

Focus on the Humanities December 2014



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Director's Message: Finding the Humanities in Ferguson



In recent weeks, the subject of race has again become a focus of public attention and debate. The tragic events in Ferguson, Missouri, and in Staten Island, New York, have aroused protest around the country, while some have blamed the victims and debated whether there is even a problem. Are we, as a nation, past race as a meaningful social issue?

Of course, in Mississippi, we never heard much about a “post-racial” society. While this state has made tremendous progress over the last fifty years, the scars of 150 years of white supremacy are still visible to us today. I used to always say that the main difference today between Mississippi and other states on the issue of race is that because of our history, we can't avoid the subject. As a graduate student, I spent nine years living in progressive Austin, Texas, where the west part of the city was almost entirely white and the east part of the city was overwhelmingly Hispanic and African American. Yet this was rarely talked about, and no one ever asked why. In fact, there were specific historical reasons for this boundary dating back to when segregation was the law of the city. In Mississippi, race is much more a part of public discourse. We can't hide from our past.

And yet, race remains a contentious issue in our state. Whites and Blacks disagree over how much progress has been made, and how much further we need to go. We have made great strides in combatting personal prejudice, but have been less successful in addressing the structural bases for continuing racial inequality. For too many white Mississippians, these structural inequalities are invisible. Here's one example of this inequality: rather than random occurrences, the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice reflect the uncomfortable reality that black communities are policed quite differently than white communities. As a society, we need to address the reasons for this iniquity and try to dismantle it.

It's much easier complaining to the choir than engaging people who may not share our politics or worldview. In order for our state to progress on this difficult issue, real dialogue across racial lines is crucial.

As I've sat in meetings and programs the past few weeks that have addressed these issues, I've realized even more that we need to talk to each other. Too often, our conversations take place among like-minded people. It's much easier complaining to the choir than engaging people who may not share our politics or worldview. In order for our state to progress on this difficult issue, real dialogue across racial lines is crucial.

The MHC is committed to making these conversations happen. Since our founding, the Council has worked to make the humanities relevant to the most pressing issues of the day, which in Mississippi, has always included race. With our grants, we have supported many programs that have addressed our state's racial divide, both past and present, and are exploring how we can be more proactive in fostering these conversations around our state. Other organizations, such as the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, have been a great model for such work.

At the MHC, we believe in the power of the humanities to guide these conversations and to provide necessary context for these difficult issues. At their root, the humanities inspire us to recognize the humanity in others, a crucial foundation in building a better Mississippi and a better America.

Mississippi Humanities Council Announces 2015 Public Humanities Awards Recipients

The Mississippi Humanities Council is delighted to announce recipients for its 2015 Public Humanities Awards, which recognize outstanding contributions by Mississippians to the study and understanding of the humanities. These recipients will be honored at a public ceremony and reception Friday, February 13, 2015, at the Old Capitol Museum in Jackson. The award recipients are:

Cora Norman Award	Dr. Estus Smith Founding board member, Mississippi Humanities Council Jackson, MS
Preserver of Mississippi Culture	Preserve Marshall County and Holly Springs, Inc. Holly Springs, MS
Humanities Partner Award	H.T. Holmes Retiring director, Mississippi Department of Archives & History Jackson, MS

Humanities Scholar Award

Dr. Eric Weber

Associate professor of public policy leadership, University of Mississippi
Oxford, MS

Thirty-one recipients of the 2014 Humanities Teacher Awards, which pay tribute to outstanding faculty in traditional humanities fields, will also be honored at the event.

“We are pleased to be able to recognize these outstanding teachers, scholars and organizations who have made significant contributions to the cultural life in our state,” said Dr. Stuart Rockoff, executive director of the Council. “The outstanding work of each of our winners exemplifies how the humanities can help us understand where we Mississippians have been and what we can become. By reaching out and bringing the humanities to the larger public, they embody the Council’s motto that ‘the humanities are for everyone.’ ”

The Council invites all Mississippians to join them at their 2015 Public Humanities Awards ceremony and reception February 13 at 5:30 p.m. at the Old Capitol Museum in Jackson. A silent auction featuring Mississippi Miscellany will once again be featured.

Tickets for the Mississippi Humanities Council Public Humanities Awards ceremony and reception are \$50 each and may be purchased by sending a check to the Mississippi Humanities Council, 3825 Ridgewood Road, Room 317, Jackson, MS 39211 or [online](http://mshumanities.org/index.php/programs/awards) at <http://mshumanities.org/index.php/programs/awards>. Information about the awards and the reception is available at www.mshumanities.org or 601-432-6752.

The Telling Project Comes to Mississippi

As part of the National Endowment for the Humanities’ “Standing Together” veterans initiative, the Mississippi Humanities Council is bringing “The Telling Project” to Mississippi in 2015. The Telling Project is a program that allows veterans the opportunity to share their military experiences with their communities. The MHC is currently looking for recent military veterans in the Jackson/Meridian area interested in participating in the program.



