

Focus on the Humanities

February 2015



(Visit our web site at www.mshumanities.org to learn more about us.)

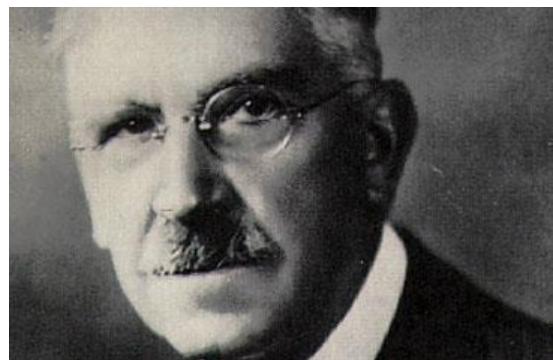
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Philosopher Argues for Public Engagement with the Humanities

When William Adams, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, spoke to the National Press Club in January, he revisited the philosophy that created the Endowment a half-century earlier. The Endowment was given two related, but distinct, objectives. One was to invest in fundamental research in the various academic fields composing the humanities – philosophy, literary studies, art history, archaeology, anthropology, languages, linguistics, political theory, etc. Second, the founders, and particularly early supporters in Congress, were determined that humanities research have public meaning, influence and impact.

That second aim has been at the heart of much of the work of the state humanities councils. The Mississippi Humanities Council endeavors, with our grants and our Council-conducted programs, to engage humanities scholars and organizations, and their academic study, with the public to consider and make sense of the complex issues of the human experience.



John Dewey, America's public philosopher.

One of our 2015 public humanities award recipients, Dr. Eric Weber, who received the Humanities Scholar Award last week, has written a compelling argument for public engagement with traditionally academic study. Dr. Weber is a professor of philosophy at the University of Mississippi, teaching courses in ethics and public policy, critical thinking and communication for public policy and philosophy of leadership. His paper, *Lessons from America's Public Philosopher*, which will appear soon in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, makes a case for why, in his field of the humanities – philosophy – more public engagement should be encouraged. His logic builds on John Dewey's argument in "The Supreme Intellectual

Obligation”: that public philosophy “must not be seen simply as a one-way street from intellectuals to the masses but, rather, as the task of fostering the scientific attitude and intellectual habits of mind in all citizens.”

Weber’s paper considers the impact on American lives of the failure to educate students in ethics, the rise in incivility in our culture, growing polarization of the population, the “remoteness” of scholarship from public discourse and a loss of intellectual guidance of public culture. Not all philosophers need to be publicly engaged thinkers, Weber writes, but many more ought to do so and to be encouraged in that work. “Scholars in university settings enjoy a special privilege, as do some other fortunate writers and thinkers in the field of journalism or in the think tank world. We are enormously lucky to have access to rich resources in terms of research databases, libraries, colleagues and sometimes travel funds to go meet with people who can help us to refine our ideas. We have, therefore, remarkable opportunities to contribute to public intellectual leadership that are largely unparalleled...Unless more do so, many opportunities for moral and social progress will be missed.”

(Dr. Weber’s article may be accessed [here](#).)

Night at the Museum

Last Friday, the MHC hosted its 2015 Public Humanities Awards Ceremony at the historic Old Capitol Museum. Below are just a few images from that wonderful night.



MHC Chair Andy Mullins welcomes everyone to the Old Capitol’s House Chamber.



MHC supporters and award winners mingling on the House floor after the ceremony.



Elise and Governor William Winter with Estus Smith, recipient of the first Cora Norman Award.



Founding MHC Executive Director Cora Norman with past board members Leslie McLemore, Gemma Beckley, and David Beckley.”

MHC Grant Helps Bring African American Collection to MSU

The Kinsey Collection – a national touring exhibit of authentic and rare art, artifacts, books, documents and manuscripts amassed by Bernard and Shirley Kinsey of Los Angeles – tells a story of African American achievement and contribution. The Kinsey Collection was begun by the Kinseys in the mid-1980s as a project for their son, Khalil, and his third grade study on their family’s history. The collection continued to grow, and today it holds more than 400 years of history and is one of the largest privately owned African-American collections. The collection is comprised of a rich cultural and historical heritage through the works of African American artists such as Jonathan Green, documents and artifacts related to Frederick Douglas and Malcolm X. The Kinsey Collection has been on national tour since 2007, and has been viewed by more than 3 million visitors. In March, it will come to Mississippi State University Library. Stephen Middleton, director and professor of the African American studies program at MSU, was instrumental in bringing the idea of a local exhibit of the collection to the library. This led to a partnership with the Mississippi Humanities Council, which provided the land grant to make this project a reality.



