

# THE SOUTHERN REGISTER

*A Publication of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture*

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*The University of Mississippi*

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OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI, U.S.A.

FALL 2022







When I attend a public event, I usually sit in the back row. It doesn't matter much to me if anyone knows that I'm there, and I won't be going to the microphone to ask a question. I act a part every time I walk into a classroom: the confident, wry professor. If I weren't a professor, I'd like to be a detective. Not the dark, tortured one at the center of every television mystery, but one of the understated side-kicks who brings to light an important discovery just before you forget her name. Or I'd be a backup singer in a band. I'd be friends with the lead singer, but I'd slip unnoticed out the back door when the show was over. No one is more surprised than I am to find myself the director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

Yet, I love this job some days and like it almost all of the time. We do important work when we lead undergraduate students in questioning notions about "the South." We do important work shepherding graduate students through their independently conceived research projects that unfold one "South" into multiple ideas, places, and people. I delight in realizing that an initiative brewing in one part of the Center connects to an idea percolating in another. I revel in the moments when the Center can say "yes, yes, yes!" to good ideas.

In fact, there are many lead singers at the Center. Jimmy Thomas, associate director for publications, creates the *Southern Register*, along with communications specialist, Rebecca Cleary. On the cover, you'll find a photograph from David Wharton's new book, *Roadside South*. You can also catch David's work in the Gammill Gallery, installed by our new operations assistant, Kell Kellum. You'll read here about the upcoming SouthTalks lecture series, organized by associate director for programs, Afton Thomas, and assembled around the theme "Race in the Classroom," a focus that dovetails with the sixtieth anniversary of the integration of UM. This programming comes in part from discussions Afton led with the Events and Outreach Committee of the Center's Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC, composed of Southern Studies alumni, community members, donors,

and leaders of regional and national organizations, provides us with invaluable counsel and ideas to stir our creativity. We especially look forward to an upcoming SouthTalk in nearby Holly Springs, focused on faculty member Jodi Skipper's new book, *Behind the Big House: Reconciling Slavery, Race, and Heritage in the US South*.

You're going to want to read more than Jodi's book and the *Register*, though. You can learn here about what's in *Living Blues* magazine, managed by Melanie Young and edited by Brett Bonner. The Southern Foodways Alliance's *Gravy* is devoted to food stories of the Great Migration and aligned with the Mississippi Museum of Art's exhibition "A Movement in Every Direction: Legacies of the Great Migration." Guest edited in this instance by Audrey Petty, *Gravy*, in print and as a podcast, is the work of editor Sara Camp Milam. The SFA also just hosted its first Summer Film Residency program, directed by SFA Pihakis Filmmaker, Zaire Love. SFA will be circulating those films soon, even as interim codirectors Melissa Hall and Mary Beth Lasseter lead the organization in preparing for its annual symposium in October.

The Southern Documentary Project's three producer-directors, Melanie Ho, Rex Jones, and John Rash, spent the summer working on projects, but now join SouthDocs director Andy Harper and administrative coordinator, Karen Tuttle, in gearing up for fall classes. In fact, we have had fall on our minds since May, when undergraduate advisers Simone Delorme and Darren Grem began registering ninety-seven incoming Southern Studies majors, bringing us to a total of 177. Meanwhile, graduate adviser Catarina Passidomo has been corresponding with fifteen incoming MA and MFA students, raising our overall enrollment across both graduate programs to twenty-five. We are excited also to welcome new faculty members this fall: Ryan Parsons, jointly appointed with sociology, and Andrew Donnelly, jointly appointed with English. We're particularly happy to welcome back Ralph Eubanks, who, after his Harvard fellowship, rejoins us as the Black Power at Ole Miss Faculty Fellow. Ted Ownby has spent much of the summer conducting research for his new book, and, while Adam Gussow has been engaged in academic pursuits, he's also been on tour with his blues band.

And who makes all of this possible? Bert Neal, our accountant, and our intrepid fundraisers, Claire Moss, on behalf of SFA, and Rob Jolly and Caroline Hourin, for the College of Liberal Arts.

Show me a more interesting place to work! Actually, I have fulfilled my wish—I *am* the backup singer in a great band. And I like my job too much to slip out the back door just yet.

Katie McKee

## THE SOUTHERN REGISTER

A Publication of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture • The University of Mississippi

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The Center for the Study of Southern Culture  
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**Fall 2022**

On the cover: Detail of *Marshall County, Mississippi* (2007),  
by David Wharton

### REGISTER STAFF

Editor: James G. Thomas, Jr.  
Editorial assistant: Margaret Gaffney  
Graphic Designer: Susan Bauer Lee

# Living Blues News

Perhaps associate editor Robin Dietrick said it best when she sent back her edits on our cover story: “Well, she’s a badass!” That pretty much sums up the life of Gaye Adegbalola. Adegbalola has been speaking up and speaking out for over sixty years now. She was a founding member of Saffire–The Uppity Blues Women back in 1984, and over the past forty years her music with that group, and as a solo artist, has always tackled trouble. As she notes, “I have always been a champion for marginalized people.” There is far more to her story than many of us may have known.

