

MISSISSIPPI HUMANITIES COUNCIL
BIENNIAL REPORT



MississippiHumanities

“In a state with a rich cultural legacy but a complicated history, the humanities are essential to understanding who we are and what we might become.”

When discussing the weekly theme of courage during a bilingual family reading program in Canton, a father explains in broken English his decision to come to America to make a better life for his family. A child reaches her hand to touch a brick made by slaves during the “Behind the Big House” tour in Holly Springs. Inmates at the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman write memoirs detailing the story of their lives, including the events that landed them in prison. While standing on a theatrical stage for the first time, an Iraq veteran shares his emotional story of service to his country and his struggles to fit back into civilian life. These are just a few of the most memorable moments from programs sponsored by the Mississippi Humanities Council in the past year.

Each of these moving experiences testifies to the power of the humanities to inform, explain, and inspire. The humanities help us make intellectual and moral sense of the world around us. They connect our own experience to other times and places and our neighborhoods and towns to the larger world. In a state with a rich cultural legacy but a complicated history, the humanities are essential to understanding who we are and what we might become. Since our founding in 1972, the Mississippi Humanities Council has worked to illuminate our complex heritage and to foster important discussions about the path ahead.

At the Mississippi Humanities Council, we like to say “the humanities are for everyone.” These are not hollow words to us. As you can see in the pages that follow, it is a bedrock philosophy that runs through all of our programs. Throughout our 43-year history, we have been dedicated to serving all Mississippians, no matter their age, race, or station in life, and regardless of in which part of the state they reside or whether they live in a big city or small town. We strive to reach everyone, using the humanities to foster lifelong learning, strengthen civic engagement, and above all, to help move our state forward.

Our work relies on our many partners and friends who help us bring outstanding humanities programs to the people of Mississippi. As you read through this report and learn about the significant impact this small organization has on the cultural and civic life of our state, we invite you to become a supporter of the Mississippi Humanities Council. Together, we can continue to create memorable moments of inspiration, connection, and understanding.



