

UIS to show local man's 1908 race riot documentary

By **PETE SHERMAN**

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It's been 12 years since UIS's Dave Antoine finished a short documentary about the Springfield 1908 Race Riot. But he's getting a chance to dust it off for a special showing at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

The film, "Springfield Had No Shame," is being shown at UIS's Brookens Auditorium on Monday, Sept. 15, at 6 p.m.

The showing is one of several events UIS is hosting in commemoration of the 1908 riot. Antoine's title refers to a quote from William English Walling's 1908 magazine story about the riot, which was read by a civil rights activist who, angered that such an event could take place in Abraham Lincoln's hometown, began meetings that led to the formation of the NAACP.

Antoine will help lead a discussion following the film, which was financed by the city of Springfield.

The idea for making the documentary came years before filming began, said Antoine, a staff member at UIS's Office of Electronic Media. He remembered talking about it with the late State Journal-Register journalist Doug Pokorski years before financing from the city came through.

In the early 1990s, a number of events raised awareness of riot, which for years had been sort of a repressed memory of the city.

A school project by two Springfield students called attention to the lack of any riot memorial. The students as well as Springfield civil rights activists began campaigning for a memorial and eventually the city erected historical markers at riot sites throughout downtown. Also, unrelated to the marker campaign, the riot was the subject of a highly praised scholarly book.

Still, putting together the film was a challenge, Antoine said.

"One of the things was putting information together," he said. "Finding people who witnessed it — or, what ended up happening, finding their sons and daughters. Also, I had dealings with (the former president of the NAACP) Carl Madison, who felt that there were more deaths than were reported."

Antoine also remembers being grilled about the relevance of the riot by Donald "One Eyed Jack" Jackson, a controversial former radio talk show host in Springfield.

Pete Sherman can be reached at 788-1539.

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