

# Norman Studios Silent Film Museum Opens in Jacksonville

The museum celebrates the first studio in the nation to produce films starring African American actors

(source: *WJXT News4JAX*; by Tarik Minor)

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**JACKSONVILLE, Fla.** – The River City was once the winter film capital of the world and a major contributor of silent films. Norman Studios, located in Arlington, was among the first studios in the nation to produce films starring African Americans in positive roles.

"While Mr. Norman himself was white he saw the discrimination against African American actors and the market and films and art that centered on African Americans and their stories," Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan said on Friday. Mayor Deegan is talking about Richard E Norman, who in 1916, was among the nation's first to produce films starring African Americans characters playing non-stereotypical characters. Friday's event marks the grand opening of the Norman Studios silent museum.

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"Pre-Hollywood we were not only the producer of world renown films and art, we also had a rich and robust community of African American art, and artists, it's important to recognize that part of that history and celebrate the champions of quality and diversity in each era of Jacksonville history," Mayor Deegan said. Among the items exhibited for the first time are Richard Norman's desks, tables, filing cabinets, chairs, and photographs of his film *Regeneration*.

"Silent films, starting in 1895, moving into the 1920s, were one of the major impetus toward the American culture permeating the entire world. This is so significant that we have this legacy represented by this complete five-building studio complex," museum curator, Barbara Wingo, said.

Organizers say the museum is a treasure trove, and the result of a labor of love. "Arlington is so historic, and throughout Jacksonville we have so much rich history, right here in Jacksonville, in Arlington," Property Appraiser, Joyce Morgan, said.

The Norman Studios Silent Film Museum will open to the public for the first time Saturday, August 19, from 3 to 6pm. It's located at 6337 Arlington Road. It is free and open to the public.

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Tarik anchors the 4, 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. weekday newscasts and reports with the I-TEAM.