Stuart Rockoff
Executive Director

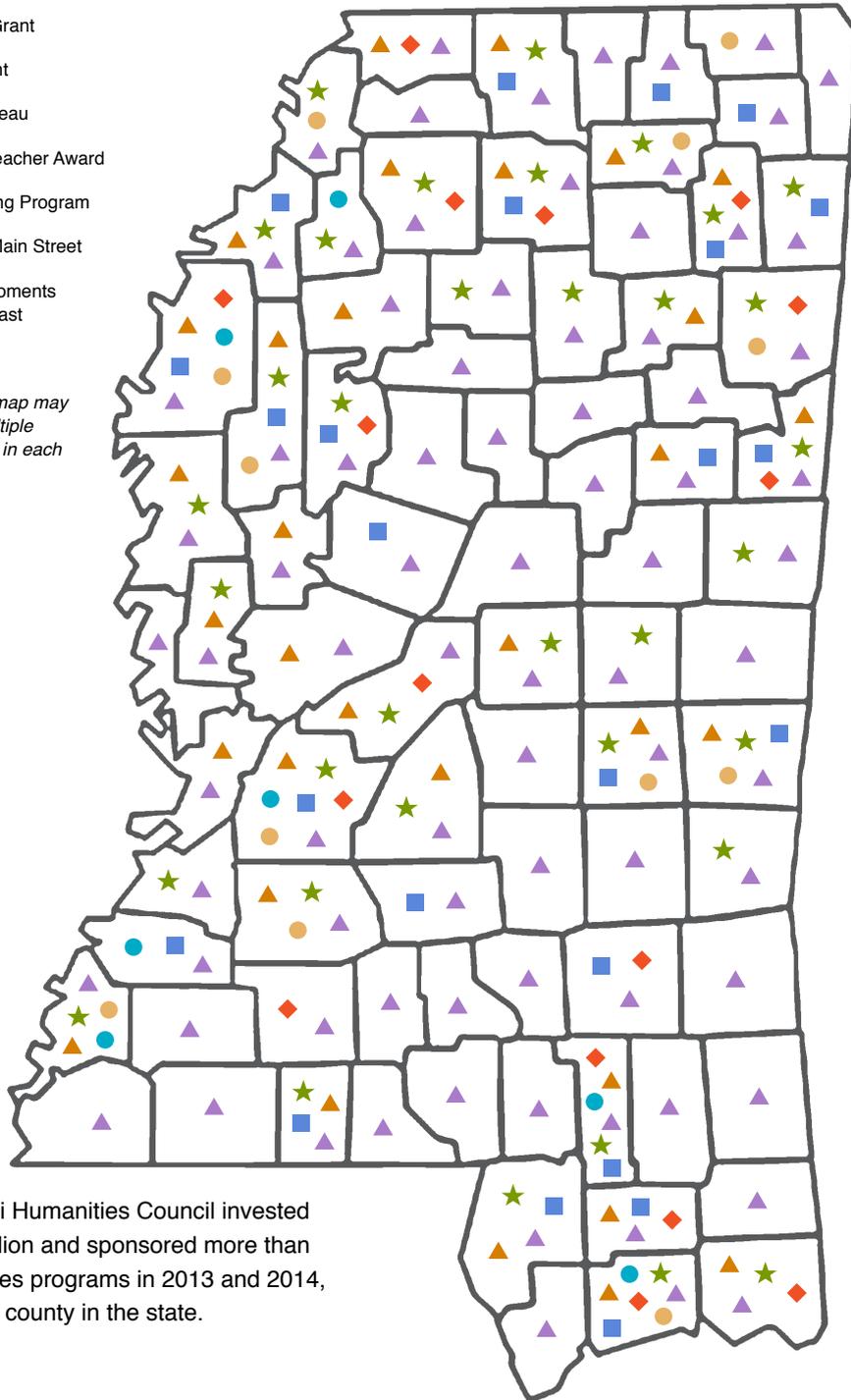


Andrew P. Mullins Jr.
Board Chair

The Humanities are for Everyone

- Oral History Grant
- ▲ Program Grant
- ★ Speakers Bureau
- Humanities Teacher Award
- ◆ Family Reading Program
- Museum on Main Street
- ▲ Mississippi Moments Radio Broadcast

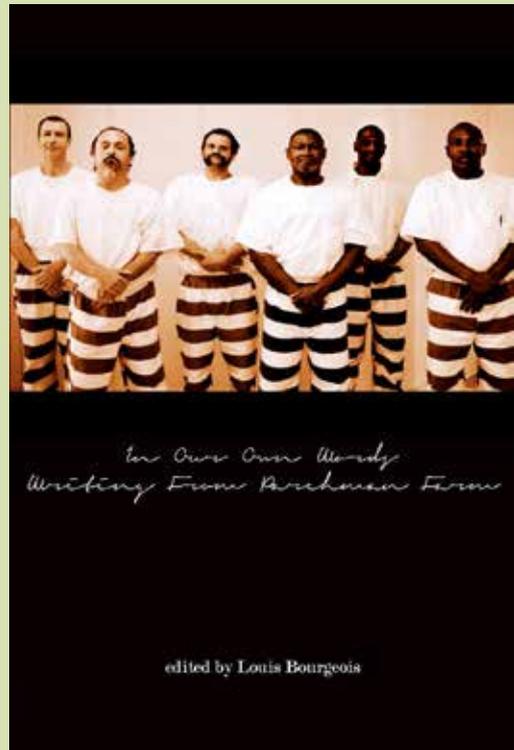
Icons on the map may represent multiple presentations in each location.



The Mississippi Humanities Council invested nearly \$1.6 million and sponsored more than 1,300 humanities programs in 2013 and 2014, reaching every county in the state.

“I’ve been in prison for 24 years and I have a daughter that is 27 years old. She has an 8-year-old daughter... This writing class (has given) me the chance to express to my daughter and grandchild how I grew up. This class (has given) me freedom. Freedom to express to the world that I am human. That I have a heart and that I love just like everyone else.”

Inmate #37525,
Mississippi State Penitentiary, Parchman



Mississippi Prison Writes, a university-style literature and writing course conducted within the walls of the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, teaches inmates to tell their life stories using the critical reading and writing skills they acquire. The results of the 2013 program have been published in a collection entitled In Their Own Words: Writing from Parchman Prison.

Joseph McGill of the Slave Dwelling Project and a former field agent with the National Trust for Historic Preservation shares the stories of the lives lived “Behind the Big House” in Holly Springs. This MHC-funded program goes behind the grand mansions to explore the small, rough dwellings where another side of antebellum life played out in Mississippi.





The WINGS Performing Arts program in Gulfport used an MHC grant to create a theater production entitled Remembrance, based on the poetry, letters and music of World War I. The young actors who created Remembrance observed firsthand the power of theater when they performed their play for the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport, where the audience was moved to tears by this expression of honor for the sacrifices of our American veterans. The workshop will perform Remembrance at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. in August.