Other features include two California-based vocalists, Dee Dee Simon and Tia Carroll. Both women had standout years last year despite Covid. Simon’s recent work has shined a spotlight on many women of the southern soul scene with her Queens series of events and releases. Carroll had the No. 6 release in 2021 according to the *Living Blues* Radio Charts.

As I mentioned in the last issue, New York guitarist Andy Story passed away while we were working on a feature story on him this spring. We present that article in the issue as a tribute to him and his under-the-radar career.

This issue’s “Let It Roll” focuses on one of the most ribald recording sessions in blues history—Victoria Spivey and Lonnie Johnson’s October 1928 sessions for OKeh in New York. The pair were at the top of their game at the time and recorded three two-part songs that, even to this day, might make you blush. “New Black Snake Blues,” “Toothache Blues,” and “Furniture Man Blues” capture two masters having great fun in the studio.

Congratulations to the 2022 *Living Blues* Awards



winners! This year’s big winner is Christone “Kingfish” Ingram with top honors of Blues Artist of the Year in both the Critics’ and Readers’ Polls as well as four other awards tied to him or his 662 release on Alligator. Other winners of multiple awards

include Mavis Staples, Buddy Guy, and Crystal Thomas.

This was a challenging time for artists to thrive, and those who stood out last year, despite most live events being closed, should be commended.

And lastly, I want to send out a special congratulatory note to the Bentonia Blues Festival on their fiftieth anniversary. This is the longest-running blues festival in the United States, and Jimmy “Duck” Holmes, his family, and their supporters need to be given a big shout-out for all of the work they have done over the decades to make sure this special event continues to survive.

Brett J. Bonner



by Frank Mathis

Gaye Adegbalola, North  
Atlantic Blues Festival  
Rockland, Maine, 2009.



# southtalks

— SERIES —

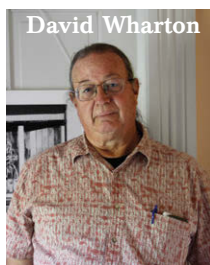
CENTER FOR THE STUDY  
OF SOUTHERN CULTURE

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, AT NOON**  
**Tupelo Room, Barnard Observatory**

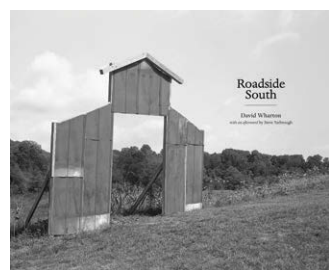
## *Roadside South*

### David Wharton

Documentary photographer David Wharton will discuss images in his Gammill Gallery exhibition, which includes photographs from his recently published fourth book, *Roadside South*, the third in his Trilogy of the American South series. The exhibition, also titled *Roadside South*, is currently on view in the Gammill Gallery in Barnard Observatory through September 30.



JAMES G. THOMAS, JR.



David Wharton is an assistant professor of Southern Studies and the director of documentary studies at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. He is the author of four books of photographs: *The Soul of a Small Texas Town: Photographs, Memories, and History from McDade, Small Town South, The Power of Belief: Spiritual Landscapes from the Rural South, and Roadside South*.

See pages 16–17 of this issue of *the Southern Register* for more on *Roadside South*.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, AT NOON**  
**Tupelo Room, Barnard Observatory**

## “Race Land: The Ecology of Segregation”

### Maarten Zwiers

“Race Land: The Ecology of Segregation” is a global and environmental history of the Jim Crow South during the Cold War era. Segregationists not only exploited (and destroyed) human beings, but



also the environment—human and natural resources were systematically mined to uphold the social ecosystem of the South. In this SouthTalk, Maarten Zwiers will discuss the multifaceted and transnational nature of US segregationist thought and practice and the global networks its proponents formed in the years after World War II to sustain their White-supremacist worldview.

Zwiers is a senior lecturer in contemporary history and American studies at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. He is the author of *Senator James Eastland: Mississippi's Jim Crow Democrat*. He is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture.



Fall 2022

*SouthTalks is a series of events (including lectures, performances, film screenings, and panel discussions) that explores the interdisciplinary nature of Southern Studies. This series is free and open to the public, and typically takes place in the Tupelo Room of Barnard Observatory unless otherwise noted. There are quite a few interesting virtual offerings this semester. Virtual events allow us to connect to larger audiences unable to attend programming in person and allow speakers to participate in the series no matter their location. Visit the Center's website for up-to-date-information about all Center events.*

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture's programming focus for the 2022–23 academic year is “Race in the Classroom.” Historically, classrooms have functioned as both intensely local spaces and as broader political stages on which debates about equality, identity, and access have played out—nowhere to greater effect than here at the University of Mississippi, where this fall we will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the campus's integration. Classrooms are not only physical sites where Americans have clashed over *who* will learn. They are also settings that frame *what* students will learn and *how* they will conceptualize themselves as residents of a region and a nation. This year's SouthTalks series will consider how ideas about “race” and understandings of “the South” intersect in the classroom. Our exploration will range from the colonial hemisphere to the postbellum United States to the Jim Crow era to the civil rights movement to present-day classroom controversies. While our interests include the experiences of Black and White southerners, they also extend beyond a biracial understanding of the region to one that accounts for the multiplicity of a historical—and a modern—South.

