

The Wellspring

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Inclusion is the Wellspring of Democracy

Youth Groups Help Bridge Generational and Racial Divides

By Megan McRaney

Mississippi youth are playing an increasing role in racial reconciliation efforts across the state. Youth organizations in West Point, Cleveland, and Jackson are leading the charge.

As one of the more recent additions to the Winter Institute family and the Welcome Table project, the community of West Point, Mississippi, has been a central partner this year. Beginning in October of 2007, a group of West Point citizens volunteered their time and efforts to broach the topic of race relations in the community. When asked what were the most pressing issues facing West Point, the group's concerns included segregation within churches, the erosion of local black history, and a perceived mistrust of city government.

Since then, a core team of leaders has been convening in continued hopes for progress and a more unified future. At the request of the local group, the Winter Institute compiled research on West Point's educational, racial, and economic demographics to use as a starting point for the community group to outline a potential course of action. The group used the research and the voiced con-



Members of the Jim Hill CRCL on the UM campus during the first 2008 presidential debate.

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Newsletter of the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation
The University of Mississippi • A Great American Public University

Hearin Foundation Renews Support for the Institute

By N. Camp Best

Success builds upon success, and an outstanding track record of being a good steward of funding received in the past has garnered the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation a new multi-year grant from the Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation of Jackson, Mississippi. Previously the Hearin Foundation has supported the multiple missions of the Winter Institute with a \$1.25 million multi-year grant, awarded in 2004. In July of this year, Susan Glisson, executive director of the Institute, learned that the Hearin Foundation had graciously renewed their substantial financial support of the Institute's work with an additional grant of \$1.5 million dollars to be utilized to support operations, staff, and services from 2009 through 2013.

Glisson said, "We are so pleased at the continuing generosity of the Hearin Foundation. We are grateful to have their support to continue our work throughout Mississippi in community building, education, and economic development. Their leadership enables and sustains our work."

The new \$1.5 million dollar grant by the Hearin Foundation is broken down into an outright grant of \$150,000 each year for the next five years and a separate challenge grant of \$150,000 per year that must be matched by the Institute before it is awarded. According to Dr. Glisson, the Winter Institute has already been successful in raising some of the matching dollars required for the first year of the grant, but will soon launch a campaign to target specific donors for additional matching funds.

University Vice-Chancellor Dr. Gloria Kellum, who is the University of Mississippi Foundation's liaison for the William Winter Institute, expressed her gratitude to the Hearin Foundation and her praise for the work of the Winter Institute: "The Robert M. Hearin Foundation's leadership and support for our beloved Mississippi is far reaching. Their vision and much-needed financial support of the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation has literally uplifted at least six communities and thousands of citizens in our state. In addition, the work of the Winter Institute has brought new ways of bringing together people of different cultures with our state's public and private school, college and university students. Their work with K-12 children will insure that the economic and social future for our state and its citizens is bright. The University is profoundly grateful for the support of the Robert M. Hearin Foundation."

Youth Groups *continued from Front Cover*

cerns of West Point citizens to categorize the areas in need of attention and to organize a community plan.

Improvements in race relations, education, and dialogue are the overarching goals as the community initiative moves forward. Local youth have taken a vested interest in the initiatives as well by forming a bi-racial youth leadership team comprised of students from the public and private schools in West Point. The group promotes local youth efforts in the community, including an initiative encouraging area students to walk to school rather than driving.

Beginning the week of November 16, West Point launched a sesquicentennial celebration of the city's history. West Point's Youth Leadership Council helped with the festivities, which included Youth Day on November 17 and Diversity Day on the 19th. As citizens young and old throughout West Point gathered during the week to commemorate their rich past, the community saw an immense opportunity to lay the path for an even richer and more harmonious future. In efforts to transform such hopes into a reality, community and youth leaders will continue their efforts in tandem with the Winter Institute to bridge the current divides and facilitate communication among West Point citizens.

The West Point Youth Leadership Council is also working in conjunction with other youth groups across the state, including the Cleveland Youth Council and the Jim Hill Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Club, to host a youth summit that will focus on pertinent issues facing Mississippi's youth. Each of these groups is a part of the Winter Institute's Student Network for Inquiry and Dialogue (SNID) initiative. The SNID program is helping to network the state's numerous youth groups, enabling them to work together in a concerted effort for common goals.

As the charter member of SNID, Jim Hill's Civil Rights and Civil Liberties club (CRCL) in Jackson, seized the many opportunities provided by this year's election process for increased dialogue and youth interaction. Prior to the first presidential debate, which was held at the University of Mississippi, the CRCL group attended a series of panels on the UM campus about the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the restructuring of political parties in Mississippi. On September 26, the club hosted a live viewing of the debate at St. Andrew's Cathedral with students from local private and public schools. Following the debate's conclusion, students led the attendees in dialogue centered on relevant political and social issues.

As groups such as Jim Hill's CRCL club and West Point's leadership council continue to grow in both number and size, the youth of Mississippi are increasingly taking a vested interest in social progress. Empowered youth across the state are joining hands with their adult counterparts to make social justice and intercommunity dialogue a reality.

One Mississippi Creates Strong Presence on UM Campus

By Patrick Weems

The student group One Mississippi has continued to challenge students and create an atmosphere for change at the University of Mississippi. On September 5-6, One Mississippi helped host a successful second annual event called the OMazing Games. The event brought together mul-



The Second Annual OMazing Games brought together a diverse group of University of Mississippi students.

tiracial and multinational teams from across the campus to compete for prizes and, more importantly, to build community.

