

# "THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS" BY CARL RAY

(formerly "A Killing in Choctaw")

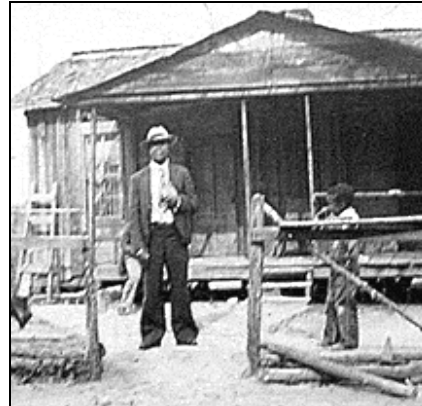
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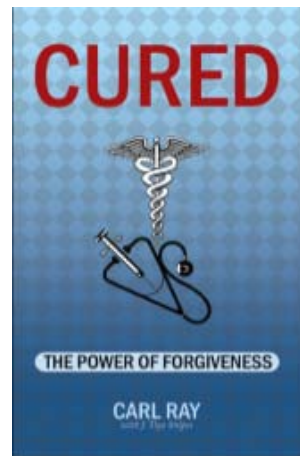
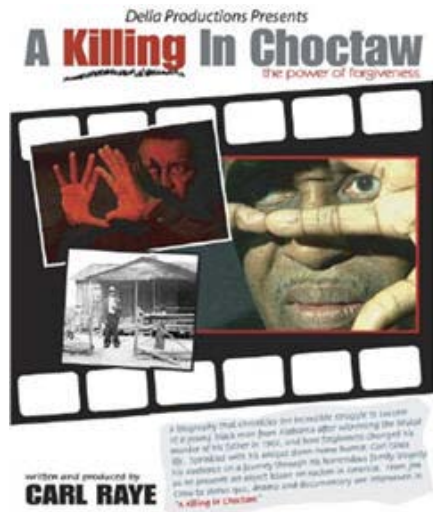
Carl Ray performance in documentary



Carl Ray in stage performance



Young Carl Ray and dad in front of porch where father was murdered



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# THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

## THE STORY

In 1962 in Choctaw County, Alabama, an 18-year-old black man was questioned by an older white man; but when responding, young Carl Ray failed to address the man as "sir" as was then customary when speaking to white men. The man severely beat Ray for being disrespectful. Still enraged, the man later showed up at Ray's home, and shot his father eight times on his front porch steps; murdered him in cold blood as the terrified youth looked on helplessly. During the farce of a murder trial that followed, the white man's lawyers blamed Ray for causing his own father's death because he had failed to be respectful. In 1984 Ray came to forgive his father's murderer. Ray attributes the act of forgiving the man to have been his own life saver. Forgiveness released Carl Ray from his self-imposed prison.  
-- a true story

## THE PLAY — "THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS" (FORMERLY "A KILLING IN CHOCTAW")

*directed by Anne Johnson, written & performed by Carl Ray*

In 1999, San Jose, Calif. educator, activist and former stand-up comic Carl Ray began telling the compelling story of witnessing his father's racially motivated murder in the form of an acclaimed one-man, single-act play "A Killing in Choctaw." Ray has relived the painful day more than 250 times performing live in theaters, museums, community centers, churches and colleges throughout the U.S.

## THE DOCUMENTARY — "A KILLING CHOCTAW: THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS"

*directed by Chike C. Nwoffiah, Exec. Director, Oriki Theatre*

*performed, written and produced by Carl Ray; a Della Productions film; USA: color, 86 minutes*

The film documentary debuted September 2004 at Montgomery Theater, San Jose, CA. Besides screenings at numerous theaters, churches and schools, the film screened and took awards at:

- 🎬 Oct. 2005 – **U.S. Virgin Island International Film Festival, St. Croix**
- 🎬 June 2005 – **San Francisco Black Film Festival**
- 🎬 May 2005 – **Black International Cinema Festival in Berlin, Germany**
- 🎬 May 2005 – **Stanford University "Reel Black" Independent Black Film Festival**

