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A Mississippi Nonprofit Corporation

For Immediate Release
June 25, 2009

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Story Circle training offers unique advocacy tool for the public

(BILOXI, Miss.) – The Mississippi Center for Justice, in partnership with the Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center, will host a Story Circle training, Tuesday, June 30, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The training is free and open to the public. The training will take place at the Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center located in Gulfport at 2218 24th Avenue.

Attendees will learn how to use the Story Circle method to collect information for organizing local events or addressing policy change. A Story Circle provides a simple and powerful way for people to get to know each other and to hear each other's stories. Participants sit in a circle, and a facilitator asks a common question. Each person gets a set amount of time to answer, and when everyone is finished, the group gets a chance to discuss the stories.

“The Story Circle method builds a sense of trust that is essential for any movement or broader community action,” said Annette Hollowell, AARP Fellow at the Mississippi Center for Justice. “Whether an organization seeks to plan a block party or to lobby the legislature, the Story Circle methodology is key to creating safe spaces to discuss difficult subjects and build consensus.”

Cultures around the world have long-employed storytelling to teach important values and beliefs, and to build community. In a social justice context, the Story Circle model is a powerful tool to bring people together on an equal playing field, allowing individuals and communities to authentically tell their stories. The process not only provides for greater participation and sharing than more traditional meeting structures, but is an opportunity to create a powerful foundation upon which to build a change effort. Personal stories invariably lead to a level of hope and engagement in which participants transfer the Story Circle model to other aspects of their lives, and realize their own role as leaders.

The Story Circle process was originally developed by the Free Southern Theater, a nonprofit cultural organization founded to enable artists, community members, and students to share their experiences from the Civil Rights Movement.

To reserve a space or for more information about this event, contact Annette Hollowell from the Mississippi Center for Justice at (228) 435-7284 or ahollowell@mscenterforjustice.org.

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