

The Wellspring

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Inclusion is the Wellspring of Democracy

Regional Alliance Formed to Repair Legacy of Racial Violence

Julie Armstrong

In a rare gathering of communities scarred by lynchings and racial violence, a number of grass roots groups met March 17-19 at the University of Mississippi to form a regional alliance for justice, dignity, and respect. At the conference, entitled *Southern Exposure: A Regional Summit on Racial Violence and Reconciliation*, participants shared information about truth and reconciliation commissions, prosecution of "cold case" civil rights murders, memorials to the slain, and educational curriculum initiatives, as well as reparations and restitution.

Hosted by the William Winter Institute and co-sponsored by The Birmingham Pledge and Southern Truth and Reconciliation (STAR), the meeting drew attendees from community organizations and university-based institutes from across the South and beyond. The result was a pledge to create a regional umbrella organization that would share resources, identify common goals, and fashion a Southern-based response to decades of intellectual, psychological, and economic racism.



A panel on the impact of trials in civil rights cold cases.

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Newsletter of the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation
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Passages

Susan M. Glisson

Last summer, 5 young white men, ages 17 and 18, accosted a 17-year-old black youth as he walked along a rural road in South Carolina. The five surrounded Isaiah Clyburn and beat him. When he tried to escape, they followed him across a barb-wired fence and into a ditch. This past January, a judge sentenced the 5 men to the maximum sentence allowed. For his part, Isaiah forgave them for the assault. In Arkansas, police recently chased down a suspect in an assault at a gay bar in Massachusetts. The suspect killed a passenger and a state trooper before turning the gun on himself. Friends report that Jacob Robida, the suspect, glorified Nazism. He was 18 years old. And in April, authorities arrested two white teenagers in Spring, Texas, who they say severely beat and sodomized a 16-year-old Hispanic boy who they believed had tried to kiss a 12-year-old white girl at a party.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reports that “In the past three years, most sections of the country have seen a significant and troubling resurgence of racist skinhead activity. This renewed growth of racist skinhead activity includes a rise in the number of organized racist skinhead groups as well as a rise in the number of ‘independent’ or unaffiliated racist skinheads. It also includes a rise in the amount of skinhead-related criminal activity, primarily hate crimes but also including a few attempted acts of terrorism.”

Several factors have coincided that have allowed the racist skinhead subculture to stage a comeback: less competition from other supremacist groups, the connections the Internet now allows, the rise in popularity and availability of white power music, success in recruiting kids, and the spread of global hate, which includes effective new recruiting by skinhead groups in Europe. According to the ADL, “The skinhead movement has evolved over the last 30 or so years and is still changing. This subculture appeals to the young; a majority of racist skinheads appear to be males in their late teens and early twenties though a significant minority are women.”

The U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics issued a special report on hate crimes in November 2005. Of the 191,000 hate crime incidents reported annually since 2000, half attributed race as the underlying motivation for the attack. The report further suggests that most hate crimes accompanied violent crimes. Two disturbing facts are included in the report. There were no significant differences in rates of hate crime vulnerability for racial or

ethnic groups, and young people reported hate crime victimization at rates higher than those of older persons. In short, young people in America are becoming increasingly engaged in hate crimes against each other. The age range for the fastest growing category of skinheads is 12 to 25 years old. Supremacists are particularly effective at recruiting young people from broken homes with few job prospects.

What legacy are we handing down to the next generations?

In April, two giants in civil rights passed away. Florence Mars was an outspoken Philadelphia, Mississippi, native who was one of the few whites to lambaste the murders of three civil rights workers in 1964. William Sloane Coffin was an eminent theologian and pastor who challenged segregation and the Vietnam War. The loss of these two heroic people begs the question: what process of awakening allowed them to challenge the system in which they existed? Courageously, Mars was able to condemn white supremacy, to tap into some deeper understanding of democracy, and to question the oppressive system in which she found herself, when all around her shunned her. Coffin was able to offer a searing analysis of power that shook the seats of both government and Wall Street from his Manhattan pulpit. He argued, “In times of oppression if you don’t translate choices of faith into political choices, you run the danger of washing your hands, like Pilate. Many of us are eager to respond to injustice,” he said, “without having to confront the causes of it and that’s why so many business and governmental leaders today are promoting charity. [Confronting injustice] is desperately needed in an economy whose prosperity is based on growing inequality.”

Prophetic voices are those who become aware of injustices around them, who begin to question the causes of such suffering, and who then act to reverse those causes. Such voices understand the difference between charity and justice.

Florence Mars believed in the capacity of people to undertake such a process. “It is significant,” she said, “that when you are finally able to cut through all the confusion, basically decent people will choose the truth. It is an enigma that it takes a Cross to clear the path for this choice, but there is also beauty in the fact that there have always been those who are willing to bear the Cross.”