## THE PBS-TV EDU. PROGRAM — "WHY HISTORY MATTERS: THE CHOCTAW PROJECT"

*directed by Brian Heffron; starring Carl Ray; produced by KLCS-TV/DT*

Los Angeles Public Broadcasting Station KLCS-TV/DT created a set replicating the porch where Ray's father was murdered and the Alabama courtroom where the actual trial took place. They filled the courtroom with jurors and spectators, then the studio taped Ray's live performance for airing on its program "Facing History and Ourselves" and for Los Angeles School District curriculum. KLCS Channel 58 aired the film documentary and the play "WHY HISTORY MATTERS: the Choctaw Project" in October 2005. Subsequently, the program won several distinguished awards:

- 🎬 Nov. 2006 - Silver **Davey Award - Award of Excellence "Social Issues"**
- 🎬 Nov. 2006 - Silver **Davey Award - Award of Excellence "Education"**
- 🎬 May 2006 - **Aurora Award - "Platinum Best of Show" for "Directing"**
- 🎬 May 2006 - **Videographer Award - Award of Excellence "Creativity in Cinematography"**
- 🎬 March 2006 - **Silver Telly Award, the highest award for "Cultural Programming"**
- 🎬 March 2006 - **Bronze Telly Award for achievement in "Set Design"**

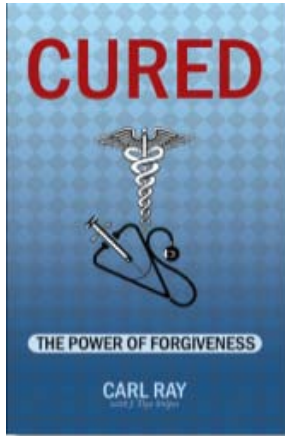
## THE BOOK — "CURED: THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS"

*written by Carl Ray with J. Toye Snipes*

*AuthorHouse, Jan. 2012, ISBN: 978-1-4670-4462-2(sc), ISBN: 978-1-4670-4460-8(e), 219 pp.*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
February 23, 2012

**AUTHOR SHARES STORY OF WITNESSING HIS FATHER'S  
RACIALLY-MOTIVATED MURDER IN CAPTIVATING NEW BOOK**  
***"Cured – The Power of Forgiveness"***

*Carl Ray tells the incredible story of how his father, one of the most successful African Americans in Choctaw County, Alabama, was murdered after Carl refused to say "Sir" to a white man. In 1984 Carl came to forgive his father's murderer. He attributes the act of forgiving to have been his own lifesaver. Forgiveness released Carl Ray from his self-imposed prison. His story has been told in The New York Times and on PBS and in countless public forums where Ray has performed his captivating one-man play.*

**Nationwide**—Author and San Jose, California resident, Carl Ray has long been sharing his riveting account of witnessing his father's murder and the circus of a trial that followed. Lawyers for the defendant appealed to the Alabama courts to banish young Carl from the state until he had learned how to talk to white people. Life was not to be the same for Carl Ray; that is until he learned "The Power of Forgiveness." Ray shares his riveting life story in his new autobiography **Cured - The Power of Forgiveness**. Not only does he impart a detailed account of this horrific experience, but also shares tales of his divergent life as a Black boy growing up in the segregated South of the 1950's, and as a Tuskegee University student, an electrical engineer, a stand-up comic, an educator, and activist.

**Cured - The Power of Forgiveness** gives us a peek into the soul of an individual who overcame several challenges during his life. Born two months premature into a segregated society and contracting Polio at the age of four is the backdrop from which this book begins. "Cured is healing through forgiveness," said Carl. "Unfortunately, millions of people suffer from depression, anger, self-hatred and other mental issues, not knowing that the cure lies within the power of forgiveness." He continued, "The greatest day of my life was the day I forgave the man who killed my father. The assumption that forgiveness is relegated to the religious community couldn't be farther from the truth. An atheist must forgive those who harmed him before he can be free from his past pain."

"Forgiveness is often taught but seldom practiced. If people understood the benefits of forgiveness there would be less need for psychiatrists, therapists, and medication," says Carl Ray. Mr. Ray is currently a motivational/inspirational speaker residing in San Jose, California with his wife Brenda.

