

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No. 15005

**Media Contact:** Anna Kate Twitty, PR manager, (803) 348-6010 (c), (803) 898-4948 (o),  
[AnnaKate.Twitty@scmuseum.org](mailto:AnnaKate.Twitty@scmuseum.org)

## **South Carolina State Museum Opens New Civil Rights Exhibit on Feb. 28**

*COURAGE: The Vision to End Segregation, the Guts to Fight for It* portrays the story behind the first lawsuit challenging racial segregation in public schools

**COLUMBIA, S.C., Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2015** – The South Carolina State Museum will open a new traveling Civil Rights exhibit, *Courage: The Vision to End Segregation and the Guts to Fight for It*, on Saturday, Feb. 28. The exhibit tells the powerful grass-roots “people story” behind the Supreme Court’s landmark Civil Rights decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and traces the saga of the citizens of Clarendon County who brought the first lawsuit challenging racial segregation in public schools.

Few Americans realize what is known as the “case of the century” started in South Carolina. More than half a century ago, families in Clarendon County launched the first of five national lawsuits, which ultimately resulted in the Supreme Court’s decision that racially segregated public schools are unconstitutional. That 1954 decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, initiated massive change in race relations across the country. The final chapters of *Brown* played out in the Supreme Court, but the story began when a preacher named Rev. J. A. De Laine and his neighbors in Clarendon County filed a lawsuit demanding the end of separate, unequal schools for their children.

“This exhibit tells the powerful story of how a community stood up for equality in a time when they were outside the traditional power structure, without wealth and often with little classroom education,” said JoAnn Zeise, State Museum curator of history. “These citizens worked together to begin the process that helped end legal segregation of the races in America’s schools.”

The saga of Rev. De Laine and his community unfolds through the exhibit as guests travel the road from Clarendon County to the Supreme Court. From the outset, guests witness the segregated South, are faced with questions of separateness and quickly see the inequality. Once inside the exhibit, guests are transported back to “The Way It Was” in Clarendon County in the late 1940s, and then join Rev. De Laine and his community in their fight for better schools for their children. The exhibit also introduces Judge Waties Waring, a white South Carolinian who provided counsel and assistance, and Thurgood Marshall, the future Supreme Court justice who organized much of the work that became *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The story is told through personal histories, photographs, reproductions of letters and documents, interactive components and artifacts. Guests can have a seat in a “Black Classroom,” enter Rev. De Laine’s study, featuring reproduced letters and family photos with a replica of one of his shotguns resting above the doorway, see examples of inequality represented in three-dimensional “bar graphs” constructed from books and read a reproduction of the *Briggs vs. Elliott* petition that was signed in 1949.

– Continued –

*COURAGE* was created by the Levine Museum of the New South, Charlotte, N.C. and made possible by a grant from Bank of America. The exhibit is presented at the State Museum through the generous support of The Nord Family Foundation, Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina, Central Carolina Community Foundation and Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP.

*COURAGE* was the recipient of numerous awards and recognition, including the winner of the American Association of Museums' 2005 Excellence in Exhibition Competition and the Southeastern Museums Conference Award of Excellence in 2004. The U.S. State Department arranged for material from *COURAGE* to become part of an exhibition that has traveled to South African museums in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

*COURAGE* will be open Feb. 28 – July 26 at the State Museum and is included with museum general admission or membership. Visit [scmuseum.org](http://scmuseum.org) to learn more.

***About the South Carolina State Museum:*** *As the state's largest and most comprehensive museum, the South Carolina State Museum offers a unique, entertaining and educational experience to visitors throughout its 225,000 square foot facility located in the heart of downtown Columbia's Congaree Vista. The State Museum is housed in one of its largest artifacts, an 1894 old textile mill full of character and charm. In addition to beautiful meeting spaces throughout the facility, guests can explore outer space in one of the largest planetariums in the Southeast, watch an interactive 4D movie and look through a vintage telescope in a one-of-a-kind observatory. These opportunities are all in addition to the four floors of South Carolina art, cultural history, natural history and science/technology. Visit [scmuseum.org](http://scmuseum.org) to learn more.*

####

**Photo Cutlines:**

**Supreme Court Panels:** *Courage: The Vision to End Segregation and the Guts to Fight for It*, open Feb. 28 - July 26 at the South Carolina State Museum, traces the saga of brave citizens of Clarendon County who brought the first lawsuit challenging racial segregation in public schools. Photo courtesy of the Levine Museum of the New South.

**Courage Desks:** *Courage: The Vision to End Segregation and the Guts to Fight for It*, open Feb. 28 - July 26 at the South Carolina State Museum, traces the saga of brave citizens of Clarendon County who brought the first lawsuit challenging racial segregation in public schools. Photo courtesy of the Levine Museum of the New South.

**Spring Hill:** African-American School in Clarendon County, South Carolina, 1939; from the De Laine family collection.