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“Till” producer Keith Beauchamp takes on Fannie Lou Hamer in new doc

BROOKLYN, N.Y. - Award-winning filmmaker Keith A. Beauchamp, whose documentary on Emmett Till led to the highly anticipated release of the upcoming feature film, “Till”, is now spearheading the effort to resurrect Fannie Lou Hamer’s story in a new documentary.

Fannie Lou Hamer was a valiant foot soldier for civil rights and constantly testified that she was ‘sick and tired of being sick and tired.’ Hamer feared no one, but boldly declared that every man, woman and child, regardless of race or color had a legitimate right to equality.

Hamer, an uneducated sharecropper, was nearly beaten to death in a Winona, Miss., jail cell in June 1963, for encouraging blacks to register and vote. So powerful was Hamer’s voice that President Lyndon B. Johnson felt he had to interrupt her remarks on national television to prevent embarrassment to him and his Democratic enterprise.

Hamer never recovered from the 1963 beating and died of breast cancer and other complications on March 14, 1977. She was 59.

Beauchamp was introduced to the film, “Fannie Lou Hamer’s America” by Hamer’s great-niece, writer and producer, Monica Land. Joining them are Fannie Lou Hamer scholars and historians, Dr. Davis Houck of Florida State University and Dr. Maegan Parker Brooks of Willamette University. Directing the film is Joe Davenport, whose 2010 film, “M.F.D.P.” detailed Hamer’s formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

Stepping outside the realm of a traditional documentary, “Fannie Lou Hamer’s America” allows Hamer to tell her own story by means of the many television and radio interviews she gave during her political career. Also featured are many of her personal effects and personal stories from her family.

Beauchamp, whose 2005 documentary on Till led to the Department of Justice reopening the case of his 1955 murder, has produced more than a dozen films on victims of the civil rights movement.

“I want to educate the public about these unsung heroes. And with Fannie Lou Hamer, her voice still speaks to a generation today,” he said. “She set the foundation for a person like Barack Obama to be president. We can learn so much from her and hers is a voice that people need to hear. It should never be forgotten.”

“Fannie Lou Hamer’s America” is in pre-production and is scheduled to be released by Oct. 6, 2017 - the 100th anniversary of Hamer’s birth. An educational curriculum will also be provided for students.