“The Cultivators,” oil on canvas by Samuel L. Dunson Jr. (2000), is one of the pieces from the Kinsey Collection which will be on exhibit at MSU.

The set-up of the collections will begin March 9–13, led by Khalil Kinsey. Once the exhibit opens, the visiting hours will be on select weekends and during regular library hours. The Collection will be open for free, public viewings March 21–June 20 in the John Grisham Room at Mitchell Memorial Library. Guided tours will be available. Other events in connection to this event include the Ragtime festival March 26–28 and the Gatsby Gala. A Kinsey public reception will be held on March 21, and Kinsey will give a presentation on March 22. For more information, please visit <http://lib.msstate.edu/kinsey/>.

Family Reading Program Trainees Learn the Ropes at New Orleans Workshop

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College at Perkinston and the Ohr-O’Keefe Museum in Biloxi have been selected the first two family reading program sites for 2015. As such, several recruits, including the program coordinators from both sites and the humanities scholar/discussion leader for the MGCCC venue traveled to New Orleans for a required Prime Time Family Time training workshop in mid-January.

The Mississippi Humanities Council is currently working with the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities in presenting Prime Time Family Time on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and in south Mississippi. The programs are partially funded by a grant from Shell Oil through the Louisiana



Attendees to New Orleans Prime Time Family Reading Time workshop, left to right, Althea Jerome (Hattiesburg), Shugana Williams (MGCCC, Perkinston), Rhea Miner (Ohr-O’Keefe Museum) and David Morgan (MHC).

Endowment for the Humanities. David Morgan, the Mississippi Humanities Council’s family literacy project coordinator, also attended the workshop, preceded by a meeting of state affiliate coordinators from

around the country. A second training workshop, scheduled for mid-summer, will be attended by recruits from central Mississippi as this project moves northward.

Hometown Teams Request for Proposals

The Mississippi Humanities Council invites applications for the Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit, Hometown Teams – How Sports Shape America. Developed for rural audiences and small museums, libraries, community centers and other non-profit organizations with limited access to traveling exhibits, Hometown Teams addresses sports and the integral part that they play in the life of towns across America ranging from the athletes themselves, to marching bands and pep squads to fans in the stands to the community-wide interest, support and pride that they instill.



A new traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibit will come to Mississippi in 2016, celebrating sports and the role they play in the life of towns across America.

Hometown Teams will tour Mississippi from March through December of 2016. The exhibit is composed of seven free-standing display modules featuring text, images, audio and video and actual sports artifacts, and requires a minimum of 8.5 feet overhead and 800 square feet of floor space. (Additional information is available at the Smithsonian Institution website: www.museumonmainstreet.org.)

The exhibit will be made available to a limited number of host sites across the state for a period of 4 to 6 weeks each. Sites will be chosen based on geographic location, strength of proposed ideas for complimentary local exhibits and programming, physical display space, and ability to raise matching funds. The exhibit requires no rental fee. Financial assistance is available and professional and technical support are provided.

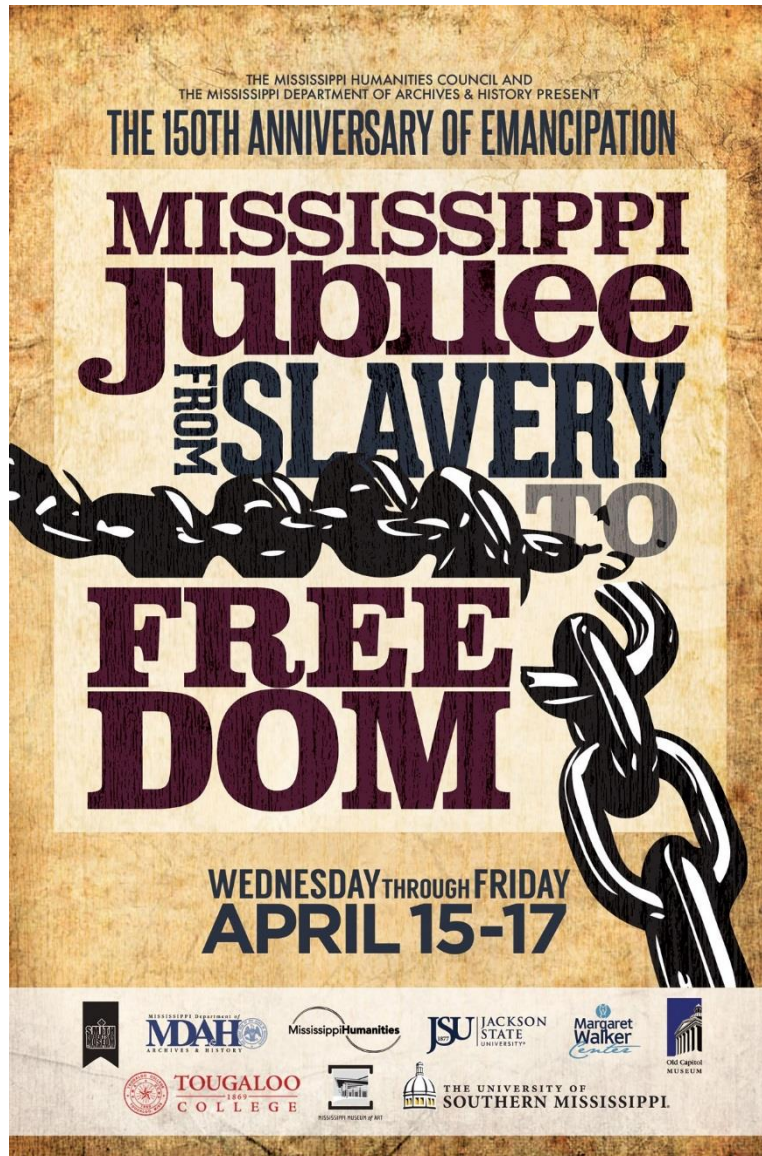
So what is your community's sports story? How does it relate to the story of sports and community in America? For information on how to apply as a host site for Hometown Teams please contact the Mississippi Humanities Council at 601-432-6752. Proposals are due by Friday, April 17, 2015.

