

November 2010

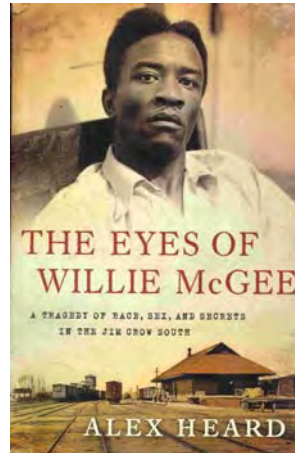
## Author Alex Heard to discuss *The Eyes of Willie McGee: A Tragedy of Race, Sex and Secrets in the Jim Crow South*

The National Archives at Kansas City will host author **Alex Heard** for a discussion and signing of his book *The Eyes of Willie McGee: A Tragedy of Race, Sex, and Secrets in the Jim Crow South* on **Tuesday, November 2, at 6:30 p.m.** Heard will be available to sign copies of his book after the discussion. A 6:00 p.m. reception will precede the event. Attendees are encouraged to view the *Documented Rights* exhibition prior to the discussion.

In 1945 Willie McGee, a young black man from Laurel, Mississippi, was sentenced to death for allegedly raping Willette Hawkins, a white housewife. At first McGee's case was barely noticed, covered only in hostile Mississippi newspapers and far-left publications like *The Daily Worker*.

During years of courtroom battles and groundbreaking protests, McGee's supporters – including William Faulkner, Albert Einstein, Jessica Mitford, Paul Robeson, Norman Mailer, and Josephine Baker – spoke out on McGee's behalf and flooded President Harry S. Truman and the U.S. Supreme Court with clemency pleas.

Drawn from primary source materials, including records of the National Archives, *The Eyes of Willie McGee* offers a glimpse into the life during the Jim Crow South and the impact of the conflicts between black and white, North and South in America. For more information or **to make a reservation for this free event**, call 816-268-8010 or register by emailing: [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov).



## Amy Wilson, exhibit curator, to discuss *1968 in America*

On November 9, the National Archives at Kansas City will open *1968 in America*, a traveling exhibition that traces the tumultuous events of 1968 - a single year in history that rocked the foundations of American society. To commemorate the exhibition opening, **Amy Wilson, 1968 in America curator, will discuss the themes presented in the exhibition on Thursday, November 18, at 6:30 p.m.** A reception will precede the lecture at 6:00 p.m.

From the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and the Vietnam War, the extraordinary events of 1968 produced profound stress on social and political systems and confirmed to citizens of all ages that fundamental change was both possible and necessary.

*1968 in America* is a traveling exhibition organized and toured by ExhibitsUSA, a national division of Mid-America Arts Alliance with The Missouri Arts Council and The National Endowment for the Arts. For more information or **to make a reservation for this free event**, call 816-268-8010 or register by emailing: [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov).



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## Upcoming Events

All events are held at the National Archives  
400 West Pershing Road  
Kansas City, MO 64108

- NOVEMBER 2 - 9:00 A.M.  
DOCUMENTED RIGHTS EXHIBITION OPENS
- NOVEMBER 2 - 6:00 P.M.  
AUTHOR EVENT: ALEX HEARD, *THE EYES OF WILLIE MCGEE*
- NOVEMBER 4 - 6:00 P.M.  
AUTHOR PANEL DISCUSSION: ELMWOOD CEMETERY: STORIES OF KANSAS CITY
- NOVEMBER 9 - 9:00 A.M.  
1968 IN AMERICA EXHIBITION OPENS
- NOVEMBER 18 - 6:00 P.M.  
CURATOR LECTURE: AMY WILSON DISCUSSES *1968 IN AMERICA*

## Educator Extras!

- **School Tours** - School tours for *Documented Rights* and *1968 in America* are now available for scheduling through the National Archives. To schedule a visit, please call 816-268-8013 or email [mickey.ebert@nara.gov](mailto:mickey.ebert@nara.gov).

- **DocsTeach** - Bring history to life for your students at DocsTeach, a web site sponsored by the National Archives Foundation. DocsTeach will give you the opportunity to build your own teaching portfolio by selecting the primary source documents you want to use in the classroom. It starts when you join the community of educators and begin to build your lesson plans and activities. Each activity-creation tool helps students develop historical thinking skills and gets them thinking like historians. Choose one of the tools on the site, then find primary sources and customize the activity to fit your students needs. There are over 3,000 documents and photographs available on DocsTeach. To get started visit:



[www.docsteach.org](http://www.docsteach.org)