The two-day event began on Friday evening with an exercise called cultural mapping. By grouping participants according to an ever-shifting set of criteria, this activity allowed students to find commonalities larger than their differences. Senior Patrick Woodyard said he “was able to learn a lot about other cultures and myself.”

On the second day, students competed in a variety of events, such as two-on-two basketball, a trivia contest on international events to relate to the presidential debate held on campus, and a round of thumb wars. The winning team won four coveted tickets to the first presidential debate of 2008.

Josh Davis from the office of Alumni Affairs, who has sponsored the event for the last two years, said, “Although it is a

lot of work to put on, it is worth it to see new relationships being built.”

Along with the OMazing Games, One Mississippi helped to organize a student service trip on November 8 to Greenwood, MS. Students spent their Saturday in Greenwood’s Baptist Town, an area of town that largely has been bypassed by the economic growth in other parts of the Delta city. After cleaning up and spending time working with people from Baptist Town, the students headed to the Tallahatchie County courthouse in Sumner, MS. There, members of the Emmett Till Memorial Commission met with students and showed them the recent historical markers installed throughout the county. Commission members told the students about Emmett Till’s murder and the infamous trial held in Sumner in 1955, which many believe was a catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement.



One Mississippi members in the Baptist Town neighborhood of Greenwood.



One Mississippi continues to meet and hopes to hold their 2nd annual retreat next semester and to bring in new members and leaders. By combining regular dialogue meetings, education, service initiatives and fun, the organization helps create a more inclusive community for all.

Mississippi Truth Project Leads the Charge in

By Patrick Weems

The persistence of the civil rights era seems to be coming to fruition as the United States has elected its first black President, Barack Obama, and in bringing civil rights era murderers to justice. But when people young and old think back to the hard work of the civil rights era, they are often uninformed either because the time is too dark of a period to think back on or because the painful history has been glossed over and has not been taught properly to the next generation.

As Dr. Susan Glisson, executive director of the Winter Institute puts it,

“We have come far in the South, but still there is pain associated with acknowledging those dark days. Partly that pain exists because many of these issues remain unresolved and operational in current policies and daily interactions. So we must frankly confront that past for those wounds to heal, so we can begin to understand the legacy of racism that continues to harm us today in education, health care, housing, and other indicators.”

Unless Mississippi confronts its past, the transition to the future will be slow and rigid. Furthermore, it is an injustice for young Mississippians not to know the story of the civil rights movement. The move-

ment should be an inspiration to young Mississippians who want to change the state for the better.

Fortunately, a group of Mississippians from many different organizations and backgrounds has spearheaded the



A diverse group of citizens from across the state meets in Jackson to discuss the idea of a Mississippi Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



Young people from Grenada present ideas at a Mississippi Truth Project meeting in Jackson.

Mississippi Truth Project to address the legacies of our past.

The Mississippi Truth Project's goal is to determine the grassroots support for a truth and reconciliation commission in the state, and, if such support is found, to then nourish a grassroots effort to create such a commission. The Mississippi Truth and Reconciliation Commission would be a discrete entity set up for 12 to 18 months that would examine the past injustices of the civil rights era in order to understand and mitigate their present and future effects.

Other truth commission models include those in South Africa, Peru, Guatemala, and Greensboro, NC.

Confronting the Past

Truth commissions generally come out of a mandate determining the scope of the specific group's examinations and role, and they generally try to foster the processes of justice and reconciliation, eventually giving concrete recommendations to the public. A Mississippi truth commission would likely focus on such things as crimes against the body, crimes against property, collusion of public officials, and conspiracies of silence during the years 1945-75. The hope is that by honestly looking at the past together, Mississippians can genuinely move forward together.

The work of the Mississippi Truth Project has already started, beginning with an exploratory stage of five meetings in early 2008 to gauge the interest of Mississippians and their communities. These meetings were held in Greenville, Philadelphia, and Jackson with participation from dozens of people across the state. All of the meetings had unanimous consent that the idea should be pursued. In April 2008, a statewide meeting in Jackson brought together allies from the previous five meetings, as well as representatives from the Greensboro Truth Commission, the International Center for Transitional Justice, and the Andrus Family Fund. Out of that meeting came preliminary language about a commission's possible focus and an ad hoc steering committee to create a draft declaration of intent.

With financial support from the Andrus Family Fund, the Mississippi Truth Project has hired three part-time organizers based across the state, to gather feedback on the draft declaration of intent and assess further support for a possible commission.

In January 2009, the Mississippi Truth Project hopes to make public a declaration of intent that will be adopted in its final form, with a ceremonial unveiling and signing by Mississippians young and old. To the right is a draft of the declaration of intent. A statewide meeting will be held on January 31 for all interested in supporting this effort. For comments on this draft declaration, email wwirr@olemiss.edu. For more information, visit www.mississippittruth.org.

D R A F T Declaration of Intent

From 1945 to 1975, racism cast a shadow over the experiences of all Mississippians.

This time period encompasses the transition between the height of Jim Crow and a post-segregation society. It was characterized by increased and organized resistance to white supremacy, as well as the development of more subtle methods of institutional racism. Many practices consciously and unconsciously oppressed a large segment of the population. These practices resulted in crimes against the body, crimes against property, the collusion of public and private institutions in preventing access and opportunity to all people, and conspiracies of silence.

We still feel the effects of that dark time.

