

Focus on the Humanities

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Director's Message: Making the Case for Humanities Funding



A few weeks ago, two MHC board members and I made our annual trip to Washington, D.C. for "Humanities on the Hill," in which the state humanities councils visit with their congressional delegations about their work and the importance of the humanities.

This was my second year of meeting with our senators and House members to talk about the MHC. It's a very interesting experience. The first obvious thing I realized is that we are not the only group lobbying Congress. Walking through the halls of the various congressional office buildings that day, we saw many people from the Alzheimer's Foundation, who were advocating for increased research funding, and even a delegation from the Sheep Farmers Association of Minnesota – I never learned what they were lobbying for. Indeed, there are many groups and causes vying for time with their senators and representatives.

Thus I was gratified that our members of Congress found time during a very busy day to meet with us. We showed them the impact the Council has had in their districts: the grants we've given; the speaker's bureau programs we've supported; the family reading programs we've sponsored; the traveling exhibits we've brought to venues around the state. We talked about our exciting new initiatives, like the Telling Project and the Mississippi Jubilee symposium. To be honest, I was quite proud to detail the large impact our small staff and small budget has on our state.

I concluded each meeting with “the ask.” Of course no one lobbies Congress asking for a funding cut, and indeed we were asking for a modest increase in the amount of money congress spends on the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Federal/State Partnership, which is where MHC receives most of its funding. Considering a federal budget in the trillions, it can seem a bit silly to be asking for an increase of \$4 million for the state councils. In the overall scheme of things, this is akin to a few nickels you find in your couch cushions. Currently, NEH and the state councils receive 38 one-thousandths of one percent (0.0038%) of the federal budget. Eliminating the NEH, which some members of Congress have proposed, would have virtually no effect on the federal budget deficit.

Yet the Endowment’s impact on Mississippi, even aside from the work of the MHC, has been substantial. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the NEH. During its half century of existence, the NEH has sponsored over 360 projects in Mississippi. If you’ve ever done research using the microfilm newspaper collection at the Department of Archives and History, you have the NEH to thank. In just the past 10 years, the NEH has funded the digitization of civil rights oral histories at the University of Southern Mississippi, the publication and digitization of the Ulysses S. Grant papers at Mississippi State, summer teacher

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workshops about the history and culture of the Mississippi Delta, and so much more. NEH grants helped create the Mississippi Blues Trail, the Eudora Welty House endowment, the Native American basket exhibit at the Lauren Rogers Museum in Laurel and the exhibits at the B.B. King Museum in Indianola.

After Hurricane Katrina, the NEH gave a series of emergency grants to help preserve our state’s cultural heritage: from funding the rehousing and stabilization of the George Ohr pottery collection to the preservation of artifacts and documents at Jefferson Davis’ home at Beauvoir and at the Old Capitol Museum in Jackson. Without the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the cultural and historical landscape of Mississippi would be far poorer.

It is important to keep this impact in mind as Congress begins its budget and appropriations process. As I learned during Humanities on the Hill, we have a strong case to make that for just a microscopic percentage of federal spending, we can greatly enrich life in Mississippi.

The Telling Project Continues to Collect Mississippi Veterans’ Stories



The Telling Project’s central and southern Mississippi shows are continuing to gear up in preparation for their productions, both of which will be held later in 2015.

Max Rayneard of the Telling Project was in Hattiesburg April 8–11 to conduct interviews for the southern Mississippi production. While there, he interviewed 11 veterans with a wide range of military experiences. Interviewees included a World War II nurse, a ship’s medic during Vietnam and an Afghanistan veteran. Once these veterans have determined if they would like to advance with the Telling Project, Rayneard will transcribe their interviews and craft scripts for each of them. Rehearsals will begin in early fall and the performances will take place in November.

In preparation for the Hattiesburg interviews, the *Hattiesburg American* ran a great story about the Telling Project and the Southern Mississippi production. You can read the article [here](#).

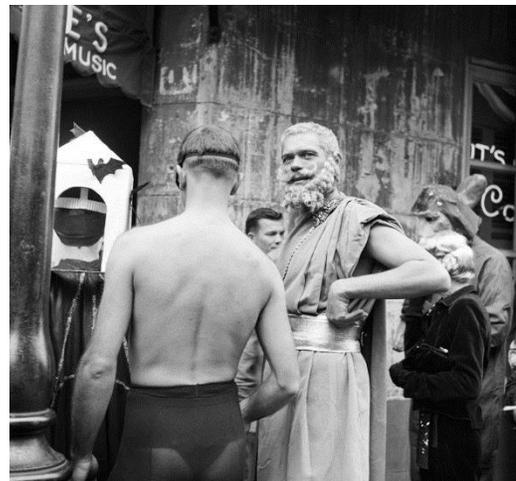
In Jackson, the central Mississippi production of the Telling Project is continuing to progress, as well. The cast has signed on and includes six military veterans and family members. Rehearsals will begin this summer under the production's director, Francine Reynolds, artistic director at New Stage Theatre.

