

The Story of Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth

A Fire You Can't Put Out

a documentary film by Mark Vikram Purushotham

based on the book by Andrew M. Manis

PROJECT PROPOSAL

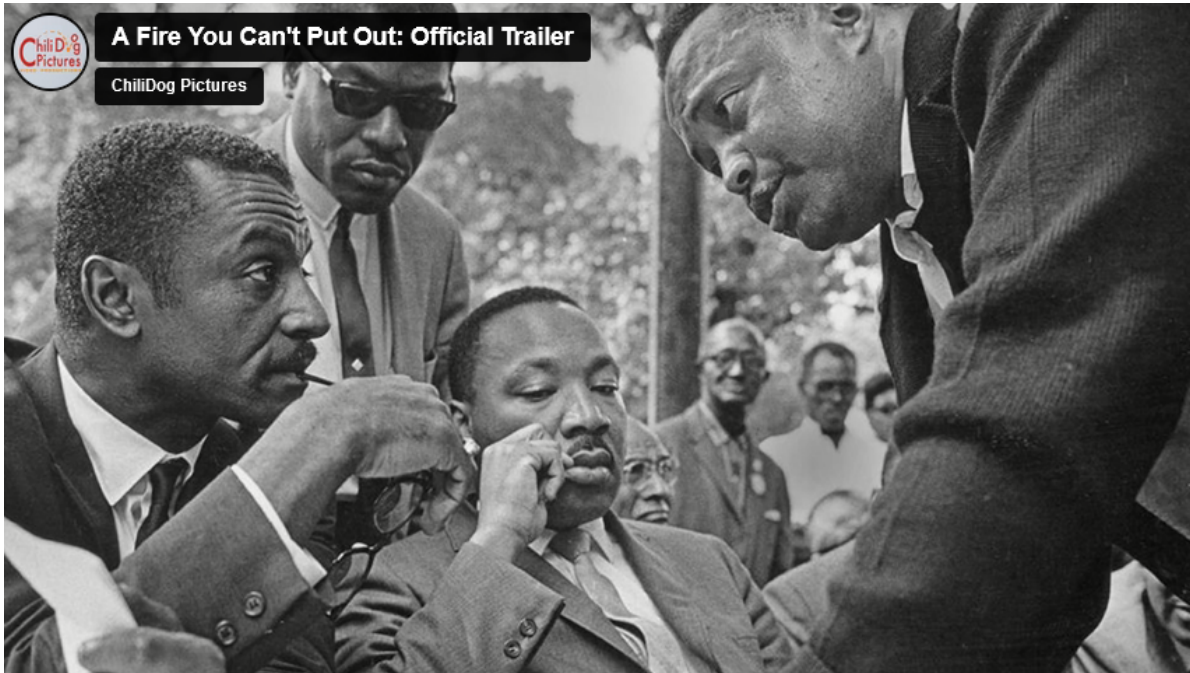
SUBMITTED BY:

Mark V. Purushotham &
ChiliDog Production Company

MERCIPICTURES.ORG

mvp@mercipictures.org
ghartong@mac.com

A Fire You Can't Put Out: Official Trailer



“WHEN ALL OF THE FLOWERY SPEECHES HAVE BEEN MADE, SOONER OR LATER SOMEBODY HAS GOT TO COMMIT SOME ACTION.”

- Rev. Shuttlesworth in a letter to Martin Luther King, Jr.



Featuring

Interviews from Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin, Civil Rights leader Andrew Young, daughters Patricia Massengill and Ruby Shuttlesworth Bester, Rev. Damon Lynch Jr., and more.



Inspired by

A Fire You Can't Put Out is based on the book by Andrew M. Manis, that tells the story of Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth - one of the **least** known but **most** impactful figures of the Civil Rights Movement.



Creative team

Led by producer and director Mark V. Purushotham, a robust and diverse group of creatives has been assembled, including two Emmy award winning videographers, to tell this incredible life story.

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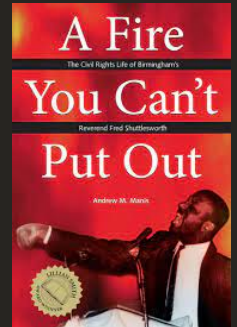
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“ Fred Shuttlesworth saved the civil rights movement.

- Andrew Young speaking at Shuttlesworth's funeral in 2011

The 1963 protests for racial justice in Birmingham, Alabama were a fulcrum for passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spent four weeks working in the city - widely regarded as the epicenter of American segregation.

Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth had worked there for a decade, surviving bombings and beatings at the hands of arch-segregationist “Bull” Connor’s henchmen. Shuttlesworth implored and cajoled Dr. King for four years to join the fight in Birmingham, until King finally relented. He re-invigorated the work of King, whose civil rights efforts after the Montgomery Bus Boycott had achieved only modest success.



A Fire You Can't Put Out explores Shuttlesworth’s character and drive in the context of his religious upbringing, and narrates his intense confrontations with the forces of segregation – among them the seminal event where Connor dispatched his fire department to put out a non-existent fire as a ruse to break-up Shuttlesworth’s event with hundreds of his supporters. Shuttlesworth stood his ground telling the firefighters: “You know there ain’t no fire in here. The kind of fire we have in here, you can’t put out with hoses and axes.”

At Shuttlesworth's 2011 funeral, Andrew Young’s tribute was clear: “Fred Shuttlesworth saved the civil rights movement.” In fact, in our pre-project interview with Young he went so far as to say that it was Fred Shuttlesworth who should have given the *I Have a Dream Speech* at the 1963 March on Washington.

