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Clifford Project presents 'A New Home for Liberty'

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Clifford

CHARLESTON -- On Tuesday, Oct. 18 West Virginia's creation 150 years ago will come alive at the Charleston Civic Center Little Theater, when the J.R. Clifford Project presents a "Living History" program titled "A New Home for Liberty -- Human Rights, Slavery, and the Creation of West Virginia."

Admission is free, and tickets are not required. Former West Virginia Congressman Alan Mollohan, whose great grandfather was a Delegate to the Convention that nominated Abraham Lincoln for President, will play the role of the Chair of the 1861 Wheeling Statehood Convention.

There will be a pre-show discussion panel, featuring the historians John Alexander Williams, John Stealey, and Cicero Fain, from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Civic Center's Parlor B -- also free and not ticketed.

Doors open at 7:10 p.m. for the 7:30 p.m. "Living History" dramatic and musical program, which will last about an hour. A public reception will follow.

"A New Home for Liberty" tells the story of West Virginia's creation through the lives of two historic characters, one white and one African American: Granville Hall (1837-1933), who served as West Virginia Secretary of State, played by local attorney Ricklin Brown; and J.R. Clifford (1848-1933), a Civil War veteran and West Virginia's first African American attorney, played by veteran local actor Reggie Parks.

Kanawha County Commission President Kent Carper and House of Delegates member Meshea Poore will welcome the audience. Circuit Judges Tod Kaufman, Jay Hoke and Gary Johnson; Delegate Clif Moore; the Rev. Mel

Hoover; Kanawha County Magistrate Kim Aaron; State Supreme Court Clerk Rory Perry and former Clerk Ancil Ramey; Deputy Attorney General Paul Sheridan of the Civil Rights Division; and Supreme Court Senior Justice Larry Starcher will be part of the cast. Stevie Brigode is directing the performance. The Carpenter Ants will provide opening music.

Program author and local attorney Thomas Rodd said:

"One hundred and fifty years ago, brave Mountaineers, black and white, slave and free, risked their lives and fortunes to create the State of West Virginia," program author and attorney Thomas Rodd said. "'A New Home for Liberty' tells the exciting story of how they added the West Virginia star to 'Old Glory' -- as the Civil War raged around them."

The J.R. Clifford Project is a program of Friends of Blackwater, a 501(c)3 organization. Donations are tax deductible. Reports on file with the West Virginia Secretary of State.

"We guarantee a good time -- come one, come all!" Rodd said. "Anyone who likes West Virginia history should attend this show, including the pre-show historian panel discussion. People will learn things about West Virginia that they never knew before."

Members of the Kanawha Kordsmen and the Almost Heaven Chorus will portray the Hutchinson Family, a 19th-century abolitionist singing group; and singers from local gospel choirs will perform African American spiritual music. Other historic characters in the program include President Abraham Lincoln, state-maker Gordon Battelle, Booker T. Washington, and historian Carter G. Woodson.

Program supporters include the West Virginia Humanities Council, AT&T, Chesapeake Energy, the Appalachian Community Fund, the Mountain State Bar Association, West Virginia State University, the West Virginia Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission, The Segal Law Firm, Jackson & Kelly, The Masters Law Firm, Katherine Dooley, Esq., Dwane Tinsley, Esq., Bailey & Wyant, Paul Sheridan, Esq., Bowles Rice McDavid Graff & Love, Barbara Allen, Esq., Chris Callas, Esq., Deborah Rodecker, Esq. & Robert Rodecker, Esq., Bucci, Bailey & Javins, Larry Rowe, Esq., James F. Humphreys & Associates, Elliot Hicks, Esq. & Nancy Hicks, and The Calwell Practice.

In a related program at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 19 at the Summit Center in downtown Charleston, the J.R. Clifford Project and the Mountain State Bar will feature WVU College of Law Professor Atiba Ellis at a free lecture and panel discussion, "Race, Law, and Voting -- Was Creating West Virginia Worth It?", followed by an optional luncheon. The public is invited, and reservations for the lecture and lunch are required.

More information and registration forms are at www.jrclifford.org, or call 304-345-7663.

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