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CLIFFORD & VIRGINIA Durr  
*Lecture Series*

***Freedom Riders:*** 1961 and the Struggle for Racial  
*Justice*

**Dr. Raymond Arsenault**

John Hope Franklin Professor of Southern History,  
University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Moore Hall Auditorium  
Sunday, April 3, at 7:30 p.m.

Clifford Judkins Durr was born and raised in Montgomery and Virginia Heard Foster in Birmingham. He attended Montgomery schools and the University of Alabama and was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University. Virginia attended Birmingham schools and Wellesley College in Massachusetts.

They moved to Washington, D.C., in 1933 when Clifford was appointed legal counsel to the Reconstruction Finance Corp. He later served as counsel to the Defense Plant Corp. Their home on Seminary Hill was a center of lively political discussion with distinguished guests.

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Clifford to the Federal Communications Commission, where he distinguished himself as a strong advocate

for public television and was instrumental in obtaining for Alabama the first public educational channel. Virginia became active in the fight to eradicate the poll tax and was a founding member of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.

While at the FCC, Clifford challenged J. Edgar Hoover by protecting the free speech rights of those with alleged communist connections, which included such innocent activities as belonging to wartime committees headed by Supreme Court justices and the vice president. Clifford refused reappointment to the FCC rather than implement a loyalty oath he believed violated the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The Supreme Court later declared the loyalty oath to be unconstitutional, but Clifford's career as a public servant was over.

The Durr family returned to Montgomery in the midst of the challenges and divisiveness of the civil rights struggle. One night E.D. Nixon called on Clifford and Virginia to come post bail for Virginia's friend, Rosa Parks, who had refused to give up her bus seat. Later, Clifford loaned his legal expertise to a young lawyer, Fred Gray, in bringing lawsuits that successfully challenged discrimination in public accommodations and education. Despite their travails, Clifford and Virginia were devoted to Alabama and to their family and many friends here.





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Raymond Arsenault is the John Hope Franklin Professor of Southern History and Program Advisor of the Florida Studies Program at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, where he has taught since 1980.

A specialist in the political, social, and environmental history of the American South, he has also taught at the University of Minnesota, Brandeis University, and at the Université d'Angers, in France, where he was a Fulbright Lecturer in 1984-85.

From 1980 to 1987, he was the co-director of the Fulbright Commission's Summer Institute on American Studies at the University of Minnesota. He has also served as a consultant for numerous museums and public institutions --- including the National Park Service, the National Civil Rights Museum, the Rosa Parks Museum, and the United States Information Agency --- and he has lectured on American history and culture in a number of countries, including France, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Norway, Turkey, and Jordan.

Arsenault was educated at Princeton University (B.A. 1969) and Brandeis University, where he received his Ph.D. in 1981. He is the author of two prize-winning books --- *The Wild Ass of the Ozarks: Jeff Davis and the Social Bases of Southern Politics* (1988) and *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950* (1998) --- and of *The End of the Long Hot Summer: The Air Conditioner and Southern Culture*, *Journal of Southern History* (1984), which won the Southern Historical Association's Green-Ramsdell Prize. An edited volume, *Crucible of Liberty: 200 Years of the Bill of Rights*, was published during the 1991 Bicentennial of the Bill of Rights. His recent publications include *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (2006), *Paradise Lost?* (2005), an anthology (co-edited with Jack Davis) on the environmental history of Florida, *The Changing South of Gene Patterson:*

*Journalism and Civil Rights, 1960-1968* (2002), co-edited with Roy Peter Clark, and *The Public Storm: Hurricanes and the State in Twentieth-Century America*, in *American Public Life and the Historical Imagination* (2003). He is currently working on *Landmarks of American Sports*, co-edited with Randall Miller.

Since 1996 Arsenault and USF history colleague Gary Mormino have served as the co-editors of the University Press of Florida's highly acclaimed "Florida History and Culture" book series.

An active member of the Florida affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union since the early 1980s, he served two terms as state president (1998-2000) and received the Nelson Poynter Civil Liberties Award in 2003.

## ***Freedom Riders:*** 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice

Presented by the Clifford J. and Virginia F. Durr Lectures and Auburn University at Montgomery

7:30 p.m.  Sunday, April 3

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|---|--|
|  Welcome – Dr. John Veres                        |   |
|  Master of Ceremonies – Dr. Jeffrey Elwell       |   |
|  Durr Essay Contest Winners – Dr. Matthew Jordan |   |
|  Greetings from Durr Family – Ann Durr Lyon      |   |
|  Introduction of Speaker – Dr. Sheldon Hackney   |   |
|  Lecturer – Dr. Raymond Arsenault                |   |
|  Questions and Answers                           |   |
|  Closing Remarks – Dr. Jeffrey Elwell           |  |

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