As a part of a dominant culture of racism, Mississippi's economic, environmental, legal, political, educational and social systems have shackled our potential and promise. Racial disparities in the areas of housing, health care, education, criminal justice, and employment not only continue to have disproportionate effect on the state's African-American population, but also limit the shared quality of life for all citizens.

The courageous struggles of many have yielded progress, but a full and accurate measure of our state's history and its lasting impact has been obscured.

Too often stories are told of this time focusing on individuals and not institutions. While it is true that vigilantes terrorized the night, it is also true that public officials and community leaders shaped the daily experience of oppression. Moreover, the white establishment enabled the violence that occurred. The failure to understand this connection has allowed the premature declaration of closure following instances of individual justice that have happened.

A just and inclusive future can only be ensured by a comprehensive inquiry of this unjust and segregated past.

There are still living eyewitnesses from this era who can help Mississippi face and tell its own stories in an honest, unflinching fashion. This opportunity allows the collection of detailed stories and records about this era. This is a unique moment, wherein we have attained a measure of distance and insight into this period while still having living participants and observers of this time.

The establishment of a Mississippi Truth and Reconciliation Project will allow us to develop appropriate remedies and to create a culture of equity, harmony, and prosperity.

Acknowledging and working to understand our deliberate, insidious and systematic racism can set us free to understand our past and to create opportunities to heal our wounds. It is hoped that citizens will use these findings to help raise Mississippi up to its potential and serve as a model for other states and communities struggling with their racial legacies. A Mississippi Truth and Reconciliation Commission will allow the state to constructively engage the confusion, division, and bitter feelings related to this time period. A truthful engagement will lead to greater reconciliation and multiracial support for restorative justice among individuals, sectors, and institutions within the state of Mississippi.

We, the undersigned, commit ourselves to work diligently and honestly with the people and institutions of Mississippi to carry out this project with integrity, promoting truth, understanding and reconciliation.

The Welcome Table Grows

By I'Nasah Crockett

In June 2006 at the Mississippi state capitol, in a ceremony with more than 300 citizens in attendance, the Welcome Table: An Era of Dialogue on Race was officially initiated.

Its stated purpose is to promote dialogue and community building around improved race relations throughout Mississippi. Since its founding, the Welcome Table effort has implemented a number of dialogue and outreach projects within each of the state's four congressional districts.

Leroy Clemons is chair of the Philadelphia Coalition, the Neshoba County group that is a model for other Welcome Table communities. Clemons says that thanks to the dialogue projects in his community, race relations have significantly improved.

"When an issue arises in the community, through open dialogue we can diffuse tensions long before they get to the point of critical mass, because the community feels they can discuss [the incident] openly, and that wouldn't have happened in the past." Clemons also says that the creation of this safe space has led to a better understanding of the real reasons behind supposed racial incidents. "A lot of times [the issue] has nothing to do with race; it's just people being people."

At the same time, Clemons is quick to point out that there is still much work to be done, saying, "We want there to be an understanding of the history of racial relations and a [knowledge] of how to deal with racial issues worked into local schools, so that children are asked to talk about race in ways that are not divisive, but productive. One of the reasons

why people have so much trouble with race today is because they don't understand the history. It's not that people don't want to [engage in dialogue], it's that they don't understand and don't know how to communicate with each other."

Starting in Fall 2007, Winter Institute executive director Susan Glisson responded to requests for meetings with community members and leaders in the city of Greenwood. Eventually a biracial working group was established and identified four main areas of concern and focus in regards to race relations there: the sharing of economic prosperity, excellence in every school, building interracial trust, and improving the internal and external images of Greenwood.

The Mississippi Delta community is already taking its next steps. On October 29, a luncheon meeting was held at Crystal Grill to kick off a pledge drive that encourages fellow Greenwood and Leflore County citizens to "Take responsibility for an inclusive Greenwood." More than 60 Greenwood and Leflore County citizens pledged to do their part. For more information, visit <http://www.greenwoodinclusive.org>.

In addition, the Kellogg Foundation and the Fetzer Institute have committed to funding a two-year statewide initiative of the Welcome Table, beginning in summer 2009, which will provide training to community members in all four congressional districts in areas such as strategic planning and coalition building, using storytelling as a bridge to better communities.

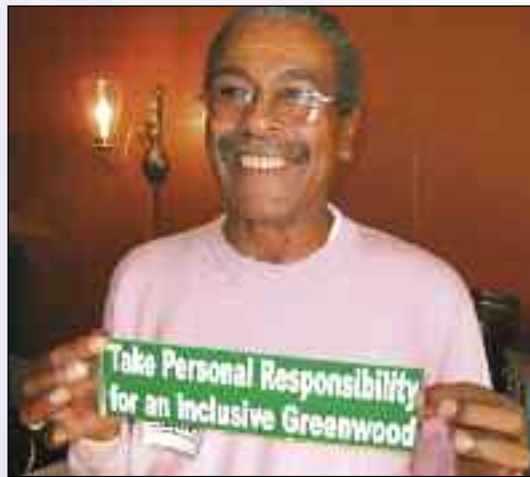


PHOTO BY CHARLIE SMITH/THE GREENWOOD COMMONWEALTH

Charles Carter shows the new bumper sticker that is part of a marketing effort by the Greenwood-Leflore Committee on Race Relations.

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Fourth Annual Education Summit a Success in New Orleans

By David Molina

This past June 27th, the Winter Institute cosponsored the fourth annual Civil Rights Education Summit for Teachers. Growing out of its support of civil rights curriculum development in the state, the Institute has co-hosted summits around the state with local school systems and community groups. This year marked the first summit held outside of the state, in New Orleans.



