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Contact: Guy Forchion

HISTORIC VIRGINIA KEY BEACH PARK 'MEMORY DAY,' BOOK SIGNING WELCOME PERSONAL STORIES

On Saturday, April 22, from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m., community residents will be specially welcomed to share their personal memories and memorabilia of Historic Virginia Key Beach Park during its popular heyday, with the opportunity to have their recollections recorded and preserved for future generations, at the Park, located on Virginia Key at 4020 Virginia Beach Drive (off Rickenbacker Causeway), Miami, FL 33249.

The event also includes a special presentation and a book-signing by Dr. Gregory W. Bush, whose acclaimed recently published book "White Sand Black Beach: Civil Rights, Public Space, and Miami's Virginia Key" tells much of the history of Miami's unique "race relations" during the segregation era and of Virginia Key Beach itself, past and present.

(Dr. Bush is credited with revealing the plans in 1999 to build an exclusive resort at the site of the historic "Colored Beach," which led to a broad and diverse community movement, led by revered late community matriarch Mrs. M. Athalie Range, to restore the park instead to its former splendor and reopen it to the public, with an indoor/outdoor museum experience to tell the story of Virginia Key as a place of freedom for African Americans and others.)

The beach reopened, after being closed for more than 25 years, in February, 2008 to huge and appreciative crowds and the long, thoughtful process of planning the innovative "museum experience of the future," which combines both Miami's rich social and cultural history and the island's unique environmental treasures, has been gradually coming to fruition, thanks in large part to the generous contributions of thousands of volunteers over the years engaged in tree plantings and other activities.

Indeed, the April 22 event is being held on Earth Day, which is also when Miami's annual Bayanza festival and other groups will bring large numbers of volunteers to the site in the morning to perform beach cleanup activities and maintain the park's environmental health.

Those who wish to share memorabilia, like family snapshots, news articles, etc., can have them digitally scanned and returned immediately, and can share their stories on camera.

For further information, please call the Virginia Key Beach Park Trust 305-960-4600.

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