To learn more about Carl Ray and his new book, visit [www.curedforgiveness.com](http://www.curedforgiveness.com). Ray may be reached directly at [dellap44@aol.com](mailto:dellap44@aol.com) | 408-206-1768.

➤ [CLICK HERE](#) for impressive historical profile of Ray's poignant story

**-END-**

# CARL RAY

## Biography



In 1967, Carl earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering at Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama. After graduation, Carl began his career in the Aerospace Industry in the State of California. Employed by Lockheed Martin Corporation from 1967 to 1977, and Ed Cliff Industry from 1978 to 1980; Carl yearned to become a stand-up comedian.

In 1968, Carl founded a *Youth Opportunity Program* in East Palo Alto, California, and by 1970, he was recruiting youth to attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). To date, Carl continues to host bi-annual tours to HBCUs and have sponsored more than 5,000 students.

Carl established Della Productions in 1984 to create a booking agency for underserved talent in the comedy industry.

In 1988, Carl with his wife Brenda Hampton-Ray founded Courtland Esteem School of San Jose, California. A private school for youth in grades one through six, Courtland Esteem has served over 200 African-American students who have successfully transitioned to other educational environments in Northern California.

In September 2004, Della Productions premiered Carl's brainchild - the candid and soul-stirring documentary film, *A Killing in Choctaw: The Power of Forgiveness* at the Montgomery Theater, in San Jose, California. The following month, *The New York Times* printed a feature story on the film writing, "Mr. Ray began finding his voice in 1998 when an exhibition of civil rights photos from the Smithsonian Institution were displayed at the San Jose Museum of Art, and an official ... asked him to speak about the civil rights era there."

In 2005, the documentary screened at the *U.S. Virgin Island International Film Festival*, St. Croix, *Black International Cinema Festival* in Berlin, Germany, and venues in Northern California.

In 2006, the PBS-TV Educational Program showcased "*Why History Matters: The Choctaw Project*" directed by Brian Heffron. *The Choctaw Project* won a *Silver Telly Award* for "cultural programming," a *Bronze Telly Award* for "set design" and two *Silver Davey Awards of Excellence* in "Social Issues" and "Education," and other distinguished awards in that year.

Since 1999, Carl has relived the gripping story of witnessing his father's racially motivated murder in his acclaimed one-man play, *The Power of Forgiveness*, that he has performed at hundreds of venues throughout the United States and abroad. In 2011, Mr. Ray continues to enlighten and educate his audiences through his works to bring awareness about race relations and the importance of forgiveness.

Carl lives in Northern California with his wife Brenda Hampton-Ray and their daughter Ania.

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# The New York Times

## MOVIES

### Haunted by His Father's Murder at the Hands of a Racist

By CAROL POGASH

Published: October 20, 2004

SAN JOSE, Calif. - Amelia Ray was 22 when she sat in a darkened theater, watching her father, Carl Ray, perform his autobiographical one-man show, "A Killing in Choctaw." Only then did she discover that he had witnessed the murder of his father decades before, killed because Carl had refused to say "sir" to a white man.

After a scene in which Mr. Ray begs his dead father to rise and see him go to college, a friend who was at the theater that night in 1999 leaned over and whispered: "Did you know about this?" Ms. Ray shook her head no. She didn't even think it was odd, she explained recently in an interview. "I guess I'd grown accustomed to the silence."

At first it was only on stage that Mr. Ray, now 60, could give voice to his experience. Recently that story has been made into a documentary by Chike C. Nwoffiah, a filmmaker and executive director of the Oriki Theater, a nonprofit community theater here in Silicon Valley. Called "A Killing in Choctaw: The Power of Forgiveness," after the Alabama county where Mr. Ray was born, the film had its premiere last month at the Montgomery Theater here. Explaining why he was moved to make the documentary, Mr. Nwoffiah said, "It's an important enough story that it needs to get out there."

That story began in Butler, Ala., on Sept. 6, 1962, when Carl was 18 and preparing to leave for the Tuskegee Institute to major in engineering. With his bags packed, he and a cousin shot off firecrackers near his house. The echoing booms attracted their neighbor, Bill Carlisle, who pulled up in his pickup and blasted the boys with angry questions. After Carl replied with a series of yeses and nos, Mr. Carlisle asked if Carl didn't know that he should say "yes, sir" and "no, sir" to a white man.

