

# The Wellspring

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*Inclusion is the Wellspring of Democracy*

## Work Continues on the Mississippi Truth Project

*By Charles H. Tucker*

Mississippians are making progress on the Mississippi Truth Project, a statewide effort, coordinated in part by the Winter Institute, to create a truth and reconciliation commission that will bring to light racially motivated crimes committed in Mississippi between 1945 and 1975.

Earlier this year, a public ceremony to endorse the Declaration of Intent for the Truth Project was held at the Central United Methodist Church in Jackson. One hundred thirty people signed the declaration, which sets forth the nature of crimes to be examined and the time frame that will be addressed by the Truth Commission.

In March, participants at the first public statewide meeting, held in Jackson, elected to divide the state into five regions, each roughly corresponding to the 2003 voting districts. These regions are: North MS (region 1), the Delta and Jackson (region 2), the Pine Belt (region 3), South Central MS (region 4), and the Gulf Coast (region 5). Each region

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# 50th Anniversary Celebration Commemorates Biloxi Wade-Ins

By I'Nasah Crockett

A series of programs to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Biloxi wade-ins, considered by many to be the start of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, were held May 15-17 on the Gulf Coast. Former Gov. William Winter gave the keynote speech, and



*WLOX TV-13 Weekend News Anchor Krystal Allen (center) with students from the Biloxi High School African-American Culture Society.*

Winter Institute interns and staff members were on hand to provide support. The events heralded the courage of Dr. Gilbert Mason, Sr., who led the wade-ins in 1959.

Programs were held on the Jefferson Davis campus of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. Panelists and speakers on Friday's program included LeRoy Carney and Rev. James Black, who participated in the wade-in, and Dr. James Patterson Smith, biographer of Mason and a professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi. Saturday's event featured a conversation on desegregation with Dr. Charles Bolton, a University of North Carolina professor, and Dr. Mary Coleman, a Jackson State University professor.

Program attendee Jenna Barone found the event eye-opening. "It was really informative. I didn't know a lot about the wade-ins before I came here," she said. "It was really cool to hear from older community members and from



*Former Gov. William Winter with City of Biloxi Ward 2 Councilman William "Bill" Stallworth.*

people who were part of the Civil Rights Movement."

Commemoration activities concluded on Sunday with the presentation of a state historical marker and an address by Gov. Winter. A picnic, held at the Biloxi Community Center, afforded participants a chance to relax and enjoy each other's company while reflecting on the historic moment.

During the early 1960s, Jim Crow laws dictated that the beach fronts of the Mississippi Gulf Coast were off-limits to African-Americans. Inspired by the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, Biloxi community members implemented a series of wade-ins, the first of which was led by Mason, a physician who, along with Medgar Evers and Felix Dunn, helped to form an NAACP chapter in Biloxi. On April 24, 1960, after months of careful organization, more than 100 south Mississippians waded onto a Biloxi beach, where they were met by an angry mob. Police stood by as protesters were beaten and shot.



*Clemon Jimerson Sr. (left) a wade-in participant, and Dr. Gilbert R. Mason Jr., son of Dr. Gilbert R. Mason Sr., the historical wade-in organizer.*

The riots forced the U.S. Justice Department to initiate the first federal court challenge of Mississippi's segregation laws and practices. In 1972, seven years after the riots, the case was won, and the beaches were legally integrated.

*Photos by Greg Wilson / Snap Shots Studio Photography*

## Mississippi Truth Project *continued from front cover*

was then divided into two districts.

With the regional groups established, their members are now establishing a state steering committee whose members will represent these areas. The steering committee will be comprised of three representatives for each region – two adults and one young person between the ages of 17 and 23. This creates a steering committee of 15 representatives. The representatives will be elected by the residents of each region.

So far, three of the five regions, 2, 4 and 5, have selected steering committee representatives.

Members of the steering committee will work to



*During a public ceremony held in Jackson, 130 people from around the state gathered to sign the Declaration of Intent for the Truth Project, which sets forth the nature of crimes to be examined by the Truth Commission.*



*Civil rights veteran Owen Brooks (left) with Rev. Nelson Johnson, who helped create the Greensboro, N.C., Truth Commission.*

craft the mandate for the commission, with input and guidance from the regional groups. To help them in their work, committee members will attend a training retreat where they will learn how to address issues surrounding traumatic events. The committee will also receive instruction on writing a mandate from people who have participated in other Truth Projects.