Teachers gather for Fourth Annual Education Summit.

In conjunction with UNESCO's Breaking the Silence: The Transatlantic Slave Trade Project and Brown University's Teaching American History Initiative, the Institute offered a day of workshops on oral histories, curriculum development, youth activism, the arts, and community engagement with schools. Civil rights veterans and scholars both led and participated in sessions. Attendees also included two groups of teachers. The first, a group of about forty teachers from Connecticut and Rhode Island, were participating in a joint civil rights tour as a part of their Teaching American History grants. The second was a group of about thirty teachers from the U.S., Norway, England and Ghana participating in the eight summer institutes of the UNESCO's education project.

This summer's summit commemorated in New Orleans the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in the United States. Our cosponsors bookended the one-day summit with several days of complimentary activities such as visits to post-Katrina rebuilding in neighborhoods and schools in the Ninth Ward, and frequent homage to the ineffable vibrancy of New Orleans culture.

Representative of the power of the summit workshops was a presentation by Hollis Watkins. Watkins—along with Curtis (Hayes) Muhammad—was the first local Mississippi youth to join SNCC's work in McComb, and now serves as president of Southern Echo, which is one of the best community organizing/empowerment and youth activism vehicles in the state. His session, "Activism Then and Now: Young People and Community Organizing in the 1960s and Today," began with an overview of his involvement in the McComb youth movement. Watkins then transitioned into a rundown of critical topics in basic organizing. One issue is how to respond to critics of the supposed apathy of "kids these days." Watkins admonished, "If there were as many young people active then as there are now, then who knows what we could have accomplished." A

second issue concerned how to respond to groups who are frustrated with the fact that their membership isn't growing exponentially. As Watkins explained, "Remember, organizers in the Mississippi movement and in SNCC itself never climbed beyond a peak of about 25, except during Freedom Summer."

However, when Watkins reflected on the difference between mobilizing and organizing, such a neglected and simple distinction became an epiphany. As he stated, "When you're just mobilizing, you're constantly being reactionary—responding to fires that other people start. Most people in this place can't get to the point of systematically, strategically analyzing the what, the why, and the impact that results. People also fail to see the interconnectedness of mobilizing and organizing. So what's the lesson you learn by putting out fires?"

Watkins continued, "If you're looking to organize, it's like this: yeah, I've got to put out this fire (mobilize), but I should also think of preventing other fires from getting started, and

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Media Literacy Project Assesses Jackson Youth

Reprinted with permission from the *Jackson Free Press* October 8, 2008

By Hope Owens-Wilson

It's hard to believe that the Media Literacy Project came from a day at the zoo. The Civil Rights Civil Liberties Club, a Jim Hill High School-based group, held a retreat for its members at the Jackson Zoo in mid-May to gain momentum for the next school year. The day started with a bunch of group exercises to get us used to working with each other, then a quick trip to visit the Gibbons (a group of great apes that make vulgar noises humorous to many generations).

We heard that *Jackson Free Press* Editor-in-Chief Donna Ladd would make an appearance, but nobody knew what her arrival would cause. In 2001, Ladd wrote a story for the *Village Voice* about a group of New York high school students, "The Youth Force," who published a report critiquing the media's coverage of youth violence and what they felt was an unfair treatment of youth in *The New York Times*. The report, "In Between the Lines: How the *New York Times* Targets the Youth," featured the students' research, observations, illustrations, and poetry communicating the reporting disparagement between teen and adult violence. The findings were so powerful that they warranted a tense visit with the Times metro staff.

Donna's timing couldn't have been more serendipitous. Jim Hill students had recently faced an unjust depiction of their



friend Alfred Hawkins, a young man fatally shot while standing outside in the early morning of March 23. The confusion and anger caused by the media coverage surrounding Alfred's death created a spark, but it wasn't enough to start the fire. Then someone noted that while Alfred was

pictured as a juvenile delinquent who got shot because he was doing something illicit, a similar story involving Mitch Dickens, Zach Bailey and Scott Lloyd—three teens from Madison County who died in a car crash—used a more sympathetic tone and showed those teens as victims of an unfortunate and untimely incident. That observation was gas for the flame.

It was obvious that the local publications were not providing equal coverage of youth. Sure, many factors came into that, such as different writers and different available information. But, isn't it the media's job to give the public fair and equal news? We couldn't sit back and allow this to happen in our own hometown. This was the time to do something. We had the manpower; now all we needed was the plan.

Donna asked if we were up to the challenge; how could we refuse?



The Winter Institute, CRCL, and the Jackson Free Press cosponsored the summer Media Literacy Project in Jackson.

And So It Began

Since first hearing about the project in May, students' anticipation and interest grew. Through word of mouth, people who weren't even present that fateful day at the zoo began to inquire. We were itching to get started. Then, the day after school ended, invitations came for a June 7 meeting at the JFP office.

Behind the scenes, David Molina, co-founder of the CRCL and project coordinator at the William Winter Institute, procured funding for the project and hired Bryan Doyle as project manager and coordinator.

th Coverage

After introducing ourselves and getting acquainted with the definition of “media literacy,” prospective members of the MLP took time reading several articles with a critical eye and identifying bias. We were getting down to the core, talking about things we had noticed was wrong with news but had never really talked about. Here, we all saw what was required.

Now the brainstorming began: What did we want to cover? What type of media did we want to focus on? What publications? For how long?