With MHC grant support, the University of Southern Mississippi presented a public lecture and musical program exploring the historical and cultural contexts of six female composers of various backgrounds who were celebrated in their times, but whose works have been largely lost to history. If Only She Were a Man: Women Composers from the 18th to the 21st Centuries featured an internationally-recognized scholar, teacher and performer who spoke about the work of female composers, then performed representative chamber pieces for flute and piano, accompanied by a pianist.



Grants

The humanities have a unique responsibility to engage with all segments of society. Inspired by this mission, the Mississippi Humanities Council awards grant support for programs that connect with Mississippians from all corners of our state and across all socio-economic and demographic lines. That reach even encompasses our imprisoned population.

In 2013, the Council awarded a grant to the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council to conduct a university-style literature and writing course entitled Mississippi Prison Writes within the walls of the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. Seventeen inmates ranging in age from 18 to 60 with no previous college experience (only one had finished high school) participated in an 18-week course which, fully immersed in the humanities, taught them how to read classic literature critically, how to discuss it and then, how to use their new understanding of literature to inform their own writing. The course concluded with each participant writing his memoir, which became part of a book available to the public. The experience was profoundly meaningful for the inmates, and for the broader community. It presented a perspective on the life experiences and events that result in incarceration.

The aim of the Mississippi Humanities Council grants program is to support programs like this, which enhance our understanding of our unique cultural heritage, encourage thoughtful, civil conversations among our citizens and use techniques of the liberal arts to interpret our human experience. Over the past two years, the Council has given out \$228,447 in grants to 88 different organizations. Our grants are available to nonprofit organizations throughout the state to support free and public programs that meet our goal of a citizenry with a sense of community and a vision for the future.

“One mother told me that at the start of the program one of her children hated books and the other child was becoming as ambivalent as the older. At the end of the program, the oldest child would read some books without being forced to and the youngest child was literally devouring them; she couldn’t get enough of books and loved them.”

Daisha Walker, storyteller for the Perkinston Elementary School program



Kids don leopard masks for the week’s theme of preserving the environment during this Prime Time Family Reading Program at the Ohr-O’Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi.



Discussion leader Mary Edelen engages the children in a conversation about dreams and determination during this Prime Time Family Reading program in Ocean Springs.



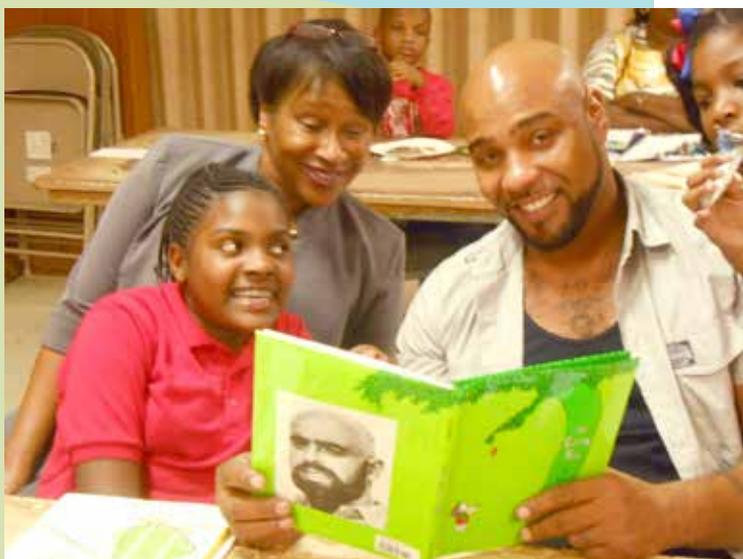
Children proudly display their graduation certificates after completing the bilingual Luciémagas reading program at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Oxford.

“I really enjoyed the program. It really brought me and my kids closer together as a family. We read more than ever and we are enjoying more family time together and have added my extended family. Thank you all and bless you.”

Parent participant at the Richard Wright Public Library, Jackson

“It is amazing and it gives a wonderful opportunity for the children to learn, and also the parents. Makes you want to spend time with your child.”

Parent participant at
Itta Bena Public Library



A father and daughter get very excited to read Shel Silverstein's classic book The Giving Tree during a family reading program in Itta Bena.

“Most of the parents had never made any attempt to read WITH their child. I feel like this program will reap rewards for years to come with parent and child.”