If you require special assistance relating to a disability, please contact Afton Thomas at [amthoma4@olemiss.edu](mailto:amthoma4@olemiss.edu) or call 662-915-5993.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, AT NOON**  
**Tupelo Room, Barnard Observatory**

***I Am from Here: Stories and Recipes from a Southern Chef***

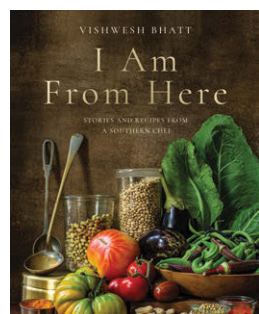
**Vishwesh Bhatt  
and Sara Camp Milam**

Vishwesh Bhatt has been the chef at Snackbar in Oxford since its opening in 2009. A native of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India, Bhatt is a graduate of the University of Kentucky. He moved to Oxford after college to begin a graduate program in political science but soon abandoned academia for restaurant kitchens. When folks in Mississippi ask him the loaded question, “But where are you *really* from?” his response is, “I am from here.” That’s the title of Bhatt’s cookbook. Throughout the book Bhatt tells stories of understandings forged over shared meals and explores the common ingredients that connect global cuisines, particularly those of India and the American South.

Bhatt will be in conversation with Sara Camp Milam, managing editor of the Southern Foodways Alliance. Milam has a BA in Spanish from Princeton University and an MA in folklore from UNC-Chapel Hill.



Vishwesh Bhatt



soon abandoned academia for restaurant kitchens. When folks in Mississippi ask him the loaded question, “But where are you *really* from?” his response is, “I am from here.” That’s the title of Bhatt’s cookbook. Throughout the book Bhatt tells stories of understandings forged over shared meals and explores the common ingredients that connect global



Sara Camp Milam

DANNY KLIMEZ

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, AT NOON**  
**Faulkner Room, J. D. Williams Library**

**“Coming Full Circle: My Journey through the University of Mississippi, to Many Points Beyond and Back”**

**Dorothea Quaye Chapman Reed**

Author, columnist, academic, businesswoman, and 1974 UM alumna, Dorothea Quaye Chapman Reed said that she was “only three years old when Emmett Till was killed in neighboring Tallahatchie County, I was ten when James Meredith attempted to enroll at the University of Mississippi. Stores in my hometown would not allow us to sit on the stools to enjoy an ice cream cone or have a cold drink. Fortunately, Black men and women in my community taught us how to cope in this environment and strive for equality.”

As a part of the sixtieth anniversary of integration on the University of Mississippi’s campus, Chapman Reed’s presentation will not only focus on her early life in Water Valley, Mississippi, but her time at the University of

Mississippi after its integration. She will also discuss her work on the “Black Families of Yalobusha County” oral history project with the University’s Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

The event is hosted by the University of Mississippi Libraries and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. Following the program all attendees are invited to join a University of Mississippi Slavery Guided Tour by history PhD candidate Don Guillory at 2:00 p.m. Attendees should meet on the steps of the Lyceum (304 University Circle). The tour will last forty-five to sixty minutes.

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, AT NOON**  
**Virtual Event**

**“Region, Race, and History: Racial Palimpsests in the Southern US”**

**Angel Parham**

The racial history of the US is too often defined monolithically in terms of a Black/White color line which has consistently dominated the country. But careful attention to particular regional histories, particularly in the US South with its connections to Latin America and the Caribbean, make clear that there have always been regional nuances that complicate the Black/White dualism often assumed to shape understandings of race across the United States.



Angel Adams Parham is associate professor of sociology and senior fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia. Her research is in the area of historical and comparative-historical sociology of race. She is the author of *American Routes: Racial Palimpsests and the Transformation of Race*, which examines changes in race and racialization in New Orleans under the

French, Spanish, and Anglo-American administrations.

This event is cosponsored by the envisioned University of Mississippi Center for the Study of Race and Racism.