With funding from the NEA, the Bob Woodruff Foundation, and other major foundations, the Telling Project provides veterans a unique opportunity to share their military experiences with their communities. The process begins with Telling Project Staff coming to a community and conducting oral histories with veterans regarding their military experiences. Once the oral histories have been transcribed, a director and the Telling Project staff work to shape the veterans’ stories and turn them into scripts. The veterans are then able to perform their own first-hand stories of their military experience for public audiences.

“Telling: Central Mississippi” will be the first of two Mississippi productions of the Telling Project. It will take place in August 2015 with performances at New Stage Theatre in Jackson and the Little Theatre in Meridian. Staff from both theatres will work with the veterans throughout the process.

international scholar and an artist, Vendryes has taught African American studies and art history at Princeton, Amherst and Wellesley College, lectured in Kenya and Panama and conducted research in Jamaica, Haiti and Italy. Her work explores themes such as race, gender and cultural identity.

The African Diva Project is open at the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art through March 7, 2015. Vendryes will present a talk and gallery tour about the project January 15, 2015, at 2 p.m. at the museum. This program is financially assisted by the National Endowment for the Humanities through the Mississippi Humanities Council.

There is Still Time to Support the MHC in 2014!

Since its founding in 1972, the Mississippi Humanities Council has brought people together to discuss and understand our state's rich but complicated history, fostering a civil dialogue about where we've been, and together, where we might go in the future.

With your help, we can continue to make a difference in Mississippi. Indeed, we have many exciting new things in store for 2015:

- "The Telling Project," a new initiative to bring the first-hand stories of recent military veterans to the larger public
- "Mississippi: State of Change" – a new oral history project to document the crucial social, economic, and political changes that have transformed our state over the last four decades
- "Mississippi Jubilee" – a symposium celebrating the 150th anniversary of the emancipation of slaves in Mississippi
- Expanded family reading programs that inspire a love of books in parents and children
- A new and improved Speakers Bureau that brings humanities scholars to your community, free of charge
- An expanded and streamlined grants program that supports outstanding public humanities programs across the state
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In 1936, photographer Dorothea Lange visited the Delta Cooperative Farm in Bolivar County where she captured this image, which presents a unique perspective on Mississippi's past. We believe it also offers a vision for the future and suggests a role the humanities can play in this journey.

We hope you will join us in this work and become a supporter of the MHC. Click the donate button on the [MHC website](#) to contribute. Thank you!

Applications Open for National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards

The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, is accepting applications for the 2015 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards. The twelve award-winning programs this year will each receive \$10,000 and an invitation to accept their award from

the President's Committee's honorary chairwoman, First Lady Michelle Obama, at a ceremony at the White House.

After-school and out-of-school time arts and humanities programs are encouraged to apply. Click the following [link](#) to access the online National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards Application: <http://www.nahyp.org/how-to-apply/>. Completed applications will only be accepted via the online access. The application deadline is Monday, February 2, 2015, 5 p.m. PST.

MHC Supports Civil Rights Photographic Exhibit Tour

"Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi (1961-1968)," is a series of black and white images taken by then Millsaps College student and later professional photographer Jim Lucas. Subject matter includes 1964 Freedom Summer; slain Civil Rights workers Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner and James Earl Chaney; the 1955 James Meredith March against Freedom; the 1967 U.S. Senate "Hearings on Poverty" and Robert Kennedy's Visit to the Mississippi Delta; the Wharlest Jackson funeral, Natchez; the 1967 Beth Israel Synagogue Bombing and portraits of segregationist leaders.

The exhibit will be on display across the state during 2015. Following a premier opening at Tougaloo College in the summer of 2014, it traveled to the Mary C. O'Keefe Cultural Center in Ocean Springs where it has been open for viewing since last October. The exhibit is next scheduled for the Charles W. Capps, Jr. Archives and Museum at Delta State University in Cleveland in January/February before opening at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi in Oxford where it will be on display from April 3 through April 30. It is also slated for Millsaps College next fall.



Marchers, Meredith March Against Fear (Jim Lucas).

The 2015 portion of this exhibit tour is supported by the Mississippi Humanities Council, and other venues are anticipated during the coming year. For inquiries about the exhibit, contact Jane Hearn, jhearnjax513@gmail.com. For inquiries about MHC financial support to host the exhibit, contact Carol Andersen, carol@mhc.state.ms.us.

The Mississippi Humanities Council Receives Mississippi Arts Commission Grant

The Mississippi Humanities Council has been awarded a \$635 mini-grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission. This grant is a portion of the \$1.27 million in grants the Commission will award in 2013-2014 and will be used to employ a storyteller in the MHC's bilingual Spanish/English Family Reading Program.

"These funds will allow the Council to use the animated storytelling skills of Dr. Rebecca Jernigan, a member of the Mississippi Arts Commission's Artist Roster," says David Morgan, director of MHC's reading programs. "Storytelling is an essential component of the reading program, bringing the stories to life for the families and setting the stage for the following discussion."