TN-Tom Moving Youth director,
Aberdeen

Family Reading Programs

For almost 20 years, the Mississippi Humanities Council has fostered a love of reading in literacy-challenged families across the state. Our Family Reading Project, which now includes Prime Time Family Reading Time® in partnership with the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and our bi-lingual Luciérnagas program, is co-hosted by schools, community centers, libraries, and churches throughout Mississippi.

During this six-week program, professional storytellers make great works of children's literature come alive, and discussion leaders guide the families through a conversation about such important themes as courage, heritage, and resilience. At the end of each session, the children bring home a copy of next week's book and read it with their families to prepare for the next program. At the end of the six weeks, participants take home a hardcover children's book to encourage them to continue reading with their families. All of these programs are free to participants and open to the public.

The family reading project has made a positive difference in the lives of its participating families. Parents and children who have gone through the program report that they are spending more time reading and discussing books as a family activity, visiting the library with greater frequency, as well as reading more often by themselves and noticing the same for their children. A study conducted by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities has shown that children who go through the program score significantly higher on academic assessments. For all of these reasons, there is always a waiting list of sites hoping to host one of our family reading programs.



The Museum on Main Street program is designed to reach rural areas, as this banner announcing the arrival of The Way We Worked in Tunica can attest.

The Way We Worked traveled to six different sites around Mississippi in 2013-2014.

“Our visitors loved looking at The Way We Worked. [It] was a great resource for parents and especially grandparents to make tangible connections with youngsters about how things have changed.”

Director of the Union County Heritage Museum, New Albany



Smithsonian
Institution

“Few aspects of American culture so colorfully and passionately celebrate the American experience as sports.”

Bob Santelli, Curator, Hometown Teams.

Museum on Main Street: Bringing the Smithsonian to Mississippi

The Mississippi Humanities Council and Museum on Main Street, a division of the Smithsonian Institution’s Traveling Exhibits Service, have been working together since 2001 to bring quality exhibits to our state. Beginning with *Produce for Victory: World War II on the Home Front*, the MHC has now toured six different exhibits, including *The Way We Worked* in 2013-14. We are currently gearing up for a seventh, *Hometown Teams*, opening in early 2016, which examines how sports shape our culture and communities.

The Museum on Main Street program is designed to reach smaller communities and rural areas, which seldom have the opportunity to host such displays. Over the years, these exhibits have toured 42 communities, most of which have been small towns. For these communities, the exhibits have been a major event and a source of local pride. Several exhibit sites have strung banners declaring “The Smithsonian is Coming” across Main Street and others have included cheerleaders and marching bands as part of their opening events. Local folks eagerly work together, serving as tour guides and donating artifacts and photos for related local history exhibits. While Museum on Main Street aims to reach small communities, it can have a big impact: over 1,600 people toured *The Way We Worked* when it was on display in Wesson, a town of only 1,900 residents.

While these exhibits only stay at each site for a month or so, they have made a lasting impact in communities across Mississippi.



Local sports traditions like Choctaw stickball will be highlighted when Hometown Teams comes to Mississippi in 2016. Photo courtesy of MDAH.



Each of the six host sites for Hometown Teams will develop a complementary local history exhibit featuring artifacts and photographs like this image of a women’s basketball team from Brookhaven. Photo courtesy of MDAH.

“The speaker was extremely knowledgeable, skilled in both presentation and use of media, and very easy for the host institution to work with.”

Sean Farrell, Library of Hattiesburg,
Petal and Forrest County



Felder Rushing, a well-known and much-loved radio personality and former Mississippi Extension Service urban horticulture specialist, presents programs that are part entertainment and part hard-core agriculture, on gardening in the Deep South.

“Thanks so much to the MHC for their support of these incredible presentations from the Speakers Bureau!”

Kathryn Lewis,
Stone County Arts Council

William Arinder, 2014 recipient of the Mississippi Humanities Council’s Humanities Educator Award, examines the state’s early pioneer history with three topics on the Speakers Bureau roster.