"No," Carl said.

Mr. Carlisle knocked him to the ground and pulled out a knife. "I was looking straight in his eyes," Mr. Ray says in the film, remembering the moment. "Just before he plunged the knife in my throat, he stopped." Mr. Carlisle rose, Mr. Ray recalled, returned to his truck and drove away.

Carl went home, and with his father, George, waited. "I knew Bill was coming. My daddy knew Bill was coming," Mr. Ray says in the documentary.

George Ray moved his family next door to a relative's house, and then pushed the television set onto the porch. Father and son sat outside watching "Douglas Edwards With the News" while they waited.

Carl Ray says he remembers the crunch of the truck tires as Mr. Carlisle arrived. After angry words and a scuffle, Mr. Carlisle cocked his .45 automatic.

In a segment of his show, which is part of the documentary, Carl Ray slowly re-enacts the events: "Each time the bullet hit, Daddy's body would flinch. The dust particles from his clothes began to float up and mix with the smoke from the gun barrel. Bill continued to fire. Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop! Daddy falls in slow motion. He takes his last breath."



"When I saw his body at the church," Mr. Ray says in the film, "reality set in. When they took him outside and put him in the ground, I began a nightmare that lasted a lifetime."

For the documentary Mr. Ray returned to the Alabama courthouse where Mr. Carlisle was tried.

"It was like a one-day circus come to town," Mr. Ray recalls as he sits on the witness stand retelling what happened some four decades earlier. Joe Thompson, Mr. Carlisle's defense attorney, accused Carl Ray of murdering his father. Mr. Ray impersonates Mr. Thompson: "You killed your daddy because you don't know how to talk to white people! If you knew how to talk to white people he would still be alive. Isn't that so?"

"No, sir," Mr. Ray said.

"Damn uppity negra," Mr. Thompson said to the judge and jury.

At intervals Mr. Nwoffiah was so overcome that the camera trembles. "As a director," he said in an interview, "you wonder at what point do you stop? Mr. Ray always said: 'Keep going. We have to get through this.'"

Mr. Ray recalled blacks sitting upstairs in the courthouse crying as if the trial were a funeral, while downstairs whites laughed.

The jury found Mr. Carlisle guilty of first-degree manslaughter and sentenced him to nine years in prison. Although the state has no record of Mr. Carlisle's having served any time, Mr. Ray's oldest brother, Lindsey, and Mike Dale, a former Butler resident who knew the Carlisle family, said he had heard that Mr. Carlisle served less than a year.

Mr. Ray said that he has always felt responsible for his father's death, and worried that his siblings blamed him as well. He suffered from severe depression and nightmares. For years he told no one what had happened. He felt "a silent scream," he said.

His wife, Brenda Hampton-Ray, learned of her husband's history 10 years ago, when she came across an old clipping about the killing.

"He had this facade for so many years," Ms. Hampton-Ray says in the documentary. "We really didn't know who the real husband and real father was."

Despite his troubles, Mr. Ray graduated from Tuskegee, then began working as an engineer at the Lockheed Corporation in California. Then this haunted man, who as a child had used humor to ward off bullies, decided to become a comedian.

The documentary blends portions of his show with Mr. Ray's commentary and interviews with others. At one point a split screen shows a thinner Mr. Ray darting onstage, wowing a Southern California crowd with his comedy. On the other half of the screen, Mr. Ray's old, sad eyes barely move: "You walk back off that stage," he says, "you walk back into that prison where all the demons are waiting for you."

Mr. Ray began finding his voice in 1998 when an exhibition of civil rights photos from the Smithsonian Institution were displayed at the San Jose Museum of Art, and an official there who knew Mr. Ray was a comedian from Alabama asked him to speak about the civil rights era there.

"She didn't really know what she was getting," Mr. Ray said recently. Among those who listened was Tommy J. Fulcher Jr., president of Economic and Social Opportunities Inc., a nonprofit organization in the area. Mr. Fulcher told Mr. Ray that his story was more moving than all the famous photos from the civil rights exhibition. He made Mr. Ray an offer: Mr. Fulcher would back a one-man play written and acted by Mr. Ray. A year later, Mr. Ray was telling his story onstage.