Angel Parham

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, AT NOON**  
**Virtual Event**

**“Race in *The Secret Lives of Church Ladies*”**

**Deesha Philyaw  
and Ethel Scurlock**

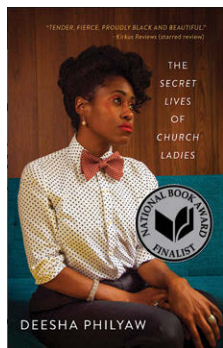
Readers and critics alike embraced Deesha Philyaw’s *The Secret Lives of Church Ladies*, a



Deesha Philyaw



collection of nine short stories focused on Black women, sex, and the Black church. Yet the collection is rarely discussed as being “about race,” with emphasis placed instead on issues related to gender, sexuality, and religion.



In this conversation between Ethel Scurlock and Philyaw, they will explore the significance of race in the book’s stories.

Philyaw’s short story collection won the 2021 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, the 2020/2021 Story Prize, the 2020 *Los Angeles Times*’ Arto Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction, and was a finalist for the 2020 National Book Award for fiction. Philyaw is also a Kimbilio Fiction

Fellow and will be the 2022–23 John and Renée Grisham Writer in Residence at the University of Mississippi.

Scurlock is dean of the University of Mississippi’s Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, associate professor of English and African American studies, and senior fellow of the Luckyday Residential College. Scurlock became a faculty member at the University of Mississippi in 1996 and has taught honors courses for more than sixteen years. Prior to being named dean, Scurlock was also the director of African American studies.



## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, AT 5:30 P.M. Off Square Books on the Oxford Square

### *Southern Beauty: Race, Ritual, and Memory in the Modern South*

Elizabeth Bronwyn Boyd  
and Darren Grem

*Southern Beauty: Race, Ritual, and Memory in the Modern South* explains a curiosity: why a feminine ideal rooted in the nineteenth century continues to enjoy currency well into the twenty-first. Elizabeth Bronwyn Boyd examines how the continuation of certain gender rituals in the American South has served to perpetuate racism, sexism, and classism.

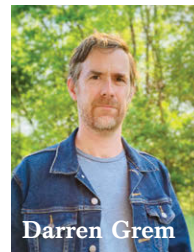


Boyd is an independent scholar who lives in Takoma Park, Maryland. A native of Jackson, Mississippi, she holds an MA in Southern Studies from the University of Mississippi, and a PhD in American studies from the University of Texas at Austin.



Darren Grem is associate professor of history and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. He is the author of *The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity* and coeditor with Ted Ownby and James G. Thomas Jr. of *Southern Religion, Southern Culture: Essays Honoring Charles Reagan Wilson*.

This event is cosponsored by Square Books.



## WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, AT 5:30 P.M. Doxey Auditorium, Rust College 150 Rust Ave., Holly Springs, MS 38635

### “Slavery and Race in Holly Springs”

Jodi Skipper, panel moderator

This panel will be moderated by Jodi Skipper, author of the book *Behind the Big House: Reconciling Slavery, Race, and Heritage in the US South*, and feature cofounders of the Behind the Big House Program, Chelius Carter and Jenifer Eggleston, Members of Gracing the Table, Rkhty Jones and Wayne Jones, and cofounder of Gracing the Table, Alisea Williams-McLeod. Panelists will discuss the development of the Behind the Big House slave dwelling education program and its impacts and role in telling more inclusive historical narratives in the South.

This event is cosponsored by Rust College.



## TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, AT 6:30 P.M. Oxford Skate Park 400 Bramlett Blvd., across from the Oxford-Lafayette Public Library

### “Skating South: Oral Histories and Music”

Southern Studies students enrolled in SST 533 will present their work, which includes oral histories and videos that document the skateboarding community in Mississippi. The presentation will be followed by a performance from the punk band School Drugs.



**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, AT NOON**  
**Virtual Event**

**“Humanists as Activists: Exploring Our Social Responsibility as Writers”**

**Clinnesha D. Sibley**

This interactive SouthTalk will allow participants to explore characters and dramatic situations that reflect injustices in our current world. In the spirit of social change, urgency, and activism, participants will be able to create and discuss original literature that encourages radical empathy, activates the human heart, and holds the writer accountable.

Clinnesha D. Sibley is the author of plays, blogs, poetry, prose, essays, and creative nonfiction. Her work contributes authentic narratives about Mississippians, southerners, and Black women to the contemporary literary canon and has been recognized by Penumbra Theatre, Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, Kentucky Women Writers Conference, Fade to Black Reading Series, and the New Stage Theatre, among others.

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, AT NOON**  
**Virtual Event**

**“Where We Matter: Dean Lucy Diggs Slowe, Howard Women, and the Co-Creation of Campus Belonging, 1922–1937”**

**Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant**

What does it mean for Black women to feel included in higher education? What does it look like when Black college women know they matter to their institutions? Lucy Diggs Slowe (1883–1937), the first trained African American dean of women, placed these questions at the center of her work at her alma mater, Howard University. From 1922 to 1937 Dean Slowe worked with Howard undergraduates to build an



**Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant**

extracurricular program focused on Black women's community, personal growth, and joy. Drawing on student newspaper accounts about her efforts and impact, Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant describes Slowe's philosophy of “living more abundantly” and the ways it operationalized a sense of belonging and inclusion for Black Howard women.