The regional groups are also active recruiting new members, hosting youth summits, and collecting oral histories.

A statewide Truth Project meeting is being planned for this fall. For more information, visit [www.mississippitruith.org](http://www.mississippitruith.org).

*Photos by Charles H. Tucker*



### *Check us out on the web!*

Visit [www.mississippitruithproject.org](http://www.mississippitruithproject.org) to learn more about the Mississippi Truth Project.

# Kellogg Foundation Funds \$400,000 Grant

By Sonia Thompson

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Mich., recently funded a \$400,000 grant to the Winter Institute.

“We are profoundly thankful for and excited about this generous gift from the Kellogg Foundation,” said Susan Glisson, executive director of the Winter Institute. “Kellogg has supported the Winter Institute in the past and we are thrilled that they continue to believe in our mission and fund our work.”

Glisson said the grant will be used mainly to support two Winter Institute initiatives: the Mississippi Truth Project and youth organizing projects throughout the state.

The Mississippi Truth Project is a statewide effort to create a truth and reconciliation commission that will bring to light racially motivated crimes committed in Mississippi between 1945 and 1975.

“There are still living eyewitnesses from this era who can help Mississippi face and tell its own stories in an honest fashion,” said Charles Tucker, director of communications for the Truth Project. “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.”

Once established, the commission will explore the institutional structures of racism as well as examine civil rights crimes that for the past 60 years have divided Mississippians.

Another component of the Mississippi Truth Project will create a special year-long course on restorative justice and public education for University of Mississippi students. The course will be taught by Bill Bender and Rita Schwerner Bender and will explore the history of public education in Mississippi and how the issue of race shapes educational policy. Rita Bender, a long time civil rights advocate, said she is looking forward to the

chance to engage with University of Mississippi students on the issues of public education within the context of reconciliation. She feels the course is an integral part of the Truth Project because “you can’t have reconciliation without addressing truth.”

Bender added, “This is a wonderful opportunity to work with university and law students to address what restorative justice means in the context of public education for Mississippi children. Improving public education in Mississippi is one of the critical unfinished agendas of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement.”

Bender herself has been personally connected to the movement since 1964, when she and her husband Michael Schwerner came to Mississippi as civil rights workers. Later that year, Schwerner, along with civil rights workers James Chaney and Andrew Goodman, were murdered in Philadelphia, Miss.

In addition to supporting the Truth Project, a portion of the grant will be used to fund programs that develop leadership skills in youth throughout the state who wish to lead work on racial equality and civic engagement. One such effort is a media literacy project that partners students in the Civil Rights Civil Liberties clubs at Jim Hill, Murrah and St. Andrew’s high schools in Jackson with the *Jackson Free Press*.

“We want to empower young people to become leaders in their communities,” said Dave Molina, project coordinator for the Winter Institute. “This project gives a voice to young people.”

The project, the second of its kind, helps students gain a better understanding of how media works by creating it themselves. Students will produce short films which will touch on under-investigated issues affecting youth in Jackson, such as issues of race in public and private schools or youth in the juvenile justice system.



Rita Schwerner Bender



Bill Bender

# With New Grant Money, Lil' Red Renovations Progress

By Nick Lockett

Once a school house for black students only, the Rosenwald School building in Drew, Miss.,—known as Lil' Red by Drew residents—will soon receive new life as a community center for all Drew citizens.

Renovations to the original 1928 structure began in 2001, and have been ongoing as funding has allowed. Much of the building's exterior has been restored, and now, with new funding from Lowe's and the Mississippi Arts Commission, reno-

Phase one of the project was completed in 2004, which stabilized the exterior by rebuilding deteriorated floor, wall and roof framing; replacing the roofing, replacing exterior elements such as wood doors and trim, and restoring the masonry. The current phase of work will restore the interior of the facility. This second phase of renovations includes plans to renovate the bathrooms and several classrooms.

From 1910 into the early 1930s, more than 5,300 schools just like Lil' Red were constructed in African American communities throughout 15 southern states. Seed money came from Chicago philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, CEO of Sears, Roebuck and Company. Black communities put up cash, and local school boards agreed to operate the facilities. Lil' Red is one of only 11 Rosenwald Schools still standing in Mississippi, from the original 600 Rosenwald structures in the state.