- **White Rose Essay Contest** - The Midwest Center for Holocaust Education announced its sixteenth annual White Rose Student Essay Contest, open to 8th through 12th grade students in the 18-county Greater Kansas City area. Survivor testimony is our most valuable resource for personalizing the history of the Holocaust. Learning how these events affected one person, one family, or one community makes the Holocaust more immediate and more relevant. In honor of the 10th anniversary of the Portrait 2000 Project and the 18th anniversary of the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education, the 2010-2011 White Rose Student Essay Contest asks students to study the Holocaust through the perspective of a local survivor. More information including application materials and deadline details can be found at: [www.mchekc.org](http://www.mchekc.org)



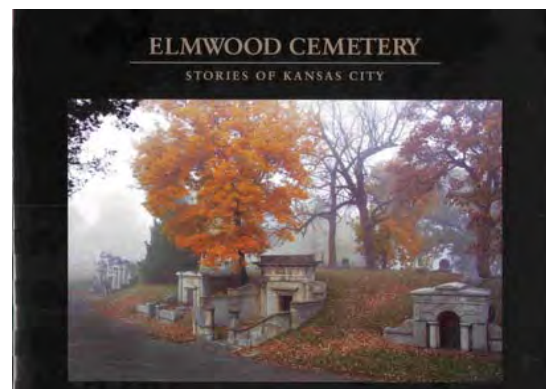
- **Winston Churchill Memorial Essay Contest** - The Winston Churchill Memorial and Library announced the third annual student essay contest. This year students in middle and high school are eligible to participate. The top essayist in each grade will be awarded a cash prize. Essay topics must be focused on an aspect of Churchill's life. More information including application materials and deadline details can be found at: [www.churchillmemorial.org](http://www.churchillmemorial.org)

### *Elmwood Cemetery: Stories of Kansas City* Panel Discussion, November 4

The National Archives at Kansas City will host an author panel discussion on *Elmwood Cemetery: Stories of Kansas City* on **Thursday, November 4, at 6:30 p.m.** Authors will include Anne Canfield, Edward Matheny, III, Ann McFerrin, Heather Paxton, Howard Sachs, and Tom Taylor. The authors will be available to sign copies of the book after the discussion. A 6:00 p.m. reception will precede the event.

Authors of this new book will speak about their research and unique facets of Elmwood Cemetery, including the fact that it was never a segregated cemetery. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Elmwood Cemetery opened in 1872. Its beautifully landscaped grounds were designed by renowned architect George Kessler, the creator of Kansas City's famed parks and boulevard system. Elmwood is the final "home" to a variety of politicians, entertainers, lawyers, physicians, architects, engineers, the famous, the infamous, and once-forgotten souls remembered only by their long-lost families and friends.

Copies of *Elmwood Cemetery: Stories of Kansas City* will be available for purchase at The Kansas City Store at the National Archives. For more information or **to make a reservation for this free event**, call 816-268-8010 or register by emailing: [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov).



## Hidden Treasures from the Stacks

### Slavery in Missouri, 1908

Slavery was banned in the United States after passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1865. Apparently, over forty years later no one had bothered to inform Charles Smith and several other southeastern Missouri landowners of this detail, or more likely they did not care. Smith had set his mind on “transforming a slimy malarial swamp into one of the garden spots of this earth” and in order to accomplish this epic project he enlisted the help of several other local landowners and invested a large portion of money in the project. Of course he had no intention of doing the dirty work himself. Traveling to Memphis and other southern cities, he recruited nearly fifty young African-American teenagers as farmhands. Telling several of the young men they would be working in his “flour mill” and promising them wages of \$1.50 plus meals and board, they were eager to sign on.



After arriving at the farm, they were greeted with a horrifying reality. The laborers were held in a structure resembling a stockade on blocks, with rickety bunks, locked from both inside and out. The windows were covered with bars and barbed wire according to testimony. John Reed, one of the young workers taken captive described it as “awfully filthy, full of vermin and very nasty.” Unfortunately the situation would only get worse. Marched to and from the fields under guard by men carrying a six shooter and repeating rifle, the men were beaten and whipped by the overseers. Woods testified that while stacking logs very high men who couldn’t reach would be whipped or kicked. On Sundays they were locked in the structure all day. Some of the men received a dollar for the week, others nothing but whiskey. While the men were there for varying lengths of time, Woods was there about two weeks before the Marshall was alerted, and the men were set free.

Charles Smith and his coconspirators were arrested and charged with “peonage.” After a lengthy trial, Smith and six others were convicted in the United States District Court, South Eastern Division in 1908 and sentenced to three years at the Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary. While at the prison, Smith and his friends were apparently “favored” prisoners given premium job assignments. The warden was required to admonish them for taking advantage of their esteem and reminded that while they were favored they must still follow the same rules as everyone else. While incarcerated Smith led a campaign to have his conviction overturned and sought a pardon from the President. In 1910 Smith was released. These records tell a dark story of our past and highlight the struggles and threats to civil liberties faced by African Americans in the decades following the end of the Civil War and slavery.

