



Eastern Connecticut State University

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

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Matthews to Show Award-Winning Documentary

Willimantic, Conn. -- Denise Matthews, associate professor of communication at Eastern Connecticut State University, will have a screening for her award-winning film, "Ask J. Edgar Hoover." The 55-minute film will be shown on May 14 at 4 p.m. in the Paul E. Johnson, Sr. Community Conference Room of the J. Eugene Smith Library.

The documentary depicts a white liberal family, the Harrisons, living in Greenwood, MS, during the 1960s. Sallie Ann Harrison's father, Henry Frank Harrison Sr., was mysteriously killed on Aug. 2, 1966. Police called Harrison and told him that his store was being robbed. Harrison went to the store to open the door for police. As he made his way to the back of the store, the policeman on the scene said he thought Harrison was a burglar, and shot and killed him. In her film, Matthews reveals Harrison's support for equality and justice for African Americans in Greenwood. She believes this led to his death.

The documentary was recently shown at the 52nd Annual Convention and Exhibition of the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) at the Las Vegas Convention Center, where Matthews was presented the Best in Festival award. "Ask J. Edgar Hoover" also won the prestigious Ron Tibbett Excellence in Film Award at the 10th Annual Magnolia Independent Film Festival in Starkville, MS. Festival director

Charlotte Magnussen praised the documentary: This award was always given by Ron Tibbett to a filmmaker whose work he admired and felt contributed to the advancement of independent film. ‘Ask J Edgar Hoover’ tells a story which very much needs to be told. The history of the South, and especially the history of Mississippi, is complicated and controversial. It is refreshing to see a film which captures this time period from a different perspective.”

Matthews, who has written, directed and produced more than 100 programs for PBS affiliates and other clients, says she got her inspiration to create the documentary from Bennett Miller, director of the documentary “Cruise.” After seeing the craftsmanship, passion and thoroughness that Miller poured into his documentary, Matthews said she wanted to create a piece that was equally stimulating. “During an interview with Ms. Harrison, I recognized that she was a ‘verbal virtuoso,’ having not only the knowledge and commitment to solve the mystery, but the gift to verbally explain what had happened as well.”

“Ask J. Edgar Hoover” was shown at Eastern in fall 2005, and in Gainesville, FL, Sallie Ann Harrison’s hometown, in August 2006. Matthews’ hard work and dedication paid off, winning top honors in her first film festival competition. Matthews thanks Jeff Arias ’06, for editing the documentary. Jamie Gomez, chair of Eastern’s Department of Communication, said, “This is a great honor for our department and Eastern, and it also reflects Denise’s commitment to staff and students.”

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Eastern Connecticut State University is part of the Connecticut State University (CSU) system and is the state's public liberal arts university. ECSU serves more than 5,000 students each year on its Willimantic campus.

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