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April 22, 2021 – For immediate release

UMW, City to commemorate 60th anniversary of the Freedom Rides

(Fredericksburg, Virginia) The University of Mary Washington and the City of Fredericksburg on May 4, 2021, will commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Riders’ arrival in Fredericksburg. The event is being held starting at 1 p.m. adjacent to the Fredericksburg Fire Station #1 in the 500 block of Princess Anne Street which is the site of the former Fredericksburg bus depot.

Attendance will be limited, due to COVID, but plans are being made for a larger event later this year to unveil the new State Historical Marker dedicated to the First Stop of the Freedom Rides. That event will hopefully allow for more attendees.

The May 4 event is being organized by City of Fredericksburg staff with the assistance of Christopher Williams, assistant director of the James Farmer Multicultural Center, at the University of Mary Washington. 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 be participating on behalf of the City and a proclamation will be read in honor of the commemoration.

The Freedom Rides, organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) with James 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.

James 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 anniversary of the Freedom Rides is available online at the James Farmer Multicultural Center by visiting <https://students.umw.edu/multicultural>.

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