After an hour-long discussion, we came to the consensus that we wanted to analyze *The Clarion-Ledger* and the weekly *Madison County Journal*, *Jackson Advocate* and *Northside Sun*. We would search archives from April, May and June, while analyzing the daily *Clarion-Ledger* for May and June. Our topic was harder to decide. It needed to be something broad enough to explore but not so much to get lost in. Then the idea struck: Observe how and what types of youth get into local media.

Simple, right?



Digging Deep

Wrong. Coming into the second week of meetings, it was easy to see how incorrect we were to assume that this would be an easy, quick summer project. This was not summer camp. Most of our time was spent creating a rubric to help us find what we wanted to look for.



Using The Youth Force checklist as a guide, we devised our own easy-to-use list. This rubric reminded us to read carefully and thoroughly to give each publication a fair analysis.

And so the research began. Many days were devoted to trips to the Eudora Welty Library locating and reading newspapers and noting our findings. Four weeks later, our work was done. It was a long process but vital to the next stage.

Start the Presses

Then it was story time. It was finally time to start learning how to “shut up and write.” Because of the inspiration gained from our research, our topics weren’t hard to find, but that left the hardest part for last: How do we put this whole thing together? We began to think about layout and cover ideas: the things that would make or break this issue. For about three weeks, even after school, we worked and reworked our stories making sure that they were near perfection.

As for the cover of this issue, we flung many stick figures and concepts around until they were nearly finished, settling on the idea of a media machine turning individual youth into stereotypes. Then the amazing JFP designer Christi Vivar did her magic.

Sweat, brain-freezes, over-talking, stressful silences, corny jokes and lots of coffee have gone into this issue just so people can see that the youth of Jackson mean business.

We have voices, and we know how to use them.

Civil Rights Curriculum Moves Forward

By Susan M. Glisson

In a freshman course I taught a few years ago, after a discussion on Ella Baker, an African American activist who advised the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, one of my students asked, "Why didn't we learn about her in high school?" Soon, this gap will no longer exist.

In the 2006 Mississippi legislative session, the Winter Institute spearheaded the successful passage of SB2718, which mandates teaching civil and human rights history in Mississippi classrooms. The bill established the Mississippi Civil Rights Education Commission, which has been working closely with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) since 2006 to establish curriculum development protocols as well as a community engagement initiative.

The MDE social studies staff has produced draft guidelines for a new civil rights/human rights strand within the social studies framework, thus ensuring that the topic will be taught across the K-12 curriculum. Currently, a new US history course will be piloted in the 2009-2010 school year, tied to improving the rigor of the history assessment and adding civil rights questions. The following year the new course and assessment will be mandated throughout Mississippi. The entire revised K-12 curriculum framework will be piloted in the fall of 2010 and spring of 2011.

The Winter Institute, working closely with the MDE, can now begin to support a community engagement effort to reinforce the curriculum process. One avenue for reaching communities will be through the Welcome Table project. This project, now in a pilot phase, will train community leaders from 10 to 15 Mississippi communities over an 18-month to 2-year period beginning next summer. It uses storytelling

as a way to help build bridges across the racial divide and to create a social justice environment. MDE will suggest likely school systems to pilot the civil rights curriculum so that the Welcome Table project can also occur there, providing a comprehensive laboratory of school and community interaction. Professional development will also be offered to teachers. The McComb School System has created and implemented a model for curriculum development, with support from the Washington D.C.-based group Teaching for Change.

In addition to this long-term curriculum development process and community engagement effort, the Winter Institute is working to produce resources to support SB2718. In January 2009, the University of Georgia Press will publish a civil rights literary reader, *The Civil Rights Reader: American Literature from Jim Crow to Reconciliation*, compiled by former Winter Institute scholar-in-residence Dr. Julie Armstrong and former Winter Institute intern Amy Schmidt. In addition, under the direction of Dr. James Loewen, the Winter Institute is supporting the revision of Loewen's and Dr. Charles Sallis's history textbook *Conflict and Change*, the first integrated Mississippi History textbook. Both of these texts will be available for use in Mississippi classrooms and beyond. In addition to these resources, we have created a web site with basic civil rights history of each of Mississippi's eighty-two counties (highlighted in another article in this issue).

If your school is interested in piloting the civil rights curriculum or if your community is interested in participating in the Welcome Table project, please let us know.

Education Summit *continued from Page 7*

so I've got to start a fire myself that others have to respond to. So I've got to organize, organize, organize."

Watkins always ends any meeting in song, sharing the tradition of mass meetings and music that is so much a part of the strength of the civil rights movement. The teachers' summit was no exception; after participating in the day's final event, a panel discussion on the "past, present, and future of community organizing," Watkins led the participants in a version of "If You Miss Me from the Back of the Bus," a verse of which seemed particularly resonant:

*If you miss me from Jackson State
And can't find me nowhere
Come on over to Ole Miss
I'll be studying there*

*I'll be studying there
I'll be studying there
Come on over to Ole Miss
I'll be studying there.*

Institute Interns and Staff Lead Presidential Debate Week Activities

By Nickolaus Luckett

In 1962, James Meredith entered the University of Mississippi, becoming the first black person to successfully enroll here. Since that time, the University has become increasingly more diverse and students have been working toward socially integrating the university. The University achieved another milestone on September 26 of this year by hosting the first presidential debate between Senator John McCain and now President-Elect Barack Obama. Much has been made of the historic significance of this debate in the media. Perhaps lost in the deluge of coverage is the impact it had on University students.