Bauboeuf-Lafontant is Louise R. Noun Chair in Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies at Grinnell College. A womanist social scientist, she researches everyday and embodied experiences of

racialized gender. She is the author of *Behind the Mask of the Strong Black Woman: Voice and the Embodiment of a Costly Performance* and *To Live More Abundantly: Black Collegiate Women, Howard University, and the Audacity of Dean Lucy Diggs Slowe*.

This event is cosponsored by the University of Georgia Press.

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, AT 7:00 p.m.**  
**Tupelo Room, Barnard Observatory**

***An African American Dilemma: A History of School Integration and Civil Rights in the North***

**Zoë Burkholder**

Since *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, Americans have viewed school integration as a central tenet of the Black civil rights movement. Yet, school integration was not the only—or even always the dominant—civil rights strategy. At times, African Americans also fought for separate, Black-controlled schools dedicated to racial uplift and community empowerment.

To date, much of what we know about the history of school integration comes from the South. In her book *An African American Dilemma: A History of School Integration and Civil Rights in the North*, Burkholder offers the first and most comprehensive analysis of the history of Black struggles for educational equality in the North. She argues that since the 1840s, African Americans have employed multiple strategies to fight for equal educational opportunities, including school integration and its opposite—separate, Black-controlled schools. This study considers what is unique about Black struggles for school integration in the North, how these struggles differed from those in the South, and why these regional distinctions matter in order to shed light on the complex relationship between school integration and the larger Black freedom struggle.

Zoë Burkholder is an historian of education, professor of educational foundations, and the founding director of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Education Project at Montclair State University.

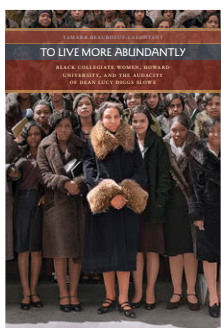


**Zoë Burkholder**

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, AT 6:00 P.M.**  
**Gammill Gallery and Tupelo Room, Barnard Observatory**

**Fall Documentary Showcase**

The Fall Documentary Showcase is a celebration of the work by our documentary students. Each artist will present their work, followed by a Q&A session.





# The Center Welcomes Incoming Graduate Students

This year there are fifteen students entering the Southern Studies MA and MFA programs from a wide variety of backgrounds and places.

## The Incoming Southern Studies MA Class



**Laura Conte**  
College of William and Mary



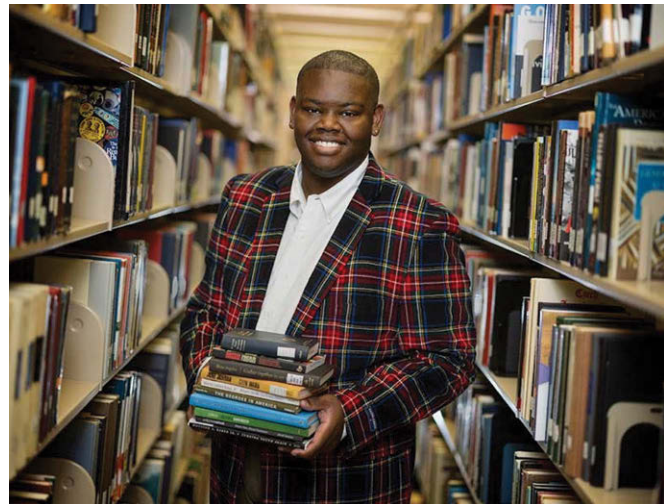
**Jacob Fennell**  
University of Mississippi



**Julia Kraus**  
Hendrix College



**Sarah Morgan Johnson**  
Mississippi State University



**Jalon Young**  
Tulane University

## Incoming MA Students Not Pictured

**MiMi Bishop**  
Jackson State University

**free feral**  
Oberlin Conservatory

**Riley Moran**  
Tulane University

**Fred Nettles**  
University of Mississippi



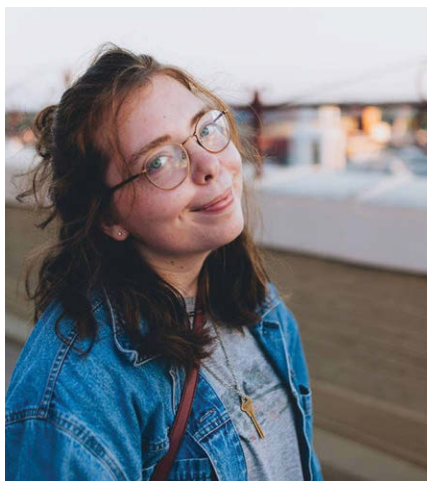


**Caroline Nolte**  
University of Mississippi



**Cosmo McGee**  
University of Hull

### The Incoming Southern Studies MFA in Documentary Expression Class



**Bethany Fitts**  
University of Mississippi



**Lilly Slaughter**  
University of Louisville  
University of Mississippi

### Incoming MFA Students Not Pictured

**Elise Denoulet**  
Université de Lille

**Logan Kirkland**  
University of Mississippi

## Awards in Southern Studies

This fall, several students earned awards that will support them as they pursue their degrees.