The Mississippi Humanities Council sponsors, supports and conducts a wide range of programs designed to promote understanding of our cultural heritage, interpret our own experiences, foster critical thinking, encourage reasonable public discourse, strengthen our sense of community and thus empower us with a vision of the future. Promoting books and literacy are among our major emphases.

The Mississippi Arts Commission serves Mississippi by providing grants that support programs to enhance communities; assist artists and arts organizations; promote the arts in education and celebrate Mississippi's cultural heritage. The grants are made possible by continued funding from the Mississippi State Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Dr. Rebecca Jernigan, storyteller.

“The creative economy has never been more vibrant than it is today in the communities across Mississippi,” stated Tom Pearson, executive director at MAC. “This agency is honored to play a small role in assisting these organizations to continue their work of reinforcing the value of the arts and the role they play in creative place-making and economic development.”

MHC Minigrants Now Have a Rolling Deadline

Mississippi Humanities Council minigrants (up to \$2000) now have a rolling deadline. Minigrant applications will be accepted anytime provided it is at least eight weeks before the planned program. Our regular grant (over \$2000) deadlines will remain the same: May 1 and September 15. As always, be sure to speak with MHC staff about your project before you apply for a grant.

Please note that several updates have been made to the Mississippi Humanities Council Grant Guidelines and to the grant application forms. It is essential that applicants use current forms, available on the [MHC website](#).

Humanities Calendar Offers Impressive Array of Public Programs

The Mississippi Humanities Council website [calendar](#) showcases an impressive array of public humanities programs taking place throughout the state this fall. Highlights include:

- **A Look at Mandé Culture Through Traditional Music** – Dec. 27, Medgar Evers Community Center, 3159 Edwards Ave., Jackson – 7 p.m. (repeated Dec. 29 at 6 p.m.)
- **The Destruction of Jackson, MS During the Civil War** – Jan. 3, Penn's Fish House, 613 West Government Street, Brandon – 7 p.m.
- **The Power of Place: Eudora Welty** – Jan. 3, Judge George W. Armstrong Public Library, 220 South Commerce Street, Natchez – 2 p.m.
- **Ohr–O’Keefe to Host Paintings by Margaret Rose Vendryes** – Jan. 15, Ohr–O’Keefe Museum of Art, 386 Beach Boulevard, Biloxi – 2 p.m.
- **Mississippi Civil Rights Movement in Contemporary Times** – Jan. 19, Ohr–O’Keefe Museum of Art, 386 Beach Blvd., Biloxi – 2 p.m.



- **Let's Celebrate Margaret Walker** – Jan. 22, Eudora Welty Library, 300 North State Street, Jackson – 6 p.m.

For more events and details, please visit our website [calendar](#).

Changes Announced in MHC Grants Programs, Forms

The Mississippi Humanities Council's [grants program](#) has undergone several changes. While the types of projects the Council funds remains unchanged, new forms and application requirements are being introduced. Key changes include:

- Proposals may now be submitted via email as PDF files.
- Proposals must be emailed or delivered to the MHC office (in person or via the mail) by 5 p.m. on deadline dates. The Council will no longer accept applications postmarked by the published deadline dates.
- Deadlines for Regular Grants will now be May 1 and Sept. 15 (formerly, the deadlines were April 15 and Sept. 15).
- Applicants must consult with MHC's executive director or assistant director regarding project viability before submitting an application.

Applications should always be made on forms downloaded from the [MHC website](#), since the forms are updated periodically.

The MHC grants program seek to fund projects that stimulate meaningful community dialogue, attract diverse audiences, are participatory and engaging and apply the humanities to our everyday lives. Grants may be used to support public humanities programs, exhibits, the planning of larger projects, and the development of original productions in film, television, radio or online resources. The MHC also offers special grants to support oral history projects around the state.

MHC Welcomes Your Support

Mississippi Humanities Council programs are engaging, inspiring and free of charge. Your gift makes a big difference to our mission of cultivating an understanding of our history and culture throughout the state. You help us enrich peoples' lives through programs incorporating history, literature, music, politics, philosophy and other humanities-based disciplines that illuminate the human condition. Thanks to your support, we are able to serve all Mississippians: all ages, all geographic areas of the state, all walks of life.

A small gift of \$25 will purchase two books for children participating in the Mississippi Humanities Council's [Family Literacy Project](#).

A larger gift of \$250 will fund a lecture in a school classroom, local library or civic club, by a member of the Mississippi Humanities Council [Speakers Bureau](#).

A \$2,500 contribution will underwrite a six-week reading and discussion series in the Mississippi Humanities Council's [Family Literacy Project](#).

A gift of any amount can support any one of our ongoing programs:

- [Oral History Projects](#)
- [Smithsonian Exhibits](#)
- [Public Humanities Awards](#)

To donate online, visit our [website](#). Or call 601-432-6752.



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