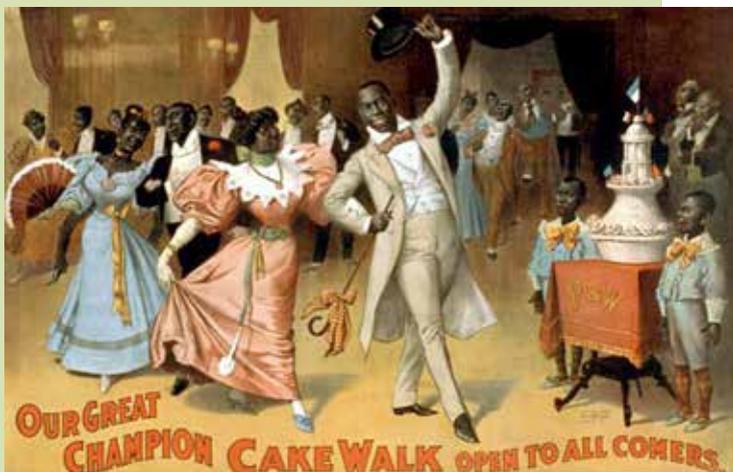


Drummer Jerry Jenkins offers audiences a glimpse of the Mandé culture of West Africa with his Speakers Bureau presentation. In the tradition of the Mandé, the history and culture are orally preserved in the minds and through the music of musicians, which Jenkins performs as he relates the history of this ancient ethnic society. Photo by Rick Guyton/The Clarion-Ledger.



“Thank you so much for providing us the opportunity to offer quality programming in our library.”

Patty M. Bailey,
Coffeeville Public Library



The Cakewalk, one of more than 130 topics available on the Mississippi Humanities Council Speakers Bureau list, explores the history behind a well-known parlor game, with its connections to plantation life in the Deep South. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division



Barbara Jones Clark, a professional storyteller and former librarian, presents three topics for the Mississippi Humanities Council Speakers Bureau, including one entitled The Cakewalk.

“A few people drove an hour and a half to attend, and they stated it was worth the drive. They were really impressed with the speaker.”

Brenda Durrett,
Columbus-Lowndes Public Library

Speakers Bureau

The cakewalk—a familiar feature at county fairs, school festivals and church fundraisers—is well-known to many Americans. But there is a complex history to this party game that dates to the antebellum South. The cakewalk was a pre-Civil War dance originally performed by slaves on plantation grounds, with couples competing with their dancing skills for elaborately decorated cakes. Barbara Clark Jones, professional storyteller and member of the Mississippi Humanities Council Speakers Bureau, explores the cultural connotations of the cakewalk through the story of the famous African American song and dance duo, Williams and Walker, who took the country by storm and took the cakewalk from America to England during the 1890s through 1920s. Jones uses a combination of storytelling, music, video and photos to trace the history of the dance. She teaches audiences traditional cakewalk steps as she reveals the story behind a popular American pastime that grew from a complicated chapter in our shared past.

Jones is one of 93 scholars and cultural experts who present on 150 different topics in the Mississippi Humanities Council Speakers Bureau, providing free, high-quality public presentations across the state. Topics available include history, ethnic heritage and cultural studies, music and theater, southern literature, philosophy and political science. Any nonprofit organization in the state (public libraries, schools, museums, historical societies, retirement homes, community centers and civic organizations) may apply to bring a speaker to their community, with all fees paid by the Mississippi Humanities Council. From 2013-2015, Speakers Bureau members presented more than 130 talks in 35 counties, making it one of the Council’s most important tools for connecting humanities scholarship with the citizens of Mississippi.



Barbara Boschert (center), winner of the 2014 Humanities Teacher Award at Coahoma Community College, presents a lecture entitled "Understanding Our First President Through Symbolism."



Hank Holmes, retired director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, receives the Humanities Partner Award from MHC board member Jack Garner at the 2015 Public Humanities Awards.



Humanities Awards

Humanities faculty at Mississippi's colleges and universities are engaged in significant work in their classrooms, nurturing students' capacity to think

critically and creatively, to evaluate points of view, and weigh evidence. They cultivate imagination in their students and help them develop the problem-solving and critical-thinking skills they will need to succeed in life and participate in a democratic society. The Mississippi Humanities Council celebrates these educators each year by recognizing one outstanding humanities teacher from every higher education institution in our state at an annual spring awards ceremony. They receive cash prizes and public recognition, and for the title of Humanities Teacher Award recipient, they are asked

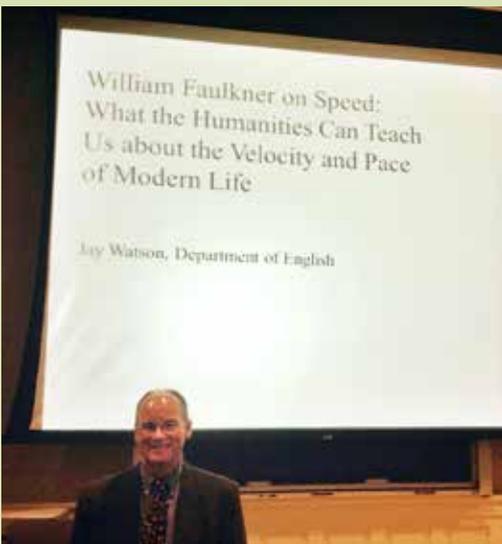
to prepare and deliver a lecture related to their work during National Arts and Humanities Month.