The National Archives at Kansas City has thousands of documents that relate to Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary for more information email [kansascity.archives@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.archives@nara.gov) or view the Archival Research Catalog at [www.archives.gov/research/arc](http://www.archives.gov/research/arc)

### Gems for Genealogists

The Lawrence Public Library, 707 Vermont Street, Lawrence, KS, will be hosting a Genealogy Resources Day on Sunday, November 7, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The day will begin with a general overview for beginners, and continue with sessions designed to familiarize researchers with the materials available in area collections and how they can be used to fill in your family history. Representatives from the National Archives at Kansas City, Mid-Continent Public Library’s Midwest Genealogy Center, Spencer Research Library, Douglas County Register of Deeds, Douglas County Genealogical Society, and Lawrence Family History Center will share information about resources available at each institution. This event is free and open to the public. For more information go to: [www.lawrence.lib.ks.us/](http://www.lawrence.lib.ks.us/) or contact Maria Butler at 785-843-3833.



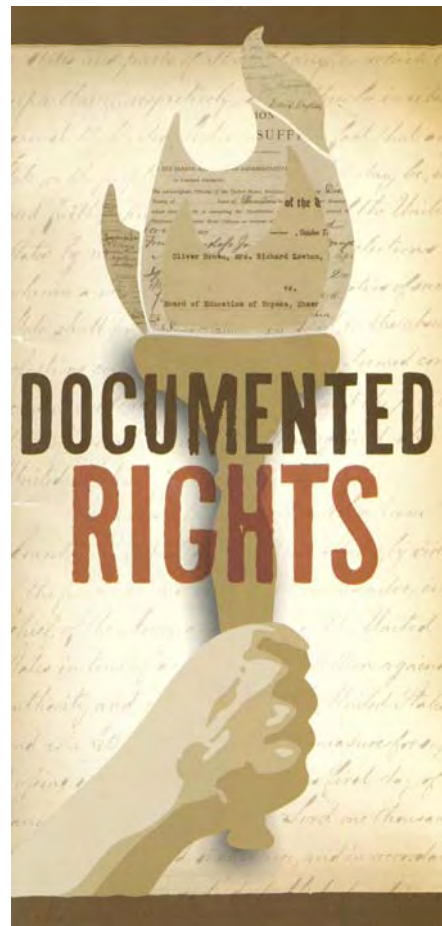
## Documented Rights Exhibition Opens November 2

On November 2, the National Archives at Kansas City will open **Documented Rights**, an exhibition featuring documents from the holdings of the 13 regional National Archives facilities that give a voice to the national struggle for human and civil rights. It features more than 80 documents, facsimiles, images, and sound recordings, including:

- Documents from the five court cases that comprised *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark Supreme Court ruling that ended school segregation;
- The story of the schooner *Amistad* and the revolt of its 53 enslaved Africans, told through 1839 court records;
- Slave compensation files from former slave owners seeking monies from the U.S. government after the Civil War;
- Court records for *John Elk v. Charles Wilkins* and *Standing Bear v. General George Crook*, two cases focusing on the civil rights and liberties of Native Americans;
- Petition from relocated Aleuts during WWII, protesting their poor living conditions, that ultimately resulted in a 10% death rate;
- Booklet outlining nonviolent protest of racial segregation by Martin Luther King; and
- A court martial order for Second Lieutenant Jackie Robinson who refused to move to the back of the bus on a military post.

Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, our rights as citizens of the United States have been debated, contested, amended, and documented.

*Documented Rights* features a selection of documents from the National Archives that gives voice to our national struggle for personal rights and freedoms. *Documented Rights* will be available for viewing at the National Archives at Kansas City, November 2, 2010 - March 19, 2011. For more information about *Documented Rights* visit: [www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights)



### Are you on the National Archives mailing list?

If the answer is "no," then send us an email with your U.S. postal mail information [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov) or call 816-268-8000.

By providing your address, you grant the National Archives at Kansas City permission to send you information about upcoming exhibitions, special events, and programs. (Per the Privacy Act of 1974, we will not share your personal information with third parties.)



The National Archives at Kansas City is one of 13 facilities nationwide where the public has access to Federal archival records. It is home to more than 50,000 cubic feet of historical records dating from the 1820s to the 1990s created or received by nearly 100 Federal agencies. Serving the Central Plains Region, the archives holds records from the states of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The facility is located at 400 West Pershing Road, Kansas City, MO 64108.

#### HOURS OF OPERATION

RESEARCH ROOMS: Tuesday through Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

EXHIBIT GALLERIES: Tuesday through Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Closed on Federal holidays. Hours are subject to change due to special programs and weather.

For more information, call 816-268-8000, visit our web site [www.archives.gov/central-plains/kansas-city](http://www.archives.gov/central-plains/kansas-city) or email [kansascity.archives@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.archives@nara.gov). Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nationalarchiveskansascity](http://www.facebook.com/nationalarchiveskansascity)