As children in our culture become disaffected, as inequality widens the gulf between those who are blessed and those who are marginalized, we need such voices now more than ever.

Gulf Coast Community Resists Urban Sprawl and Environmental Destruction in the Aftermath of Katrina

Amy Schmidt

Since Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast, particularly that of Mississippi, leaving widespread destruction in her wake, many groups and organizations are lending their hands in the rebuilding effort. Among these groups are YouthBuild and Turkey Creek Community Initiatives (TCCI), both of which have been in contact with the Winter Institute during the rebuilding process.

YouthBuild, a nonprofit organization based in Massachusetts, is contributing to efforts in the Gulfport area. Along with Public

ed and settled after the Civil War by a community of freed slaves, was named one of Mississippi's Most Endangered Historic Places in 2001. Before Hurricane Katrina even hit, the residents of Turkey Creek were facing the problems of



Turkey Creek Community Initiatives group.

development, racism, and isolation. So, in 2003, they organized the Turkey Creek Community Initiatives group in order to deal more effectively with these problems.

After Katrina hit, the community and the organization had an additional set of issues to confront. Accordingly, in addition to the organization's on-going efforts to revitalize and preserve their community's cultural, historical, economic, and ecological assets, TCCI has distributed over \$20,000 of hurricane relief aid to the residents of Turkey Creek and the surrounding areas. Most of the homes in the area suffered water and wind damage from the storm, and TCCI has been busy cleaning, repairing, and rebuilding ever since.

Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned not only from the experience of Katrina's damage, but also from the efforts to repair damage in the aftermath: Local organizations, such as TCCI, can and should work alongside national groups, such as YouthBuild, to effectively rebuild Mississippi's coast.



Destruction from Hurricane Katrina.

Allies, the program was awarded over \$3 million in grants by the Corporation for National and Community Service. With the grant money, YouthBuild hopes to bring more than 350 students to the area to build and repair 150 to 300 units of housing.

TCCI, a nonprofit community development organization based in Turkey Creek, near the Gulfport airport, is also helping in the hurricane relief effort. Turkey Creek, found-

Institute Spearheads Passage of Civil Rights Curriculum Bill

Annette Hollowell

This March brought with it the passage of Senate Bill 2718, which directs the State Department of Education to teach civil and human rights in Mississippi schools and creates the Mississippi Civil Rights Education Commission. Serving as permanent members of the Commission are Jackson State University, the Oral History Project at the University of Southern Mississippi, Tougaloo College, and the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation. Other individuals or entities may apply for a three-year term as a rotating member of the Commission. The bill was modeled after similar national efforts at mandating Holocaust education in schools.

The Commission is charged with implementing civil rights and human rights education as part of the State K-12 curriculum, using the following guidelines: (a) Provide assistance and advice to K-12 schools with respect to the Civil Rights Movement and human rights education and awareness program; (b) Survey and catalog the extent to which civil rights and human rights education exists in state curricula; (c) Inventory civil rights memorials, exhibits, and resources that could be used in classrooms and other educational programs; (d) Compile a list of volunteers who are willing to share their knowledge and experiences concerning the struggle for civil rights; (e) Prepare reports for the Governor and the State Legislature on the inclusion of civil rights studies into the educational systems of the state.

The Commission is also charged to seek funds to support the project.

With the passage of this bill, Mississippi accompanies a handful of states advocating a curriculum that embraces a complex narrative of American history, one more encompassing of the black experience. Other such programs include a unique curriculum partnership between Maryland's Department of Education and the Reginald F. Lewis Maryland Museum of African American History and Culture, as well as the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, School Reform Commission's African-American history class requirement. However, Mississippi is the first state to place special emphasis on civil rights history.

This fall, the William Winter Institute will present the findings of research exploring similar bills and state action, in an effort to better anticipate any challenges or particular issues arising around related efforts across the country. In the meantime, educators and local people will convene this June in McComb for a Civil Rights Education Summit, in an effort to equip teachers with a plan for incorporating Civil Rights history into the curriculum.

Our hope is that, with the advent of this bill, Mississippi educators will leverage Civil Rights topics across subjects—for example, teaching Freedom Songs in music class, discussing SNCC leader and Algebra Project founder Bob Moses in math class, and incorporating local oral histories into a Social Studies class. Whatever the approach, with the support of the State and its citizens, along with the fundraising and curriculum-development efforts of the Commission, these educational resources will be available soon for all students.

Mississippi Coalition for Racial Justice Part of a “N

April Grayson

In a meeting of the Mississippi Coalition for Racial Justice, Former Governor William Winter asserted that we are in the midst of a new civil rights movement.

The volunteer, multiracial group of civic, religious, and educational leaders has been meeting since 2005 to create an alliance of Mississippians interested in equity and justice for all state citizens.