The content of those public lectures illustrates the depth of scholarship in our humanities departments across the state and demonstrates the extraordinary talent of these educators in the teaching of language, literature, history, social studies and other humanities fields. The lectures delivered by 2014 Humanities Teacher Award honorees plumbed the complex history and culture of Mississippi, examining the impact of racial perceptions on popular television, unearthing the stories of female soldiers of the Civil War, exploring female agency through novels written by pioneering female writers, interpreting symbolism associated with the nation's first president and analyzing literature in the social media age.

The Humanities Teacher Award winners are then special guests of the Mississippi Humanities Council at its annual awards gala, which honors significant achievement in the public humanities. By recognizing outstanding scholars, preservers of Mississippi culture, partners, and educators, we celebrate the power of the humanities to understand our past and provide an intellectual framework for thriving in a changing world.



Ebony Lumumba, 2014 Humanities Teacher Award recipient at Tougaloo College, speaks about depictions of race in the work of Eudora Welty.



Jay Watson, the 2014 Humanities Teacher Award honoree at the University of Mississippi, presents a lecture about the relevance of William Faulkner to modern life.

“I cannot tell you how much the symposium has re-energized me to believe that there is hope for Mississippi.”

Mississippi Jubilee audience member

The MHC assembled a large coalition of partner organizations to put on the Mississippi Jubilee symposium in 2015.



Supported by the Cora Norman Lecture Fund, Civil Rights leader Bob Moses spoke about his fight for voting rights in Mississippi as part of the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer.



This image from the 1966 March Against Fear is just one of several photographs from the Jim Lucas Exhibit that traveled the state with the support of the MHC.

Council Conducted Projects

From time to time, the Mississippi Humanities Council supports special programs and initiatives that further our mission to promote understanding of our cultural heritage, encourage civil discourse, and strengthen our sense of community.

In April 2015, the Council partnered with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the University of Southern Mississippi, Tougaloo College, Jackson State University, the Smith Robertson Museum, and the Mississippi Museum of Art to present "Mississippi Jubilee: From Slavery to Freedom," a three-day symposium examining and celebrating the 150th anniversary of the ending of slavery in Mississippi. Emancipation transformed the lives of all Mississippians, the majority of whom had been enslaved. The symposium bridged the worlds of academia and the general public, bringing leading scholars and accomplished artistic performers to explore the continuing resonance of this crucial period.

The Council has also sponsored the Jim Lucas Photography Exhibit, a collection of images depicting seminal events of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. In 1964, Lucas was a student at Millsaps College when he became a "stringer" photographer for UPI and *Time* and *Life* magazines during the search for the missing civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman. Lucas continued to document key events, including the James Meredith March for Freedom in 1966, the bombing of Beth Israel's synagogue in Jackson, the funeral of Wharlest Jackson in Natchez in 1967, and the Senate Hearings to Evaluate Poverty in Jackson in 1967 with the subsequent trip by Senator Robert Kennedy to the Mississippi Delta. The Humanities Council offered support to four different venues around the state to host the exhibit and to bring in scholars for public programs related to the photographs.

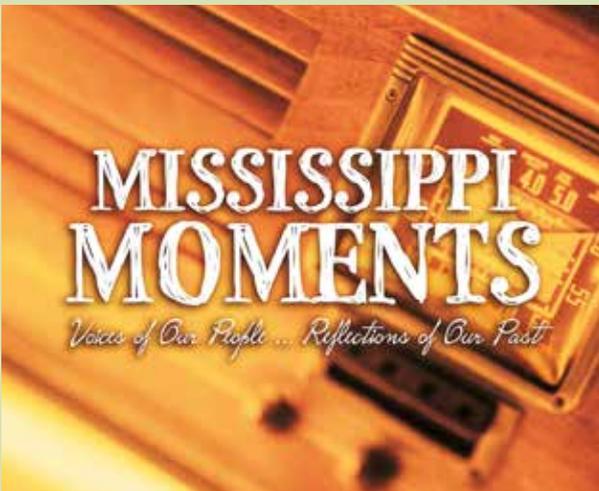
Through these special initiatives, the Council has also helped bring StoryCorps to Mississippi in conjunction with Mississippi Public Broadcasting, sponsored a public lecture by Civil Rights leader Bob Moses as part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer through our Cora Norman Lecture Fund, and supported the first annual Mississippi Book Festival.