My experience with the debate began a semester before the debate actually happened. I was one of four students who were chosen by the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and the Lott Leadership Institute to represent the university at one of the two national party conventions. In return for sending us to the conventions, we were asked to plan some



Charles Cobb speaking, while Rita Bender, Susan Glisson, John Dittmer and Lawrence Guyot are looking on.

student events that would lead up to this historic debate. The four of us immediately began to brainstorm ideas and seek the advice of administrators. The hardest thing for us to do was to not limit ourselves to a budget we did not have; we repeatedly were told the sky is the limit, but we knew we should be responsible and careful. After weeks of brainstorming, we came up with a list of speakers, events, and activities, and we went back to administrators to get funding. Dean of Students Sparky Reardon suggested that there be a committee that had representation from the entire student body.

Before Spring Break, Reardon formed the Presidential Debate Student Steering Committee, which had student

leaders from every facet of the University student body. Our large committee worked hard to plan events for the Debate. We planned a speaker series, a festival, and many political-based events and activities. We even got to create the system of how the tickets would be distributed among students. It was a tough process; with so many people there were often arguments, but at the end of the process, we were all happy with the finished product.

The Winter Institute also joined the Debate week planning by co-sponsoring the Mississippi Politics Symposium in conjunction with the Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics and the Lott Leadership Institute. The symposium consisted of three panels. The first, “Challenging the Rules—Mississippi Freedom Democrats at the 1964 Convention” was moderated by Winter Institute Executive Director Susan Glisson and featured Lawrence Guyot, former chairman of Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party; Rita Schwerner Bender, widow of Mickey Schwerner, a victim of the Neshoba County murders that year; John Dittmer, DePauw University professor and author of *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*; and Charles E. Cobb, Jr., former member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and author of *On the Road to Freedom: A Guided Tour of the Civil Rights Trail*.



Lawrence Guyot discusses Mississippi Freedom Democrats.

The other two panels moved chronologically to examine the notion of the post-civil rights era “Solid South” and into the contemporary challenge of establishing a two-party system. Participants included Clarke Reed, former and longtime chairman of the Mississippi Republican Party; William Winter; and Leslie McLemore, political science professor at Jackson State University and president of the Jackson City Council. The final panel was comprised of Mary Coleman, associate dean of the JSU College of Liberal Arts; Rep. Philip Gunn (R-Clinton); and Sen. Gray Tollison (D-Oxford).

Institute Launches Web site of Civil Rights Resources

By Melody Frierson

When I decided to volunteer with the Winter Institute—after spending my freshman year hearing my good friend Nick Lockett talk about it—I had no idea the level of responsibility I was going to be given. At my first meeting there, I learned about the Institute’s project of creating educational resources for helping teachers incorporate civil rights and human rights into the Mississippi Public School Curricula.

In October, the Winter Institute launched this project, a new Web site aimed at providing teachers and students a centralized resource on Mississippi’s rich civil rights history, county by county. The Mississippi Civil Rights Project (www.ms civilrightsproject.com) offers a basic, skeletal history of the black struggle for freedom in each of Mississippi’s 82 counties.

The Winter Institute has been working with teachers and students to research Mississippi’s civil rights history and to develop civil rights curriculum since 2004. At the behest of teachers, the Winter Institute spearheaded passage of SB2718 in 2006, which mandates the teaching of civil rights and human rights history in Mississippi classrooms.

When I joined the project this past summer, I thought that I would just be helping make copies and doing research. Instead, I found myself in charge of 8 Mississippi Teacher Corps interns, many of whom were older and more experienced than I am.

The MTP interns were excited to contribute to our project and were brimming with knowledge that they wanted to share with Mississippi students. Using Harper Lee’s *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the Kent State Shootings, incidences of voter coercion and intimidation in the South, works by James Baldwin, and primary documents, the Teacher Corps interns took these documents and connected them to English, Math, and History.

This summer’s curriculum development capped a project spanning the past few years, during which undergraduate and

graduate students researched and compiled the information on Mississippi counties. The categories include people, organizations, events, and places that are significant in this history. This project will continue to grow, as teachers and their students research their local communities and submit additional information. As it grows, the site will showcase primary documents, oral histories, lesson plans, and other educational resources.



www.ms civilrightsproject.com

Annual Meeting Highlights Institute Interns and Community Work

By April Grayson

On March 31 and April 1, 2008, the Winter Institute hosted the first of what will become its annual general meeting. The two-day event started with an Intern Roundtable, at which former and current interns discussed the impact that working at the Winter Institute had on them, as well as the atmosphere of the organization. Moderated by Institute



The Winter Institute family, past and present, gathered at the annual meeting.



Current and former Winter Institute interns participated in a discussion moderated by Project Coordinator Dave Molina.

project coordinator David Molina, the group analyzed leadership dynamics and how valuable interns are to the work of the Institute.

That evening, more than 200 people gathered for a banquet meeting with reports from Chancellor Robert Khayat, Vice Chancellor for University Relations Dr. Gloria Kellum, both outgoing and incoming presidents of the Institute advisory board, Alan Moore and Lisa Percy, and Institute Executive Director Dr. Susan Glisson. The Institute also premiered its new



Outgoing advisory board member Alan Moore welcomed guests to the banquet.

promotional video, which gives an overview of its work in communities throughout the state.