**free feral** received the Jamie Beane Joyner Southern Studies Scholarship Endowment, an award given to an outstanding incoming student with an expressed interest in documentary study.

**Feagin Hardy** earned the inaugural Rose Cailiff Scholarship.

**Lily-Pearl Benn** is completing her internship with the Walter Anderson Museum of Art in Ocean Springs with the assistance of the Wiener Internship Award.

**Sandip Rai** received the Southern Studies Graduate Endowment (Abraham Award), an award given to an outstanding student from a group underrepresented in the cohort's makeup.

**Jai Williams** received the Fullerton Graduate Fellowship, an award given to an outstanding student with an expressed interest in documentary study.



# Feagin Hardy Earns Inaugural Rose Cailiff Scholarship

With rising tuition costs, everyone can use a little extra help with their bursar bill. Feagin Hardy earned a boost by becoming the inaugural Rose Cailiff Scholarship winner in Southern Studies.

"I wanted to apply for the Cailiff scholarship after Dr. Delorme emailed me about it—extra scholarship money is always exciting, and I'll always take an opportunity to talk about Southern Studies and everything it has meant to me," said Hardy, who is originally from Laurens, South Carolina.

Hardy was previously working on a minor in Southern Studies, but enjoyed her classes so much that she decided to officially switch to a Southern Studies major, along with linguistics.

Undergraduate applicants submit a 250-500-word essay in response to the following prompt: How has being a Southern Studies major affected your view of the region, the nation, and the world? Which course has had a particular impact on your world view? How do you apply what you have learned in Southern Studies to real-world settings?

"For the essay, it was really hard for me to pick just one course out of the handful I've taken, so I ended up mentioning all of them. In one way or another, every class I've taken has helped to give me language and context for not only my own connection to the South, but also my family's," Hardy said. "It was the desire for this language and context

that drew me to Southern Studies. My family has lived in the South for generations (even before it would have been called "the South"), and we've shaped and been shaped by it in more ways than most of my relatives have ever been willing to talk about. As I entered college, I was desperate to find a way around those silences. Between that and my deep love of stories, Southern Studies has given me more in two years than I could have ever dreamed."

Undergraduate students who are interested in applying for the Cailiff Scholarship can look for the application announcement next spring.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

## Center on the Move

### A Review of Where We've Been and What We've Done

- Jodi Skipper published her new book *Behind the Big House: Reconciling Slavery, Race, and Heritage in the US South*. Skipper also participated in a panel session at the Mississippi Book Festival on August 20 in Jackson, Mississippi.
- David Wharton published his fourth book of documentary photography, *Roadside South*, with an afterword by Steve Yarborough.
- In July, the Center's associate director for publications, Jimmy Thomas, presented "Collective Memory and Lebanese Mississippians' Racial Position in the Jim Crow South" at the Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies' New Perspectives on Middle East Migrations Conference at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. Also, his short documentary film *Along the Blues Highway* was chosen to screen in the fifth annual Best of Oxford Film Festival event in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. The film will be included in Oxford Film Festival's traveling Best of the Festival screenings, which will take place in underserved areas throughout Mississippi.
- Kelly Spivey's film *Mississippi Creates: Tyler Keith* was also chosen to screen in the fifth annual Best of Oxford Film Festival event in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Her film will also be included in Oxford Film Festival's traveling Best of the Festival screenings. Spivey is a recent graduate of the Center's MFA in Documentary Expression program.
- Adam Gussow, professor of English and Southern Studies, appeared on cover of the July 21, 2022, issue of *Blues Blast* magazine. Gussow is featured for his role as an academic, educator, and bluesman, making him "one of the most intriguing individuals in the blues world."
- Andy Donnelly, visiting assistant professor in English and Southern Studies, published two essays: "The Sexuality of Civil War Historiography: How Two Versions of Homosexuality Make Meaning of the War," *Civil War History*, vol. 68, no. 3 (September 2022) and "Stowe's Slavery and Stowe's Capitalism: Forced Reproductive Labor in Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Women's Studies*, vol. 51, no. 5 (September 2022).



# Kell Kellum Joins Center Staff

There is a fresh face in the lobby of Barnard Observatory, but he isn't new to the building. Kell Kellum is the new operations assistant who will welcome students, faculty, and visitors to the Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

Kellum, a native of Greenwood, Mississippi, earned his undergraduate degree in Southern Studies in 2014, something he says was a pivotal moment for him.