As an early sponsor, the MHC has helped develop and plan this year's inaugural Mississippi Book Festival.



The Mississippi Oral History Project funded Surviving Katrina: Lost and Found in Mississippi, a collection of interviews about the aftermath of the storm conducted by the Center for Oral History at USM.



Every weekday at 12:30 pm on Mississippi Public Radio, listeners across the state can enjoy Mississippi Moments, featuring excerpts from the Mississippi Oral History Project at USM.

G. Mark LaFrancis and Devonte Demby interview Charles Evers at his radio station in Jackson for the MHC-supported World War II Veterans Oral History Project.



Oral History

Much of our state's history exists primarily in the memories of the people who experienced it. For over fifteen years, the Mississippi Oral History Project has documented the story of Mississippi through the voices of its people in hundreds of recorded audio interviews. Funded by the Mississippi Legislature through a grant from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the Mississippi Oral History Project is a statewide initiative to record Mississippians talking about their life experiences – from the mundane to the extraordinary.

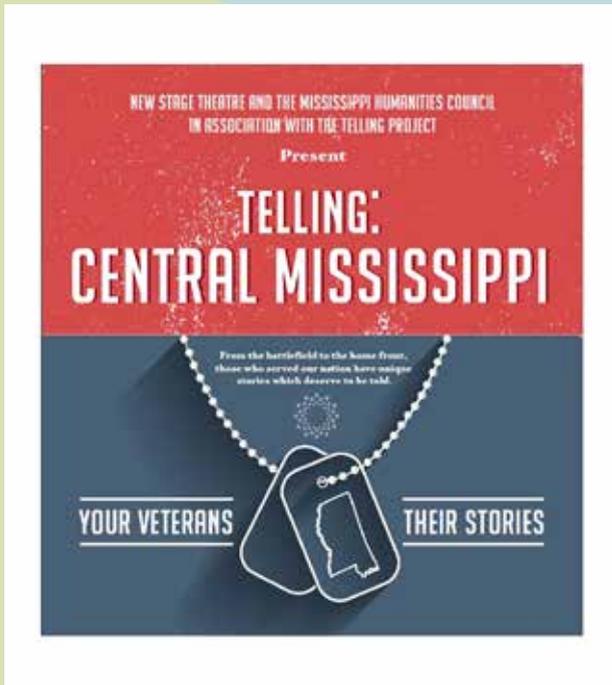
Working with the University of Southern Mississippi's Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, the Mississippi Humanities Council oversees the program, offering grant support to nonprofit groups to conduct a wide range of oral history projects. The collaboration has resulted in one of the largest oral history collections in the Gulf South. In the past few years, the Humanities Council has funded several oral history projects related to World War II veterans, local civil rights history, and the ethnic heritage of Mississippi.

Excerpts from the Mississippi Oral History Project are played on statewide public radio five days a week during the "Mississippi Moments" program, which is produced by the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage at USM. These brief but compelling clips bring Mississippi history to life, whether it be Fannie Lou Hamer talking about her struggle for voting rights, King T. Evans giving an eyewitness account of the Great Flood of 1927, or Dan McDaniel describing life growing up in the small town of Bude.

In 2015, the Mississippi Humanities Council launched a new oral history initiative entitled "Mississippi: State of Change" which is documenting the important social, political, economic, and cultural changes in the state over the past 40 years. Thanks to the Mississippi Oral History Project, these crucial stories will be preserved for future generations.

“Greater understanding fosters receptivity, easing veterans’ transitions back to civil society, and allowing communities to benefit from the skills and experience they bring with them.”

The Telling Project



“Standing Together funded programs seeking to explore war and its aftermath, promote discussion of the experience of military service, and support returning veterans and their families.”

NEH Standing Together

Standing Together

The Mississippi Humanities Council is proud to partner with the Telling Project for two productions in 2015. The MHC’s sponsorship of the Telling Project in Mississippi is part of the National Endowment for the Humanities’ veterans’ initiative, “Standing Together: The Humanities and the Experience of War.” The goals of “Standing Together” are to support veterans returning from combat and to foster a greater public understanding of their experiences.