Since then Mr. Ray has traveled the country, performing his play before college audiences and in community theaters. Wanting to make a documentary, he searched for the right filmmaker. He contacted Mr. Nwoffiah after seeing his 2000 documentary about a black hospital, "A Jewel in History." With no financing, Mr. Ray raised \$150,000 himself. Amelia, one of his five children, wrote the accompanying music and designed the Web site, [www.carlraye.com](http://www.carlraye.com). Mr. Nwoffiah said he plans to submit "A Killing in Choctaw" to film festivals and show it at community theaters and colleges. No New York showings have been scheduled yet.

Theaters in Choctaw County probably won't be too eager to show it though, said Tommy Campbell, the editor and publisher of The Choctaw Sun, who knows both the Carlisle and Ray families. "This is not the South of the 1960's anymore," he said. Residents "would just like to let it alone," he said.

Mr. Ray wanted to expose what happened 42 years ago, but he was not quite ready to watch the documentary. During the premiere he stood silently in the back of the theater, seeing snippets of his life, before fleeing outside.

...



Telly Award

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Arts/Entertainment, Education, Features

**PBS Educational Program Based on Life of Bay Area  
Black Man Garners Two Top "Telly" Awards**

*"WHY HISTORY MATTERS: the Choctaw Project," an adaptation of Carl Ray's acclaimed autobiographical play and compelling film documentary, won a Silver Telly Statuette, the highest award for cultural programming, and the Bronze Telly for achievement in set design.*

**SAN JOSE, CA -- MARCH 6, 2006** -- The Telly Awards honor outstanding local, regional, and cable television commercials and programs, as well as the finest video and film productions. When the 27th annual Telly Awards were announced March 1, 2006, Bay Area educator, activist and former stand-up comedian Carl Ray learned that the KLCS-TV studio-taped adaptation of his acclaimed autobiographical play and compelling film documentary had been awarded two top prizes. **Why History Matters: the Choctaw Project** won a Silver Telly Statuette, the highest award for cultural programming, and the Bronze Telly for achievement in set design. The program was selected from among 12,000 entries.

In 1962 in Choctaw County, Alabama, 18-year-old Carl Ray witnessed his father's gruesome racially-motivated murder at the hands of a white man who was angered because he believed Ray had disrespected him in conversation. During the murder trial that followed, Ray was blamed for causing his own father's death because he had failed to respect the white man.

Since 1999, Carl Ray has relived the gripping story of witnessing his father's murder in the form of an acclaimed one-man, single-act play titled "A Killing in Choctaw." Los Angeles Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) KLCS created a set replicating the Alabama courtroom where the actual murder trial took place; filled it with jurors and spectators; then studio taped Ray's live performance for airing on its program "Why History Matters," and for the Los Angeles School District "Facing History and Ourselves" curriculum. KLCS Channel 58 aired the film documentary on October 25th and the taped play WHY HISTORY MATTERS: the Choctaw Project on October 26th and October 30, 2005.

**- more -**



KLCS television producer Brian Hefferon contacted Ray after reading *The New York Times* review of the play's documentary film version - "A Killing In Choctaw: the Power of Forgiveness," directed by award-winning filmmaker Chike C. Nwoffiah. Ray agreed to lend his story for educational television programming.

"It took me by surprise," Ray said of the request, "It's great that my life story is going to be the focal point of a Civil Rights curriculum. Ray continued, "My father will continue to live and be remembered in American history. I'm proud of that. But it's not just my story, it's an African American story. Incidents like this happened to countless African American families throughout this country's history. Ours was a horrendous family tragedy, and an abject lesson on racism in America."

KLCS General Manager Dr. Janalyn Glymph notes that everyone at the Station is "truly honored when our efforts for education, inspiration and clarification are met with such prestigious recognition. Each person involved in this project was impacted by Carl Ray's moving, compelling and life-changing performance; particularly the high school students fortunate enough to interact with Carl during the videotaping."