The dilapidated Lil' Red was purchased in 1996 by Holly Grove Community Development Corporation, a community based organization created by member of the Holly Grove Missionary Baptist Church. In 2001, the Winter Institute helped the HGDC secure a grant of \$400,000 from the Mississippi

Department of History and Archives.

The community plans to use the space mainly for youth and elderly programming. Drew residents have been eagerly anticipating the day when the center will be open to them.

"I am excited to hear about renovations to the inside of Lil' Red," said Wykeisha Patt, a native of Drew. "It will be great when I can finally go inside the building that my grandma attended for school."



*Historic photograph of the Drew Rosenwald school*

novations to the interior of the building are underway.

"I'm happy to see this day coming," said Jesse Gresham, Reverend at Holly Grove Missionary Baptist Church, which owns the building. "I knew it was going to get here, but waiting has been hard. I am happy about beginning the second phase of renovations. The community has been waiting for this for a long time and we are all ready to start using the building."

# Oral History Projects Help Students Gain

By Patrick Weems

In order to better understand who they are by understanding where they came from, members of the Civil Rights Civil Liberties (CRCL) club at St. Andrew's Episcopal High School in Jackson are conducting an ongoing oral history project of which the school itself is the focus. Partnering with the Winter Institute, which is helping students conduct the interviews and operate video equipment, St. Andrew's students are interviewing current and former teachers, students and administrators to delve deeply into the history of their school.

"The project will focus on the school's journey through external and internal changes in regard to race relations and access to education in the Jackson metro area from the 1940s to the 1980s," said Dave Molina, project coordinator with the Winter Institute. "The students knew that their school was different from most private schools in that it was not established due to public school desegregation, but no one knew how the school maneuvered during heightened racial periods. This oral history project hopes to bring clarity to the St. Andrew's story."

In addition to the project conducted by the CRCL club, a southern studies class at St. Andrew's has incorporated oral histories into its curriculum as way to gain a broader understanding of the civil rights movement in Mississippi. The class

of about twenty seniors has conducted oral history interviews of Mississippians who lived through the civil rights era.

Dr. Jim Foley, who taught the interdisciplinary class, said that after some initial reticence, the students embraced the assignment.



*Briana Robinson (right), a St. Andrews student learns how to use a video camera for the CRCL oral history project.*

"Their reflection papers revealed just how much they had learned through this process of carrying out an oral his-

# Breaking Bread Together: A new café will feed the

By Dave Molina

Last year, members of St. Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral in Jackson contacted the Winter Institute to help them initiate dialogue about race relations in Jackson's Episcopal community. The parishioners were working to come to terms with critical issues facing their congregation. Church members boiled down their discussion to two major issues, one from the past, the other from present day. First, parishioners wanted the opportunity to openly discuss the church's transition through desegregation during the civil rights era. Second, they needed to figure out where they fit into Jackson's downtown development and urban renewal efforts—especially since the cathedral's location, in the heart of downtown Jackson, put them squarely in the center.

Talks continued through 2008, as the group expanded its circle of participants, and hosted meetings throughout the city.

The issues economic justice, neighborhood organizing, media activism, young people, diverse and representative participation, and anti-racism training emerged as areas of interest. Group participant Chuck Culpepper, pastor of St. Alexis Episcopal Church, said he viewed the ongoing discussions as a "sign of hope," and "something valuable we all want to be out there doing."

The group further narrowed its focus and decided to take action by creating a café that would bring together diverse groups. Today, St. Andrew's is working towards opening a non-profit restaurant with a local, organic, and sustainable agriculture menu. The restaurant plans to employ Jackson youth who have dropped out of school or are referred from the juvenile justice system, and to provide youth mentoring and workforce development programs to participants.

The café was inspired by similar projects across the coun-

# Insight

tory project. For many of them, history appeared more personal and more meaningful. In essence, the human drama of the individual helped them grasp the larger historical drama of the Civil Rights Movement,” Foley said.

The oral histories that were used to broaden students’ understanding of the civil rights movement will be added to the Winter Institute educational website, [mscivilrightsproject.com](http://mscivilrightsproject.com), which provides a brief civil rights history for every county in Mississippi, and exists as a resource for students and teachers who wish to explore civil rights history.

Briana Robinson, a student who worked on the CRCL oral history project, felt the project was a valuable learning experience.

