Evans and Joe Womack of Mobile’s Africatown. Evans and Womack write about their communities’ struggles and resilience on Bridge The Gulf, a media project that lifts up the voices of Gulf Coast communities working toward justice and sustainability. Both Turkey Creek and Africatown were founded by freed slaves and face myriad environmental and other threats today. Evans’ work to protect Turkey Creek will be commemorated at an awards banquet at 6:30 pm. Both events will take place at the Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel.

River Rally is a national conference that focuses on education, inspiration and celebration within the river and watershed community. The River Heroes Award was created “to recognize and celebrate people whose efforts to protect and restore their local waters have been extraordinary in scope, scale, impact and heart.”

Come Hell or High Water: The Battle for Turkey Creek follows the painful but inspiring journey of Derrick Evans, a Boston teacher who moves home to Mississippi when the graves of his ancestors are bulldozed to make way for the sprawling city of Gulfport. Over the course of a decade, Evans and his family and neighbors stand up to powerful corporate interests and politicians and face Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil disaster in their struggle for self-determination and environmental justice.

The film aired on the WORLD Channel’s series *America Reframed* in 2014 and 2015 and was featured in the American Film Showcase program in Indonesia in April 2015. The program is a cultural diplomacy initiative of the U.S. Department of State in partnership with the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. Filmmaker Leah Mahan traveled to the islands of Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi to screen the film and lead workshops with aspiring and established documentary filmmakers and journalists. In April 2016 Mahan will share her experience making the film and helping to launch Bridge The Gulf at the Skoll World Forum, through the Sundance Institute’s Stories of Change initiative.

Related links:

- **The Film:** <http://comehellorhighwaterfilm.com>
- **River Hero Award:** <https://www.rivernetwork.org/events-learning/river-rally/about/>
- **Bridge The Gulf:** <http://bridgethegulfproject.org>
- **Skoll World Forum:** <http://skoll.org/session/skoll-world-forum-2016/networking-activities/>

April 5, 2016

“THIS INTIMATE FILM TELLS A GIGANTIC STORY... It’s about everything that matters in our society.”

- Bill Bigelow, RETHINKING SCHOOLS

“EXPOSES RAW IN-YOUR-FACE Mississippi politics ... a perfect lesson that we are not living in a post-racial era.”

- Dr. Robert Bullard, Dean, School of Public Affairs, TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

“VIEWERS WILL BE TOUCHED by Evans’ courage and self-sacrifice and gain insight into the region’s historical, environmental, and racial issues.”

- Candance Smith, BOOKLIST

“A POWERFUL STORY of one man’s good fight.”

- C. Cassady, VIDEO LIBRARIAN

“WE HIGHLY RECOMMEND this documentary film about a middle school teacher who leads an environmental justice battle in a historic African American community in Mississippi.”

- Deborah Menkart, TEACHING FOR CHANGE

About the filmmaker

Leah Mahan is an independent documentary filmmaker whose work has been nominated by the Directors Guild of America for Outstanding Directorial Achievement. Mahan’s film *Sweet Old Song* (2002) was selected by Roger Ebert for his Overlooked Film Festival (“Ebertfest”). Mahan began her career as a research assistant for filmmaker Henry Hampton on the groundbreaking PBS series on the civil rights movement *Eyes on the Prize*. A sequel to her first film, *Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street* (1996), was completed in 2013. The films tell the story of a vibrant community organization that transforms a devastated Boston neighborhood through grassroots organizing. Mahan is a Storytelling Fellow with Stories of Change, a partnership between the Sundance Institute and Skoll Foundation.

Come Hell or High Water: The Battle for Turkey Creek is a co-production of Zamler Productions, LLC and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), produced in association with Mississippi Public Broadcasting, with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The film was also supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Sundance Institute Documentary Fund, Chicken & Egg Pictures, Berkeley Film Foundation, Just Media Fund, Winograd-Hutner Family Fund, Nu Lambda Trust, LEF Moving Image Fund, Fleishhacker Foundation and individual donors.

For additional information:

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