Using a theatrical setting, the Telling Project is aimed at helping veterans and their families share their stories of military experience and connect with their communities. By sharing and listening to these stories, communities are able to better understand and value the experiences of veterans. The Telling Project’s process begins by conducting interviews with veterans and their family members. These interviews are transcribed and turned into a script that interweaves each of the individual stories together into a larger narrative. The script is then performed by the veterans, thus allowing them a chance to speak to their communities about their military experiences using their own words.

The MHC will host two productions of the Telling Project in Mississippi. The first, “Telling: Central Mississippi,” will be performed in Jackson and Meridian. The second production, “Telling: Southern Mississippi,” will take place in Hattiesburg, Long Beach, and Poplarville and will include veterans from Hattiesburg and the Coast area.

The Telling Project’s Mississippi productions will give local veterans a unique opportunity to share their stories with the general public, thus benefiting both the veterans and their communities by fostering greater understanding and appreciation for our military veterans.

DONORS

JANUARY 1, 2013 through
FEBRUARY 28, 2015

Gifts of \$1,000 and above

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Wallin, Penny
White, Jack H. & Emilie
Whittington, Linda
Williams, Clyde V.
Wolverton, Robert E.
Young, Julia Marks

2013 Funding Sources

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| National Endowment for the Humanities | \$615,761 |
| Mississippi Arts Commission | \$5,217 |
| Mississippi Legislature: Oral History | \$50,000 |
| Private Donations | \$10,655 |
| Interest and Miscellaneous Income | \$12,037 |
| In-Kind Contributions | \$214,091 |
| Total | \$907,761 |

Expenditures for Fiscal Year 2013

| | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Program Services | 83.00% |
| Administrative and General | 16.00% |
| Fundraising | .05% |

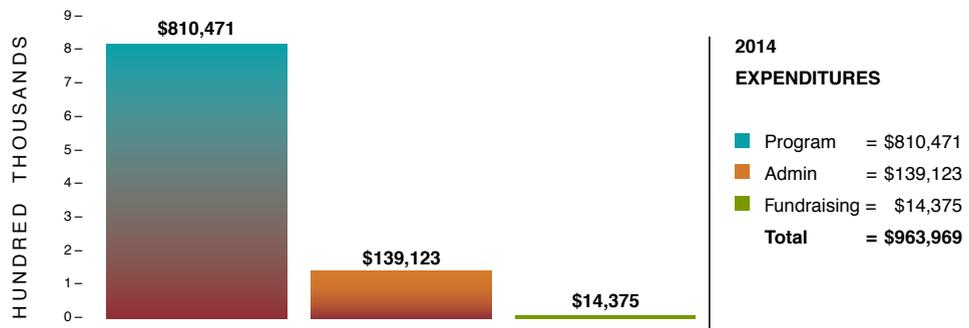
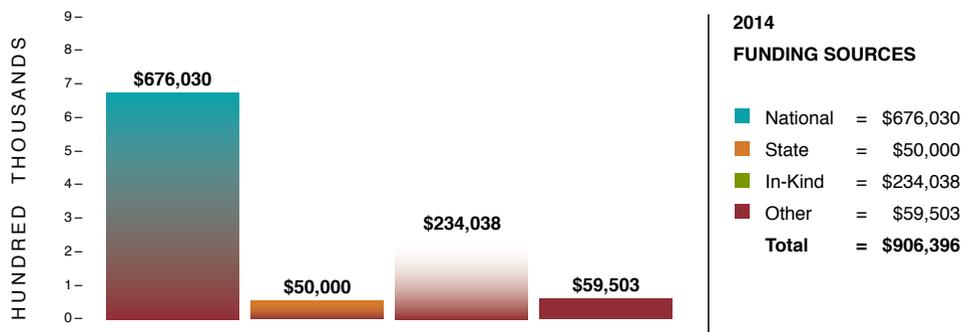
2014 Funding Sources

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| National Endowment for the Humanities | \$676,030 |
| Mississippi Arts Commission | \$3,105 |
| Mississippi Legislature: Oral History | \$50,000 |
| Private Donations | \$17,697 |
| Interest and Miscellaneous Income | \$14,951 |
| Shell Oil Grant subgrant | \$20,000 |
| Barksdale Reading Institute | \$3,750 |
| In-Kind Contributions | \$234,038 |
| Total | \$1,019,571 |

Expenditures for Fiscal Year 2014

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Program Services | 84% |
| Administrative and General | 14% |
| Fundraising | 2% |

Based on audited financial statements for fiscal years ending 10/31/2013 and 10/31/2014.



Mississippi Humanities Council 2015

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Retired, Mississippi
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