“Before diving into the project, I thought that St. Andrew’s history had nothing to do with the Civil Rights Movement,” Robins said. “I knew that we were not a private academy like some of the other private schools in Jackson,



*Gov. William Winter address St. Andrews students and CRCL club members*

but this oral history project has really influenced the way I think about civil rights history. It is not just something that happened in D.C. or just with Martin Luther King, but instead the movement had lots of implications even for an independent school like St. Andrew’s. I am excited to continue to understand how court decisions and federal acts affected our local community.”

## souls of Jackson’s youth

try—most notably Café Reconcile, in New Orleans’ Central City neighborhood. Established in 1996, Café Reconcile and its accompanying Youth Workforce Development Program (established in 2000) meet the needs of youth who have experienced an array of socio-economic challenges, including poverty, homelessness, arrested educational achievement, substance abuse, and participation in the juvenile justice system.

In early 2009, a group from St. Andrew’s traveled to New Orleans to tour Café Reconcile’s facilities. The trip provided members with a sense that a café was a feasible—albeit ambitious—project, as well as an invaluable source of firsthand knowledge regarding the mission, challenges, and triumphs of a like-minded organization.

Plans are gelling for the café to open temporarily on St. Andrew’s Episcopal Cathedral grounds once funding is

secured. The café will utilize the cathedral’s courtyards and full kitchen, while the youth workforce and mentoring program will use the church’s classroom space.

Dean of St. Andrew’s, the Very Rev. Edward F. O’Connor, says the café is a crucial project for both economic development and enriching the fabric of the downtown Jackson community.

“I see the café as an iconic symbol of what we, as a community, can become with everyone working together from the same page,” he said. “It has been nothing short of miraculous to watch as this project has taken off. We have a diverse group of people working together and it gives me great hope as I watch downtown Jackson evolve. We are on the verge of something truly glorious. This is about renewal and hope, it is about justice and equality, it is about development and prosperity for everyone.”

# My Point of View

By Judge Gray Evans

It is as old as recorded history that a mixture of culture, race, religion, the color of one's skin, and many other differences have a built-in venue for trouble—genocide, mass murder, torture, confiscation of property, slavery, segregation, wars, and on and on.

Such conduct elsewhere in the world has been going on for centuries where kings, despots and dictators rule. It is not acceptable in a democracy such as the United States. Even so, there exists a divide between the races in America where the black population has been subjected to gross injustices from the very beginning of this country when the first slave set foot in America in 1619.

Such conduct in this country does violence to all the founding documents of America. Thomas Jefferson, a slave owner and author of the Declaration of Independence, wrote that “all men are created equal.” James Madison, another slave owner, wrote the Constitution of the United States, guaranteeing equal rights to all Americans. These documents instilled in Americans the idea that every human being has a worth independent of his or her background or accomplishments and that the least have the same value as the great. These freedoms have not been extended to the black race.

The establishment of a democracy with the power resting in the people is the most revolutionary principle in history. At their deaths, both Jefferson and Madison, to their great credit, freed their slaves, having failed to do so earlier for financial reasons. Slavery, in spite of these two extraordinary documents and the disapproval of a large segment of the population, lasted more than 250 years.

Sovereignty had never before been put into the hands of the people. Even though it is obvious from the sections of the Constitution dealing with slavery that the founding fathers knew it was wrong and should end, it took another 70 years, a devastating civil war, and the Emancipation Proclamation to officially end slavery. Tragically, this still did not change the oppression and mistreatment of African-Americans. It took another 100 years to begin to erase the unthinkable treatment of the black race in the form of beatings and murders.

While there has been tremendous progress since Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of the bus in Montgomery, Ala., there remains much to be done before we can overcome the injustices, insults, and degrading conduct toward the black race in all parts of this great country.

The only way to bridge the divide that still exists between black and white communities is through a reconciliation movement that brings together reasonable people on both sides of the divide to openly and honestly face the problems that still exist, with a realization that very sensitive subjects will have to be discussed. Sensitive subjects must be dealt with if we are to make progress in erasing racism in this country.

To do this, we must help one another. We must be patient, and willing to work alongside each other. Reconciliation is the ambition to give all Americans the precious rights set forth in our founding documents. It can and must be done to erase the injustices suffered by so many for so many years.

It's time for reconciliation movements to be started in every community in Mississippi where problems still exist. It appears that the process is beginning to move more swiftly now, with a large segment of both races being ready to accept one another as equals. We must be ever mindful, however, that a small group of both blacks and whites oppose any improvement in race relations.

