

## **“Keep Your Trash” 1971 Documentary on Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike Newly Released for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebrations on UF Digital Collections**

Gainesville, FL—Award-winning PBS documentarian Churchill Roberts was a doctoral student at the University of Iowa in 1971 when he produced the first documentary film recounting events of the historic 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers strike and assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Four decades after its original release, “Keep Your Trash” is now newly digitized and available on the UF Digital Collections through the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program and George A. Smathers Libraries.

Roberts became personally involved with the strike when he began working with a group called Memphis Search for Meaning Committee as a young graduate student, collecting footage and interviews about the strike shortly after Dr. King’s death. In subsequent years, Churchill Roberts became an award-winning film maker and a prominent professor in the College of Journalism at the University of Florida. His films include, “Freedom Never Dies: The Legacy of Harry T. Moore” (2001), and “Negroes With Guns: Rob Williams and Black Power” (2006).

To commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Roberts released a copy of “Keep Your Trash” to the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program for educational use, and the film is now available to the public through the generous support of George A. Smathers Libraries:  
<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00019392/00001/video>.

Thinking back over four decades after the making of “Keep Your Trash,” Professor Roberts recalls: “The events in Memphis changed my life completely. Before attending Iowa, I had taught communication for a year in a vocational program funded by the Manpower Development Training Act, an act of Congress to help people at the bottom of the economic ladder, particularly minorities, develop job skills. Teaching in the vocational program made me realize how unfair society had been to the less privileged. Dr. King’s assassination brought a sense of urgency to the problem. At Iowa I took a course on race relations and focused my early research on the portrayal of minorities on television. Later, I had an opportunity to make several PBS documentaries about unsung heroes of the civil rights era.”

UF’s 2014 celebrations of Martin Luther King Day are organized by the Multicultural & Diversity Affairs program. For more information about “Keep Your Trash” and additional oral histories of the civil rights movement, please contact the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida at <http://oral.history.ufl.edu/>.