Former Mississippi Governor William Winter, for whom the institute is named, gave the keynote address, saying

“In spite of all of the progress we have made, the issue of race remains the most difficult and intractable problem our country faces. And why is this? It is because we still have not come to terms with the deep-seated, little understood, and usually repressed feelings that are derived from our different backgrounds....Our society is becoming more diverse, more complicated racially, more subject to misunderstanding and mistrust, more caught up in ‘white flight’ and re-segregation. Unless we come together to work at eliminating, or at least reducing, the remaining areas of racial tension and misunderstanding, this state and this country are not going to be as good for our children and our grandchildren to live in as it ought to be....That would be a tragedy indeed if we let divisions over race diminish the quality of our lives, as it has too often in the past.”



Governor William Winter gave the keynote address at the annual meeting.

The following morning, the advisory board met for a business meeting that was open to the public.



Annette Hollowell listened as Nash Molpus shared her experiences as a Winter Institute graduate assistant.

The Winter Institute plans its second annual meeting for March 27-28, 2009, on the University of Mississippi campus.

In Memoriam: Grey Ferris

The Winter Institute lost a great friend and advisory board member when Grey Ferris passed away.
Reprinted with permission from Kos Kostmayer

Grey Flowers Ferris, a farmer, former state senator and longtime advocate for public education in Mississippi, died at his home outside Vicksburg Friday, June 13, 2008, following a long illness. He was 62.

This is the place where Grey Ferris and his wife, Jann, an acclaimed artist and educator, raised their three children: Lylen Ferris, a naturopathic physician practicing in Portland, Ore.; Jason Ferris, a Presbyterian minister now living and working in New York City; and Jessica Shelby Ferris, a gifted young artist who passed away in 1999.

Former Mississippi Secretary of State and longtime family friend Dick Molpus put both the public and personal dimension of Grey Ferris' life into perspective when he said, "Professionally, Grey Ferris was a stunningly effective, strong and noble public servant. Personally, he was a decent, kind and gentle soul. His tireless work to ensure that every child in Mississippi had the skills to succeed, regardless of their race or economic status, secures his place in our state's history. I, along with many others, will miss his friendship, and all of us who call ourselves Mississippians are greatly diminished by the passing of this good man."

Shortly before Grey Ferris died, his son Jason, speaking from the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church in Vicksburg, praised his father for his public spirit, his uncommon decency and his exceptional honesty, calling him a politician unafraid to say those three fearful words: "I don't know." After his father's death, Jason said, "My father was a born leader. He led with compassion and humility and had a gift for bringing together disparate parties to get things done. Dad always put the needs of others before his own, and he had a special sensitivity for anyone who had been denied the opportunities given to him. He was a planter statesman of the highest order and there will never be another like him."

Another close friend, Jimmy Gouras, spoke for many when he described Grey Ferris as "...the most honorable, the gentlest, the kindest person you could ever meet. Grey was the kind of man we all wanted to be when we grew up."

Grey Ferris always viewed his childhood as idyllic, and he once wrote: "Our parents instilled in all of us a deep respect for the land, an appreciation for the rich racial diversity of our region, and an abiding love of education."

Ferris attended public schools in Warren County and Vicksburg before finishing his secondary education at Brooks School in North Andover, Mass. Upon graduation from Brooks, he was awarded the Faculty Prize, which is present-

ed to the student who contributes most to improving the welfare of the school. He was especially proud of the role he played in encouraging the recruitment and acceptance of the school's first minority student.

Ferris graduated from Tulane University and the Tulane School of Law. As an undergraduate, he served as president of the student body. It was also at Tulane that Grey Ferris met his future wife, Jann Terral, and the two of them were wed in New Orleans on June 6, 1970. Following graduation from law school, Grey Ferris returned to Vicksburg to practice with the law firm of Dent, Ward, Martin and Terry. While he thoroughly enjoyed the practice of law, he decided to return to the farm when his father's health began to fail.

Ferris considered public service a privilege and served on the boards of the Vicksburg Art Association, the Mercy Regional Medical Center, the Soil and Water Conservation Commission, the Mississippi Museum of Art, the Mississippi School Board Association and the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation. He was a deacon of the First Presbyterian Church.

Ferris's greatest passion - beyond his family and farm - was a commitment to improve public education. He was elected to the first board for the Vicksburg Warren School District and worked tirelessly to consolidate the two districts into one.

Grey Ferris' passionate commitment to public education, along with his love of the arts, was shared by his wife, Jann, herself an accomplished artist. The two of them worked together closely year after year to develop ideas and programs designed to make the arts a vital part of the school curriculum in Mississippi. They even found time to teach courses together in art appreciation to elementary school students in Warren County.

After serving six years as chairman of the Vicksburg Warren School Board, Ferris was elected to the Mississippi State Senate and served two terms. During his second term, he was chairman of the Senate Education Committee, and he committed himself to reforming educational opportunities in rural and underfunded areas of Mississippi.

He worked closely with librarians to create the Magnolia project, which provided local libraries with an online database containing thousands of reference materials. For the first time, schools even in the most remote areas of Mississippi had access to unlimited resource materials.

Ferris was especially proud of his efforts to create and

pass the Adequate Education Act. He and Sen. Hob Bryan were the lead authors of this measure, which changed the funding formula for public education and channeled additional, desperately needed state resources into the poorest, most underserved districts of Mississippi. Jere Nash, co-author of "Mississippi Politics," said of the Adequate Education Act: "No piece of legislation has helped and will continue to help Mississippi's children and students more than that bill."

As a citizen and a public servant, Grey Ferris devoted his life to strengthening Warren County, Vicksburg and Mississippi through improved education and health care. Ferris' compassion and love for his family, his friends and the land he worked were beyond measure, and he left this world a far better place than he found it.