Telling: Central Mississippi will take place in Jackson at New Stage Theatre August 7–9 and in Meridian at the Little Theatre August 14–16. Telling: Southern Mississippi will take place in Hattiesburg, Poplarville and Long Beach in conjunction with Veterans Day in November. The production will begin in Hattiesburg Nov. 11 and will follow with shows in Poplarville Nov. 12, Long Beach Nov. 13 and 14 and will close with two performances in Hattiesburg Nov. 21 and 22.

As we continue to secure details for both productions, we will update our website accordingly. For more information on the Telling Project, visit its [website](#).

The Trouble with Tight Pants: Historian Studies the Homophobic History of New Orleans

Dr. Alecia Long, associate professor of history at Louisiana State University, will deliver the 17th annual Sammy O. Cranford Memorial History Lecture April 27 at Delta State University April 27. The presentation, titled "The Trouble With Tight Pants: New Orleans, Homosexuality and the Search for Conspiracy in the Assassination of JFK," draws on Long's current project, which seeks to reconsider the 1969 trial of Clay Shaw, the only person ever charged in one of many conspiracies alleged in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Long connects Shaw's legal ordeal to the longer history of homosexuality in New Orleans and the nation while also making plain Shaw's overlooked role in the national movement for gay and lesbian civil rights.



Clay Shaw dressed as a Roman senator stands outside Dixie's Hall of Music during Mardi Gras in the early 1950s. (Jack Robinson Photo: ww.robinsonarchive.com)

An in depth article on Long's research can be found in the online cultural reporting publication, *Country Roads*, [here](#). Reporter Ruth Laney writes that although the New Orleans is known for its laissez-faire, gay-friendly atmosphere, Long found it wasn't always that way. In fact, many homophobic activities and ordinances in the state originated in New Orleans. "By 1960, there was a legislative committee on 'sex deviates,'" said Long. "The committee named an advisory panel of people from around the state and held hearings about the problems of 'sex deviates,' about gay people gathering in the French Quarter—which leads us to question the idea of New Orleans as the only liberal place in the state."

The Cranford Memorial History Lecture honors the life of Dr. Cranford, a longtime professor of history and archivist at DSU. This presentation, supported by a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council, is free and open to the public. The lecture will begin at 7 p.m. in Jobe Hall Auditorium on the DSU campus. Following Dr. Long's lecture, there will be a question and answer section with the audience.

JSU Commemorates 45th Anniversary of Gibbs, Green Shooting



Law enforcement fired more than 460 rounds of bullets into JSU's Alexander Hall after claiming to have seen a sniper in a window on the building's top floor

In the spring of 1970, university students across the country protested against the Vietnam War, racism, gender oppression and other issues, at times leading to violent and deadly confrontations with law enforcement. On May 14, 1970, students at Jackson State College (now Jackson State University) staged a demonstration condemning racial discrimination in Mississippi and the killing of four students at Kent State University by the Ohio National Guard 10 days earlier. The demonstration continued into the night, and shortly after midnight on May 15, police opened fire on students gathered outside a campus dormitory. Phillip Gibbs, 21, and James Green, 17, were killed during the shooting and 12 others were injured.

On May 15, 2015, JSU will commemorate the 45th anniversary of the Jackson State shooting, with grant support from the Mississippi Humanities Council. Dr. Nancy Bristow, professor of history at the University of Puget Sound and author of an upcoming book about the shooting, will speak about her current research on the subject. James Baker and Eddie Jean Carr, both members of Jackson State College's class of 1970, will speak about the events that took place on campus that night. Following the commemoration ceremony, the speakers will participate in a panel discussion with the audience.

Next MHC Grant Deadline May 1, 2015

May 1, 2015, is the deadline for MHC regular proposals for amounts between \$2,000 and \$7,500. Application guidelines and forms are available on the MHC [website](#). Regular grant deadlines are May 1 and Sept. 15 each year. Proposals must be emailed or delivered to the MHC offices by 5 p.m. on these dates. Programs and expenditures may not occur fewer than 10 weeks after the deadline date you selected. 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 [here](#).