“Let us not underestimate how far we have come,” said Governor Winter, “but we have a long way to go. Traveling around this state, I’m convinced that there is a huge reser-

voir of people who want to see us come together.”

The group modeled itself after the Philadelphia Coalition, a multiracial community group in Neshoba County that organized to call for justice in the slayings of three civil rights workers killed there by Klan members in 1964. Following the 2005 conviction of Edgar Ray Killen for orchestrating those murders, the Philadelphia group continues to build on their work by expanding to educational initiatives in the local schools, as well as identifying further issues to tackle. The Mississippi Coalition for Racial Justice wants to draw on that model for the state as a whole.

New Documentary Project Explores Roots of Desegregation

Kate Medley

A documentary project is underway at the Winter Institute with the support of John Batson of Roswell, Georgia, aiming to capture the stories surrounding the integration of both the University of Mississippi Law School and the University of Mississippi Medical Center in the 1960s.

Dr. Blair Batson and Josh Morse were raised in and around Poplarville, Mississippi, where their mothers were close friends during the Depression years. Batson grew up to be a doctor and eventually became Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at the Medical Center. Morse went on to become a lawyer and then Dean of the University of Mississippi Law School.

As Chairman of the newly established Department of Pediatrics, Batson was working furiously to staff it when a young doctor from Vicksburg, Dr. Aaron Shirley, applied for a residency position. After reviewing Shirley's application and finding him to be well suited for the position, Batson hired Shirley to become the first black resident in the medical school. Dr. Shirley started to work that very evening.



Dr. Aaron Shirley is one of the subjects of a new documentary project on the integration of the University Medical Center and the University of Mississippi Law School.

Soon after the integration of the medical school, as Dean of the Ole Miss Law School, Josh Morse made the decision to admit the first black student, Cleve McDowell. Morse also recruited Reuben Anderson, who became the first black graduate of the law school in 1967. Anderson went on to become the state's first black Supreme Court justice and the first black president of the Mississippi Bar.

"This story seems to be an example of where the seeds of such reform came not from outside the region, but rather grew up naturally from people living in the rural South between 1920 and 1950," says John Batson. "[These people] understood and demonstrated the conviction that all people should be treated fairly, regardless of what predominate social attitudes and norms may suggest to the contrary."

April Grayson, a documentary educator with the Winter Institute, and Kate Medley, a Southern Studies graduate student, began conducting interviews this spring regarding the integration of the medical school and plan to continue filming interviews this summer focusing on the integration of the law school.

New Civil Rights Movement

Steering committee member David Bickham believes the Coalition should be "an avant-garde of social justice in the state of Mississippi" to address the state's most difficult questions. "If we're going to be a people of conscience," he stated, "it's not going to be comfortable."

Winter Institute director Susan Glisson helped convene the group and will serve as a non-voting ex-officio member of the steering committee.

The group's mission statement:

"The Mississippi Coalition for Racial Justice believes that

economic and community development and civic change are inextricably linked to equity and respect. We are committed to engaging a wide variety of partners and community members to address past and continuing inequities caused by exclusion and racism. The Mississippi Coalition for Racial Justice hopes now to offer a long term vision of individual and systemic change to advance social justice and quality of life in Mississippi."

For more information about participating in the coalition, contact the Winter Institute at wwirr@olemiss.edu or 662-915-6734.

Institute to Host Second Annual Civil Rights Education Summit

Judith Barlow-Roberts

On June 21-23 the Winter Institute will co-sponsor the second annual educational summit on Civil Rights lessons for the classroom. “McComb Legacies: Reclaiming Our Past for a Brighter Future, A Civil Rights Education Summit Honoring C.C. Bryant” is free and open to the public. It will bring together educators, community leaders, and students to explore more effective ways to teach the civil rights movement. This year’s summit will be held in McComb, Mississippi, a key community in organizing the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign. The event will offer plenary and breakout sessions, a driving tour of historic Civil Rights sites, and a reception in honor of local Civil Rights figures, including 89-year-old Civil Rights stalwart C.C. Bryant, for whom the summit is named.

The Institute, in association with the educational non-profit organization Teaching for Change and the McComb School District, has organized resources and speakers that will present effective models for the classroom. Among this year’s distinguished speakers and guests are Civil Rights activist Hollis Watkins, Mississippi State Superintendent of Education Dr. Hank



McComb teachers in a role-playing training on incorporating civil rights education into the curriculum.



Winter Institute partners Teaching for Change and the People’s Institute help lead training on incorporating civil rights education into the curriculum for McComb teachers.

Bounds, and Civil Rights Historian and author John Dittmer of Depauw University. Returning presenters and panelists from last year’s summit are African American Studies scholar Dr. James Campbell of Brown University, Oral Historian Jennifer Abraham of Louisiana State University, Jennifer Clark of Facing History and Ourselves, and Educational Director of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Lecia Brooks.