We need to further liberate ourselves from the heavy burden that racism lays on our backs. By doing so we will serve both the general public, and our freedom will be greatly expanded in that we will no longer have to think about skin color. We will be able to accord to all races the human dignity and freedom ordained by God and guaranteed to all by our founding documents. We all need to realize that it is our duty to begin, in earnest, reconciliation with people who in the past have been restricted from enjoying the fullness of life.

The time has come when both blacks and whites must be able to shed their resentments and finally bury Jim Crow. We must work toward a future of living together in peace and harmony, no matter the color of our skin and the backgrounds of our ancestors. I am hopeful that someday soon we will all look at each other as just people, American citizens with equal rights and privileges under the laws of this wonderful land in we are all privileged to live.



Judge Gray Evans

## *About the author*

Judge Gray Evans lives in Greenwood, Miss., and is working with other members of the Greenwood community to create a biracial dialogue there. He holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Mississippi Law School. After law school, he worked as an assistant to U.S. Congressman Frank E. Smith and later became a partner in the firm of Brewer, Deaton, and Evans. He was appointed Circuit Judge of the 4th Circuit Court District by Governor William Winter and served in that capacity for 22 years, retiring in 2001. He and his wife, Patricia, have a son, David, and two grandchildren.



# Professors Open Doors at UM Law and Medical Schools

The Winter Institute is nearing completion of a multimedia oral history project about the people behind integration of the University of Mississippi School of Law and the University Medical Center (UMC). In 1965, Aaron Shirley became the first African American resident at the UMC, the state's only medical school, in Jackson. In 1967, Reuben Anderson became the first African American graduate of the University of Mississippi School of Law. Behind the integration of the UM professional schools were two men in positions of leadership who took an unusual stand to open doors for black students: Dr. Blair Batson at UMC, who welcomed Dr. Shirley, and Dean Joshua Morse,

who recruited Mr. Anderson and other African American students. The two leaders, both from Poplarville, Mississippi, grew up near each other, and their mothers were close friends.

Soon, the Winter Institute will launch a website devoted to the multimedia project. Components will include a written piece giving historical context, an edited video piece, video excerpts of interviews with all participants, transcripts of each interview, and links to primary documents such as newspaper articles and speeches. Participants include Dr. Batson, Dr. Shirley, Dean Morse, and Judge Anderson, as well as other law school and medical school faculty and alumni.

## *Winter Institute Interns Volunteer in the Community*

During the summer, Winter Institute interns volunteer in the Oxford community. This summer, interns have been getting in touch with their artistic side by assisting Chandra Williams, owner of the Brilliant Easel Art School. Williams runs a summer art camp in June and July for children between the ages of three and 11. The art students work with different mediums including clay, fiber, watercolor and of course, crayons and markers. "It's fun to see how creative the kids are," said Ameerah Phillips, a Winter Institute intern



volunteering at the camp. "They interpret each assignment their own way and just have lot a fun with it. I've enjoyed getting to know them and seeing the world through their eyes."

*Photos by Charles H. Tucker*

# Welcome Table Pilot Project Concludes

By Susan M. Glisson

Residents from Greenwood joined facilitators at Lake Tiak-O'khata May 8-9 for the second retreat of the Welcome Table pilot project. Funded by the Fetzer Institute and the Kellogg Foundation, the Welcome Table: An Era of Dialogue on Race, is a series of retreats offered to small groups of Mississippians who are dedicated to fostering positive change in their communities.

Using the Spirit of Generosity curriculum, a system using stories to convey and exemplify universal truths, these training sessions provide a safe space in which members of divided communities can learn to listen to and trust each other. The Welcome Table facilitation teams teach the participants to create safe spaces in which sensitive issues can be discussed and explored without fear of personal attack. Over time, the participants learn to create such environments on their own and to teach that practice to others.

By teaching community members how to effectively to listen to each other and to build trust, the Welcome Table helps citizens engage in inclusive and meaningful conversations about the place they call home. Further, these people will also comprise a cadre of citizens who will help implement the recommendations of a Mississippi Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Black and white citizens from Greenwood have been working to improve race relations in Mississippi by promoting excellence in schools, trust between blacks and whites, and economic justice. A biracial group invited the Winter Institute to support that work, beginning in 2007, and the group expressed interest in receiving training in community dialogue. They were eager to participate in the Welcome Table

pilot initiative. Retreat participant Bill Ware said the retreat enabled community members who have lived in the same place for decades to "get to know each other for the first time."