'Visit Mississippi' Announces Tourism Development Grant Program

Visit Mississippi, formally MDA Tourism, has announced the FY2016 Tourism Development Grant program. This program, in its third year, supports community events which promote Mississippi's heritage, culture and unique assets. The program encourages regional partnerships in the development and promotion of Mississippi's historic and diverse story. Tourism Development Grant guidelines and application are available at <http://www.visitmississippi.org>, under Resources. The deadline for application submission is 5 p.m. May 6, 2015. Events that occur from July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016 are eligible. For additional questions, contact Carla Moor at cmoor@mississippi.org or at (601) 359-3297.

Behind the Big House 2015 Features Archaeological Excavation



For the fourth consecutive year the Mississippi Humanities Council has provided a grant in support of the “Behind the Big House Tour” in Holly Springs. Scheduled in tandem with the annual pilgrimage, this program allows visitors to observe and experience the slave quarters that accompanied the Big Houses, the occupants of which provided the labor necessary to keep the Big Houses operational. This year’s tour included an outside cooking demonstration by food historian Michael Twitty, slave quarters tours by historic interpreter Joseph McGill and archaeological excavations by Drs. Jodi Skipper and Carolyn

Freiwald from the University of Mississippi’s Department of Anthropology and Sociology. Numerous visitors, including some six hundred school children, attended these activities and were exposed to the bigger picture of what went on at an in-town setting where wealthy homeowners retained enslaved Africans to do much of their domestic work.

Recent Format and Scheduling Changes for Mississippi Moments on MPB Radio

Mississippi Moments, an oral history project partnership of the Mississippi Humanities Council, the University of Southern Mississippi’s Center for Oral History and Culture, and Mississippi Public Broadcasting, has changed from its previous twice-weekly schedule. While still beginning at 12:30 p.m., it now airs on every weekday. And while individual segments are shorter in length, 3 different segments are broadcast with the first offering airing on Mondays and Tuesdays, a second segment on Wednesdays, and a third on Thursdays and Fridays. Thus, the reduction in run time of individual episodes has made way for a greater variety of material each week. Check it out. We think you’ll like it! (For extended interviews and additional material you can also subscribe to the MS Moments podcast at iTunes or just like Mississippi Moments on Facebook.) Mississippi Moments is made possible by a generous allocation from the Mississippi Legislature via the MS Department of Archives and History.

Jackson Hinds Library System Celebrates Margaret Walker

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of Margaret Walker's birth in 1915, the Jackson Hinds Library System is hosting a series of lectures during the writer's centennial year entitled "Let's Celebrate Margaret Walker, An African-American Woman Author of the 20th Century," with support from the Mississippi Humanities Council. The series focuses on the literary and historical importance of Walker, her influence on other African-American women and the lasting value of her works. Each lecture will be led by a scholar and will be free. Upcoming lectures:



- April 21 – Terrence Roberts, *Stories for My People*, a storytelling workshop for children, 4:15 p.m. at the Richard Wright Library, Jackson.
- May 7 – Dr. Carolyn Brown, *Who in the World Was Margaret Walker: Bringing the Legend Alive for 21st Century Youth*, 4 p.m. at the Raymond Public Library, Raymond.
- June 1 – Katrina Byrd, *Jubilee for My People*, writing workshop for children, including a performance–reading of Walker’s works, 10 a.m. at the Charles Tisdale Library, Jackson.
- June 6 – Terrence Roberts, *Stories for My People*, a storytelling workshop for children, 1 p.m. at the Quisenberry Library, Clinton.

For further details and lecture dates, please see the event [schedule](#).

The Luciérnagas Family Reading Program Delights in Oxford



Storyteller Dr. Rebecca Jernigan presents "Where the Wild Things Are" to Hispanic Audience at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Oxford.

As part of the MHC’s Family Literacy Project, the bilingual Spanish/English Luciérnagas Family Reading Program continues to make headway in 2015. This program is geared towards the ever growing Hispanic population in our state and is designed to encourage Hispanic parents and their lower elementary age children to participate in family reading and discussion of award winning children’s books as modeled by a storyteller and humanities scholar/discussion leader. With MHC support, the program was created by veteran storytellers Dr. Rebecca Jernigan and June Caldwell; piloted at the public libraries in Canton and Pontotoc in 2004; and now travels to several locations across the state each year. A “Lucie” program is currently underway in Oxford, co-sponsored by the Oxford Public Library and St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, where Dr. Jernigan is serving as

storyteller, thanks to a minigrant from the Mississippi Arts Commission. A second program is scheduled for St. James Catholic Church in Tupelo this summer followed by a highly successful program at the M.R. Dye Public Library in Horn Lake, which is now in its sixth annual installment.

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. For 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](#).

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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