**WHY HISTORY MATTERS: the Choctaw Project** is a partnership between KLCS, Della Productions (Ray's production company) and "Facing History and Ourselves" to create this new resource and provide supplemental materials for the study of the Jim Crow Era and Civil Rights Movement. The program piloted in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

:: For interviews, press kits, invitations to lecture or perform his one-man play "A Killing in Choctaw," please contact Toni Beckham | 408-499-3664 | [Toni@PRetCetera.com](mailto:Toni@PRetCetera.com)

:: To learn more of Carl Ray's fascinating story or his bi-annual Black College Tours, please visit [www.carlraye.com](http://www.carlraye.com)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Arts/Entertainment, Education, Features  
May 9, 2006

**PBS Educational Program Based on Real Racially-Motivated  
Murder Wins Third Industry Award of Excellence**

*This month, the PBS educational program **Why History Matters: the Choctaw Project** took the Videographer Awards' 2006 "Award of Excellence for Creativity/Cinematography." In March 2006, the program, which is licensed to the Los Angeles Unified School District, won a Silver Telly Award, the highest award for cultural programming, and the Bronze Telly for achievement in set design.*

**SAN JOSE, CA** - The Videographer Awards is an international awards program directed by communications professionals to honor talented individuals and companies in the video production field who raise the standards of the industry. May 1, 2006, San Francisco Bay Area educator, activist and former stand-up comedian Carl Ray learned the KLCS-TV studio-taped adaptation of his acclaimed autobiographical play and compelling film documentary had been awarded this top prize. The PBS educational program titled **WHY HISTORY MATTERS: the Choctaw Project** highlights Ray's own real-life rendition of Jim Crow Era life for blacks. The multi-award winning program was bestowed the Videographer Awards' 2006 "Award of Excellence for Creativity/Cinematography," the highest honor presented for projects deemed written, produced, shot and edited with exceptional skill and presentation. **WHY HISTORY MATTERS: the Choctaw Project** was selected from among 2,327 entries from throughout the United States and several foreign countries.

The Telly Awards honor outstanding local, regional, and cable television commercials and programs, as well as the finest video and film productions. In March 2006, **Why History Matters: the Choctaw Project** won a Silver Telly Statuette, the highest award for cultural programming, and the Bronze Telly for achievement in set design. Judges chose the program over 12,000 other entries.



Carl Ray in live performance of "A Killing in Choctaw" on KLCS stage replica of porch where Ray's father was murdered

**-more-**

PBS Educational Program ... Wins Third Industry Award of Excellence – 2 OF 2

## **BACKGROUND:**

In 1962 in Choctaw County, Alabama, 18-year-old Carl Ray witnessed his father's gruesome racially motivated murder at the hands of a white man who was angered because he believed Ray had disrespected him in conversation. During the murder trial that followed, Ray was blamed for causing his own father's death because he had failed to respect the white man.

Since 1999, Carl Ray has relived the gripping story of witnessing his father's murder in the form of an acclaimed one-man, single-act play titled "A Killing in Choctaw." Los Angeles Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) KLCS created a set replicating the Alabama courtroom where the actual murder trial took place; filled it with jurors and spectators; then studio taped Ray's live performance for airing on its program "Why History Matters," and for the Los Angeles School District "Facing History and Ourselves" curriculum. KLCS Channel 58 aired the film documentary and the taped play **WHY HISTORY MATTERS: the Choctaw Project** in October 2005.

"Carl Ray's story helps people to understand the pain, isolation and horror that are caused by racism and intolerance," said KLCS-TV producer/director Brian Heffron. "KLCS management and the talented people involved in this production are delighted and proud to have played a part in bringing Mr. Ray's message of forgiveness to Los Angeles Unified School District students and our local TV audience." Heffron continued, "The fact that the program is now being independently recognized with various awards is truly icing on the cake. The only thing that would please us more is for the program to be exposed to a national audience. We feel that "Why History Matters: The Choctaw Project" has something of value for everyone in the USA to hear and see."

**WHY HISTORY MATTERS: the Choctaw Project** is a partnership between KLCS, Della Productions (Ray's production company) and "Facing History and Ourselves" to create this new resource and provide supplemental materials for the study of the Jim Crow Era and Civil Rights Movement. The program piloted in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

## **EDITORS:**

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