"Grey has been my partner and my love since I was 18 years old," said his wife, Jann. "His enormous spirit lives on and will continue to guide our family in the years to come."

Grey Ferris was preceded in death by his daughter, Jessica Shelby Ferris; and his father, William Reynolds Ferris.

Survivors include his wife, Jann Terral Ferris; daughter, Lylen Terral Ferris and her husband, Michael Swierczuk, of Portland; son, Jason Reynolds Ferris and his wife, Rebecca Marshall Ferris, of New York, N.Y.; grandchildren, Nathan Shelby Swierczuk and Ruby Grace Swierczuk of Portland; his mother, Shelby Flowers Ferris; brother, William Reynolds Ferris Jr. and his wife, Marcie Cohen Ferris, of Chapel Hill, N.C.; sisters, Shelby Ferris Fitzpatrick and her husband, Peter Fitzpatrick, of Sturry, England, Hester Ferris Magnuson and her husband, James Magnuson, of Austin and Martha Ferris and her husband, Kos Kostmayer, of Vicksburg.

Memorials may be made to the Shelby Ferris Art Therapy Endowment, payable to UMMC Office of Development, 2500 N. State St., Jackson, MS 39216. Please write "In Memory of Grey Ferris" on the memo line of the check.

Contributions may also be made to the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677.

USpeak Speaks Out

By Artair Rogers

With the excitement that surrounded the first debate between presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain—which the University of Mississippi hosted on September 26—the students at the university wanted to participate in the abundance of activities offered. From panel discussions to movie series, students engaged in the political and patriotic atmosphere that the University created. Many students realized, however, that the discourse should not be confined just to September 26 and the two presidential candidates. We realized that we had an opportunity to state how we feel about the issues that directly affect us.

Society often views college students as apathetic when it comes to the political process. The students at the University of Mississippi wanted to challenge that notion and ensure that our voices be heard on the issues that we were concerned with most. Through the Associated Student Body (ASB), students decided to create an outlet for fellow students to voice their opinions about issues driving them to the polls. Quickly, the ASB realized that this opportunity was bigger than just our one campus. Thus, we partnered with the Mississippi Student Body Presidents' Council to create the organization USpeak, a nonpartisan lobbying group for Mississippi collegiate students.

The organization is structured to encompass at least five delegates representing five pressing collegiate issues in the eight colleges represented on the Institute for Higher Learning (IHL) board. On September 6, the University of Mississippi Associated Student Body coordinated a statewide delegate meeting, facilitated by David Molina, project coordinator at the Winter Institute. At this productive meeting, the schools decided that the five most pressing issues to college students in Mississippi are 1) college affordability, 2) college preparedness (K-12 education), 3) job market/economy, 4) health care, and 5) green initiatives.

The delegates decided to conduct school wide surveys to rank the issue that was of most concern to that school's students. The idea of the survey stemmed from the Mississippi Youth Ballot Campaign. Each school conducted a USpeak survey for three to five days. The results showed that students felt that college preparedness, or primary and secondary education, is the most critical issue facing Mississippi today.

Now, USpeak is working to fulfill its role of a unified collegiate lobbying voice. The University of Mississippi delegates are currently researching legislation that correlates with their respective issues.

We hope to meet with state senators and representatives to assist us in making a public statement about pieces of legislation that we, as USpeak, support. In the future, USpeak hopes to work with state legislators to create bills that help the post-secondary students of Mississippi. In addition, we ourselves will become educators by promoting awareness about various issues and how they directly affect college students.



Calendar of Events

January 31, 2009

Mississippi Truth Project meeting
Jackson, MS

February 13-14, 2009

Welcome Table pilot retreat
Gray Center, Canton

February 24, 2009

Screening of "Traces of the Trade" documentary film
UM Oxford campus

March 19-21, 2009

4th Annual Conference of the Veterans
of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement
Jackson State University, Jackson, MS

March 27-28, 2009

Winter Institute Second Annual Meeting
UM Oxford campus

April 1-4, 2009

10th Annual White Privilege Conference
Memphis, TN

May 15-17, 2009

Mississippi Gulf Coast 50th Anniversary
Wade-in Commemoration
Biloxi and Gulfport

Institute Intern Alumni News

Nash Molpus is the Associate Director of the Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives at Tulane University. The Cowen Institute is an action oriented think tank that focuses specifically on the public schools in New Orleans. Nash heads up the policy shop within the organization, working specifically on state and federal legislation that affects the public school system. Additionally, Nash is involved at the local level in items that require action by the Orleans Parish School Board and City Council. She worked previously for Senator Mary Landrieu in Washington, DC, as education and health legislative assistant. While a graduate assistant at the Winter Institute from 2002-2004, Nash's work focused on managing volunteers, coordinating Open Doors (the 40th Anniversary Commemoration of James Meredith's entrance into the University of Mississippi), assisting with the International Conference on Race, working with the Philadelphia Coalition, and coordinating the 40th Anniversary Commemoration of the deaths of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner in Philadelphia, MS.



Jeremy Hawkins was a summer intern at the Winter Institute in 2007, when he assisted with community projects and researched the local civil rights history of Mississippi counties for the Mississippi Civil Rights project. In 2008, he graduated from Vanderbilt University and then spent the summer touring North America. Currently, Jeremy lives in Morocco, where he works for the Peace Corps and the Moroccan Ministry of Youth and Sports, teaching English classes and planning various youth development activities at the local *dar chabab* (youth center).