"I think about the speech Martin Luther King Jr. gave about him getting increasingly frustrated with the White moderate," Kellum said. "This program pushed me to realize the White moderate in action is a dangerous thing, and it really opened my eyes to what I took for granted, such as socioeconomic and racial inequality and how they intersect and inform one another to create a systemic problem. Southern Studies informed my view of the world, and the idea of being a part of a place that can push the White

moderate to become something less dangerous is appealing."

He said he liked all of the professors he had as a student, the staff as well, and he is excited to work at the Center. Outside of Barnard, when he doesn't have a book in hand—he is always reading a music biography or autobiography—he is probably playing music.

"I started playing guitar when I was twelve and pedal steel at twenty-one," said Kellum, who has played with area musicians Jimbo Mathus, Dent May, and the Water Liars. He credits influences such as Bill Frisell and George Harrison's Indian-inspired work, and he is usually listening to a Tom Petty album. Kellum released his first album *Adding to the Ashes* in 2018, recorded a solo album and an EP in 2020 and 2021, and is working on a new album. "The record I finished last year is named after a line in a David Joy novel, *Hope You Don't Dream*," he said.



Kell Kellum and family

Kellum, who lives in Water Valley with his wife, Nicci, and stepson, Otto, encourages everyone to stop by his desk and say hello.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

## Announcing the 2023 *Study the South* Research Fellowship at the University of Mississippi

Scholars researching the South now have an opportunity for funded research in the collections of the Department of Archives and Special Collections at the J. D. Williams Library at the University of Mississippi. The *Study the South* research fellowship, sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Department of Archives and Special Collections, will provide funding of \$1,500 to one qualified scholar, who will also have access to a carrel in the library and an opportunity to publish an essay in *Study the South* based on their research.

Special Collections has particular

strengths in areas that include political history, the blues, civil rights, and the antebellum and Civil War eras. Subject guides and finding aids at Archives and Special Collections can be found at [www.libraries.olemiss.edu/specialcollectionspages](http://www.libraries.olemiss.edu/specialcollectionspages).

The funds will support travel and lodging expenses, and the remainder serves as a stipend. Research should take place between January 2023 and December 2023. The deadline for application is November 1, 2022, and the selection committee will notify the awardee by January 1, 2023.

*Study the South* is an online scholarly journal at the Center for the

Study of Southern Culture. We will ask the successful fellow to either give a public presentation at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture or a short, recorded interview about her or his work, to be shared through *Study the South*, [www.studythesouth.com](http://www.studythesouth.com).

All scholars, including advanced graduate students, are eligible for the fellowship. Candidates should send a 1–2 page description of a research agenda, citing research questions and specific collections that seem most useful, to James G. Thomas, Jr., editor of *Study the South*, at [jgthomas@olemiss.edu](mailto:jgthomas@olemiss.edu).

# Fall Semester Sees Influx of Southern Studies Majors

## *New Requirements on the Horizon*

The fall 2022 semester will see a large influx of Southern Studies majors. In fact, there are ninety-seven first-year students enrolled in the program, which necessitated adding a fourth section of SST 101 to accommodate the large group. Altogether, there will be 177 Southern Studies majors beginning the school year.

In order to effectively manage enrollment in the future, beginning with the fall 2023 semester, admission to the BA in Southern Studies program will be by admission only. The goal is to allow approximately fifty students into the major each year. Competitive applicants will have a minimum high school GPA of 3.0, a resume that shows leadership and engagement with local communities, and should submit a well-written essay. In addition, they must be ready to immediately enroll in Southern Studies 101 in their first semester of the program.

“We are delighted by the interest in Southern Studies from both

in-state students and students who are coming to us from out of state by way of the Academic Common Market,” said Katie McKee, director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. “We will shift to a competitive application process for the 2023–24 academic year in order to be sure that we can adequately serve the needs of individual majors. But we will still eagerly welcome students from many different locations to the interdisciplinary study of region and nation.”

The Academic Common Market (ACM) program of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is a tuition-savings program for college students in fifteen SREB states who want to pursue degrees that are not offered by public institutions in their home state. Students can enroll in out-of-state institutions and pay the in-state tuition rates for a select number of degree programs.

The process for the ACM scholarship is similar to applying to the Southern Studies major, but with

an added step. Incoming students should first apply to the University of Mississippi. Once accepted to UM, the applicant will have access to the special programs and scholarship application online, including the Southern Studies application section with the essay prompt. Incoming transfer students will complete the same application. Current UM students will complete the application and submit a resume. Decisions are made on a rolling basis for current students. The application deadline is February 15.

Once ACM applicants are admitted to the Southern Studies major, they must apply for the Academic Common Market program through their home state’s ACM application to be certified as a resident. UM will provide an official letter to verify the applicant has been admitted to the program, and only this letter may be used to confirm enrollment in the ACM application.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

## Rights and Southern Activism Course Taught for First Time This Fall

Southern Studies is offering a new course this semester: SST 109: Rights and Southern Activism. Ralph Eubanks will teach a small group of twenty students on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The class will examine the South, past and present, through the lens of activism, whether for civil rights or human

rights. A central part of this class’s focus will be the history of protest at the University of Mississippi. Additionally, connections between the University’s history of protest and other southern movements will be explored—such as the Southern Tenant Farmers Union and the civil rights movement in general.