StoryCorps in Mississippi through March 6

StoryCorps, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to recording, preserving and sharing the stories of Americans from all backgrounds and beliefs, is collecting Mississippi stories through March 6, with support from the Mississippi Humanities Council. The StoryCorps MobileBooth — an Airstream trailer outfitted with a recording studio — is parked on Duling Green next to Duling School in Jackson. Reservations are being accepted and can be made by calling StoryCorps' 24-hour toll-free reservation line at 1-800-850-4406 or visiting storycorps.org.



Singer Dorothy Moore, of "Misty Blue" fame, pictured with former Gov. William Winter, at the StoryCorps MobileBooth.



Telling Project Update

Productions of “The Telling Project” veterans program are moving forward throughout Mississippi. In addition to the Jackson–Meridian production that will take place in August, work has begun on the Hattiesburg–Coast production of the Telling Project, which will take place in November.

The Telling Project’s Max Rayneard visited Jackson in January to conduct interviews with interested veterans for the Jackson–Meridian production. He conducted six in–person interviews while he was here, and three additional phone interviews after his visit. In addition to a packed interview schedule, Max also sat down with the Clarion–Ledger and Mississippi Public Broadcasting during his visit to talk about the Telling Project’s Mississippi productions. (Read the Clarion–Ledger article [here](#).)



The cast for the Jackson–Meridian has been set, and the six participants will begin rehearsals this summer in preparation for August. Performances will take place at the New Stage Theatre in Jackson August 7–9 and in Meridian at the Little Theatre August 14–16.

The MHC is also beginning to solidify plans for the second production of the Telling Project, which will include performances in Hattiesburg, Poplarville, and Long Beach. The MHC is thrilled to be partnering with the University of Southern Mississippi’s theatre program and the Dale Center for the Study of War & Society for this production.

Performances will take place in conjunction with Veterans Day in November.

Rayneard will be back in Mississippi April 8–11 to conduct interviews for the second production of the Telling Project. These interviews will take place in Hattiesburg. If you know of a veteran who is interested in interviewing, please contact the MHC at 601–432–6752.

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:

- **The Art of War** – Feb. 21, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson
- **26th Annual Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration** – Feb. 27–28, various venues and times, Natchez
- **The Kinsey Collection: Shared Treasures of Bernard and Shirley Kinsey—Where Art and History Intersect** – March 3–April 1, Mississippi State University, Starkville
- **Mississippi Symphony Orchestra ‘Informances’** – March 5 and April 5, Carthage
- **Jim Lucas: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi 1964–1968** – through March 31, Delta State University, Cleveland
- **Celebration to Honor 50th Anniversary of Drew, MS School Integration** – Feb. 26, Fannie Lou Hamer Institute @ COFO, Jackson
- **Porter Fortune, Jr. History Symposium: Southern Religion** – Feb. 26–28, University of Mississippi, Oxford
- **Culinary Communities of Mississippi: Farm, Table and Campus** – March 19, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg
- **‘If Only She Were a Man...’: Women Composers from the 18th to the 21st Centuries** – March 24, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg



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.



Disclaimer

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