A Fire You Can't Put Out sets the record straight on a man who was at the heart of America’s awakening to the depths of racial injustice. It illuminates the overlooked story of one of the most important forces for justice and civil rights this country has ever known and reminds us what it takes to stand up these profound American ideals.

“ The kind of fire we have in here, you can't put out with hoses and axes.

- Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, speaking to Birmingham firefighters.

2023

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WHY?

This film seeks to tell the story of one of the most significant and courageous figures of the American Civil Rights movement, whose story has been largely forgotten by history. It also intends to locate Rev. Shuttlesworth not merely as a historical figure, but one whose word and action continue to inspire and inform the fight for equality and justice today.

WHO?



Director and Producer, Mark V. Purushotham



Author and Historian, Andrew M. Manis



Producer, Peter Sasowsky



Videographer, Glenn Hartong



Editor, Stacy Doose

Mark has worked in the media communications field for thirty years. Programming he has contributed to has appeared on MSNBC, The History Channel, and the A&E Network. He was the Co-Producer of "Race to the Moon," a documentary on the Apollo 8 Space Mission which appeared as part of the prestigious "American Experience" Series on PBS. Most recently, his biographical film on Jamaican sociologist and author, Erna Brodber, which was commissioned by Vanderbilt University, premiered at the prestigious New School in Manhattan.

Andrew Manis is a Emeritus Professor of History at Middle Georgia State University in Macon, Georgia USA. He grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, during the Civil Right era. An ordained Baptist minister, he earned a BA from Samford University in his hometown and an MDiv and PhD from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Peter Sasowsky is the founder of Serious Motion Pictures, LLC a script-to-screen production company producing work for commercial clients as well as narrative and documentary films on culture, environment and the arts. His documentary feature Heaven + Earth + Joe Davis, won top honors at SF Indie Film Festival, and Memphis Independent Film Festival. His short narrative film Mojave was awarded best Narrative Short at the Greenpoint Film Festival.

Glenn Hartong is an Emmy Award winning producer, director, director of photography, and editor. He was a photojournalist and video producer with The Cincinnati Enquirer and Cincinnati.com for 26 years. He is currently a partner at ChiliDog Pictures, a production company specializing in narrative and documentary video. His video work has appeared on ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, CNN, CNBC, ESPN, Netflix Deutsche Welle TV, and France24.

Emmy award-winning editor Stacy Doose started as a video editor in 1988 on one of the first non-linear systems in the midwest. His work has appeared on PBS, Fox Sports Net, ABC, and the USA Today network. He is an adjunct professor at his alma mater the University of Cincinnati. Other credits include lighting director for The Ohio Players and mixing countless live audio productions.

WHEN?

In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Birmingham riots, *A Fire You Can't Put Out* aims to honor the legacy of Fred Shuttlesworth alongside other commemorative events planned by Birmingham Mayor Randall L. Woodfin.

HOW?

Would you like to be a part of this special, important film? We are currently seeking sponsors. To learn more on how to get involved as a sponsor, please email mercy pictures@gmail.com.

Advisory Board Members



Mark Curnutte

Mark Curnutte full-time faculty member and instructor of social justice at his alma mater, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. A 34-year newspaper reporter, the final 25 at "The Cincinnati Enquirer," he was part of the "Enquirer" team that won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Local Reporting for "Seven Days of Heroin." Reporting on social justice issues, he was selected three times (in 2013, 2014, and 2019) by the Society of Professional Journalists as the top reporter in Ohio.



John Archibald

John Archibald is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and columnist for the Birmingham News, The Huntsville Times, and the Press-Register. He graduated from the University of Alabama in 1986 and began work as a reporter for the Birmingham News. He began writing his column in 2004, where he focuses on politics. In 2018, Archibald was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary "for lyrical and courageous commentary that is rooted in Alabama but has a national resonance."



Gina Ruffin Moore

Gina Ruffin Moore is the author of "Cincinnati: The Black America Series" (Arcadia Publishing). She has written several articles for the Cincinnati Enquirer on African-American history. Gina Ruffin Moore is the Learning and Development Manager for the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati. She is an elected member of the Princeton Board of Education and also serves on the board for the Friends of Harriet Beecher Stowe House.



Devon Crawford

Reverend Devon Jerome Crawford is the National Executive Director of the Multifaith Initiative to End Mass Incarceration. Founded by Sen. Raphael Warnock, the Multifaith Initiative leverages the power of U.S. faith leaders and communities to demand and promote an end to mass incarceration at the local and national levels through training, advocacy, and direct action. Prior to leading EMI, Rev. Crawford was the inaugural Staff Director of the William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice in the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.



Curtis Fuller

Curtis John Fuller is a news broadcaster in Cincinnati, Ohio, who is active in politics and in local community affairs. Fuller is an on-air personality at [WLWT-TV](#). He was named "Cincinnati's Favorite TV Personality" by the Broadcast Hall of Fame. He is a member of several community boards and commissions, including the Greater Cincinnati Tall Stacks Commission and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Board of Trustees.



Diane McWhorter

Diane McWhorter is an American journalist, commentator, and author who has written extensively about race and the history of civil rights. She won the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction and the J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize in 2002 for *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama, the Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (Simon & Schuster, 2001; reprinted with a new afterword, 2013).



Jerry Mitchell

Jerry W. Mitchell is an American investigative reporter formerly with The Clarion-Ledger, a newspaper in Jackson, Mississippi. In 2009, he received a "genius grant" from the MacArthur Foundation. In 1989, Mitchell was working as a court reporter when the film *Mississippi Burning* inspired him to look into old civil rights cases that many thought had long since turned cold. His investigations have led to the arrest of several Klansmen and prompted authorities to reexamine numerous killings during the civil rights era.