The pilot period encompassed two retreats, one in November 2008, for statewide leaders, and a second one



*Greenwood citizens participate in a Welcome Table training session where they learned to listen to and trust each other. The retreat was held May 8-9 at Lake Tiak-O'khata.*

focused on Greenwood. In July, facilitators and retreat participants will gather in Oxford to retrieve the lessons learned from the pilot period in order to plan a statewide initiative using the storytelling curriculum.

*Photos by Charles H. Tucker*



*Greenwood citizens gather in a story circle at Lake Tiak-O'khata.*

# Jackson-Evers Airport Dedicates Pavilion to Medgar Evers

By Melody Frierson

June 5, 2009, marked the opening celebration ceremony of the new Medgar Wiley Evers Pavilion at the Jackson-Evers International Airport. Medgar Evers promoted social change in Jackson during the Civil Rights Movement. He served as field secretary of the NAACP in Mississippi until he was gunned down in the driveway of his Jackson home on June 12, 1963.



*Winter Institute interns Melody Frierson and LaToya Thompson (left, center left) and Winter Institute project coordinator Dave Molina (right) visit with Myrlie Evers-Williams at the Medgar Evers Pavilion dedication ceremony at the Jackson-Evers International Airport on June 5. Photo by Charles H. Tucker*

The newly opened pavilion, located on the second floor of the main terminal building at the Jackson-Evers airport, is a tribute to the life and legacy of Evers and others who participated in the Civil Rights Movement in Jackson. The permanent exhibit features a video narrated by NAACP chairman Julian Bond, and a timeline of Mississippi Civil Rights Movement events.

Myrlie Evers-Williams, Medgar Evers's widow and chairman emeritus of the national NAACP board, attended the event. Evers-Williams is a long-time friend of the Winter Institute and recently agreed to serve on its national advisory board. She fought back tears when she spoke to the audience during the dedication.

"I just want to thank you for what you have done, for remembering Medgar in this way because keeping his memory alive has been foremost in what I have done in my life," Evers-Williams said.

Her children and grandchildren were also present for the event. Her grandson Daniel Evers-Everette said he was overwhelmed with honor and humbled by what his grandfather accomplished.

"My grandfather helped setup the foundation for our future. Now it is up to us, as individuals, to find our path and build the framing," Evers-Everette said. "We do this by learning and respecting our past, correcting the wrong in our lives individually in order to help direct, shape and secure

the next generation of mankind. There is a lot to do, but now, in Jackson, Mississippi, where the battle for equality was frowned upon, there is hope and change. A new life breathes in the heart of the city. This pavilion will open the door for all toward embracing Mississippi heritage and sharing it wherever they may go."



## Winter Institute News

### New Staff



Foundation on its mid-South Delta Initiative. He holds a degree in mass communication and journalism from Jackson State University.

**Charles H. Tucker**, a Cary, Miss., native, has joined the WWIRR staff as director of communications for the Mississippi Truth Project. He has worked in fundraising and public relations and as a newspaper reporter and photographer. Most recently Tucker served as public information officer for the W.K. Kellogg



communications specialist in UM's Office of Development. She has also worked as an editor at *Lucky* and *Woman's Day* magazines in New York City. She holds a degree in journalism from the University of Missouri.

**Sonia Weinberg Thompson**, a native of Columbia, Missouri, recently joined the Winter Institute staff as project coordinator. She manages the daily operations of the office and is also in charge of communications efforts and fundraising for the WWIRR. Before joining the WWIRR staff, she was a communica-

### Institute Interns Attend Obama's Historic Inauguration

A group of Winter Institute interns traveled to Washington, D.C., on January 20 to witness firsthand the inauguration of Barack Obama. Mississippi Senators Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker provided the tickets to the students, who said attending the event was a once in a lifetime experience. While in the nation's capitol, the interns visited monuments on the D.C. Mall and took in the excitement of the day. "Having the chance to go was unbelievable," said intern Megan McRaney. "It was, and still is, hard for me to comprehend the magnitude of it all."



*Institute interns and director Susan Glisson (second from right) gather around a monument near the Washington D.C. Mall.*