Continuing Education Units (CEUs) will be available for teachers. For more information, see <http://www.olemiss.edu/winterinstitute/pages/mccomb-summit.htm>.

Literature and Civil Rights Anthology On the Way

Julie Armstrong

Although most civil rights scholars agree that literature and the other arts played a significant role in the movement, most movement teachers know that including creative works in the classroom can be difficult. One must gather resources from a variety of books and websites because no central location exists where materials can be found. Over the next year, the Winter Institute will take a big step toward solving that problem.

Scholar-in-Residence Julie Armstrong and Graduate Assistant Amy Schmidt are working on a first-of-its-kind book, *Literature and the American Civil Rights Movement*. The anthology collects

the poetry, fiction, drama, and essays not typically found in civil rights readers, which often center instead on speeches, government documents, oral histories, and academic scholarship. The editors’ primary goal is to assemble a product that works for both high school and college students, and appeals to general readers as well.

Over the past few months, the editors have been gathering materials, seeking copyright information, and meeting with potential publishers. By 2007, the book should be ready. Also in the works is a companion website with lesson plans and a database of additional readings.

Institute to Release Study on Economics and Race

Johnny Ducking

Many southern states are significantly below the national average of per capita income, but Mississippi's per capita income is the lowest in the U.S. Mississippi is also the state with the largest percentage of black residents. Unfortunately, this correlation is not surprising, although the reason for it is unclear. Professors Jon Moen and Andrew Young, of the University of Mississippi Department of Economics, are undertaking research projects to provide insight about this issue.

Professor Moen's project raises the question, "Could the South and Mississippi in particular have caught up sooner, and if so, what prevented it from doing so?" His initial research reveals that Mississippi began to close the gap several decades after other southern states. He demonstrates that while the reason for this delay is unclear, "it appears that Mississippi grew faster than other states when it started growing."

Professor Moen explains why the answer of whether Mississippi could have done better is important. "If the answer is 'much better off,' designing better government policies to foster economic growth and overcome past mistakes is obvious," he argues. "But if the answer is 'not much,' then the role for intrusive (and costly) government policies becomes less obvious." Moen hopes to have his results available for public discussion soon.

Professor Young's research will focus on the relationship between low income growth and the percentage of population that is black. He plans to identify which, if any, socioeconomic and demographic variables underlie this negative relationship. The research hopes to identify specific variables, whether they are easily-measured, such as educational attainment, or not easily measured, such as cultural characteristics. In either case, this information would be useful to policymakers and community leaders wanting to focus their efforts effectively towards true causal channels. Professor Young begins his work this summer for a release next year.

Strategic Plan Ushers in New Age for the Institute

Kirk Sims

During the past year, the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation has been engaged in a strategic planning process. The Institute has expanded its work in the last three years, and a written strategic plan is part of the formula for sustaining its vision and outreach. Denise Cavanaugh, of the Washington, D.C., firm of Cavanaugh, Hagan, and Pearson, has assisted the Institute's Advisory Board and director in crystallizing its role in Mississippi's future.



Community leaders from throughout Mississippi met with the Winter Institute to help develop a strategic plan.

In February, the Institute hosted three strategic planning sessions in Jackson, where more than eighty Mississippians discussed three primary areas of interest: Education, Economics, and Community Development. All three groups highlighted challenges in education, the stagnant economy of local areas, and the desire of communities to develop their hometowns as inseparable issues. Using the groups' input and guidance, the Institute's Advisory Board and Ms. Cavanaugh will form a long-term plan. When it is completed, the strategic plan will be posted on our website at <http://www.olemiss.edu/winterinstitute/>.

Regional Alliance Formed *continued from Front Cover*

The conference's keynote speakers were Rev. Theophus "Thee" Smith, director of STAR and professor of religion at Emory University, civil rights activist Lawrence Guyot, former head of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and Sherrilyn Ifill, professor of law at the University of Maryland and author of the forthcoming book, *On the Courthouse*



Rosewood, Florida, exhibit.

Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the 21st Century. Other highlights included a presentation by North Carolina's Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The group, the first of its kind in the United States, seeks justice and healing from an alleged Ku Klux Klan ambush in 1979 that killed five demonstrators and wounded ten. Mississippi's Philadelphia Coalition also shared its experiences with the recent trial and conviction of Edgar Ray Killen for



Oxford Middle School students provided artwork for the conference.



Discussion in a breakout group.

orchestrating the 1964 murder of three civil rights workers.

Noting that nine of the eleven states from the former Confederacy were represented at the conference, organizers described the regional alliance as a "new Confederacy" that hopes to lead the nation away from racism, violence, and poverty. As Rev. Smith explained in his address, "the prospect before us is the opportunity to reclaim our honor as an American people by seeking together to restore our highest ideals as a democratic nation."



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