This seminar will not only explore activism, but also the connections among activists, the strategies they used, and the opposition they faced. With the connection between race and protest in the South a central focus of the course, one primary text will be C. Vann Woodward’s *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*.



# Daina Ramey Berry to Deliver Gilder-Jordan Lecture

On Tuesday, September 13, at 6:00 p.m., Daina Ramey Berry will deliver this year's Gilder-Jordan Lecture in Southern Cultural History. The lecture is free and open to the public and will take place in Nutt Auditorium on the University of Mississippi campus.

Slavery in the United States has often been described as a stain on our history, and as a result the subject is absent in many K-12 classrooms. Yet slavery was a major part of American history, and we are still dealing with its legacy. Recent proposed legislation that aimed to shape the language, topics, and learning outcomes can suppress student knowledge about an important part of our national story. Berry's lecture will focus on what it means to teach the truth about slavery and the value of learning about race and slavery in the modern classroom.

Berry is the Michael Douglas Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). Before joining UCSB she was the Oliver H. Radkey Regents Professor of History and chair of the History Department at the University of Texas at Austin. She also served as the associate dean of the graduate school. She completed her BA, MA, and PhD in African American studies and US history at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is "a scholar of the enslaved" and a specialist on gender and slavery, as well as on Black women's history in the United States. She is one of the most sought-after consultants for public-facing projects offered by museums, historical sites, and K-12 educational initiatives.

Berry is the author or editor of six books, including *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to the Grave, in the Building of a Nation*. She has



Daina Ramey Berry

appeared on several syndicated radio and television programs, and she served as a historical consultant and technical advisor for the remake of *Roots* by Alex Haley. She currently serves as a consultant for museums and historical societies throughout the United States, including the restoration and interpretation at historic sites such as the Owens-Thomas House in Savannah, Georgia, the Phillipsburg Manor in Sleepy Hollow, New York, and the Neill-Cochran House in Austin, Texas. In 2018 Berry produced several online essays during Black History Month for the National Museum of African American History and Culture in

collaboration with Biography.com and History.com, and edited the text for the award-winning *People Not Property* website that investigates slavery in the North.

The Gilder-Jordan Lecture Series is organized by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the UM Department of History, African American Studies Program, and the Center for Civil War Research. The Gilder-Jordan Speaker Series is made possible through the generosity of the Gilder Foundation, Inc. The series honors the late Richard Gilder of New York and his family, as well as University of Mississippi alumni Dan and Lou Jordan of Virginia.

# Who Says You Can't Go Home Again?

*Andrew Donnelly and Ryan Parsons  
Return to Join Center Faculty*

Thomas Wolfe wrote that you can't go home again, but perhaps it is possible to return to a college campus after a few years away. Andrew Donnelly and Ryan Parsons aren't returning home, per se, but they are coming back to a familiar campus, since they both studied or researched at the University of Mississippi.

Donnelly joins UM as visiting assistant professor in English and Southern Studies, and Ryan Parsons begins as an assistant professor of sociology and Southern Studies. "We're always excited for the return of students in the fall," said Katie McKee, director of the Center. "This year our excitement is doubled by the prospect of welcoming two new professors. We do a lot of learning from each other in an interdisciplinary program like Southern Studies, and we're eager for the fresh ideas and new insights that Andy and Ryan will bring."

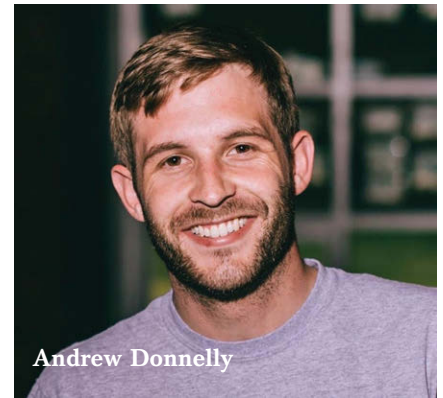
Donnelly is a cultural and literary historian of the nineteenth-century United States, and his work examines the history of sexuality within the literature and culture of the Civil War and Reconstruction eras. "I first visited the Mississippi Delta in 2010 when I became an English teacher through Teach for America. I taught for three years at Lakeside High School in Lake Village, Arkansas, which lies just over the Mississippi River bridge from Greenville," Donnelly said. "For the



next ten years, I spent part of every summer teaching and working in Mississippi. In 2015 I began working with the Freedom Project Network youth empowerment and liberatory education organizations in Sunflower, Meridian, and Rosedale, Mississippi. I worked with them to start a new initiative, Freedom Summer Collegiate, which brings PhD students from around the country to teach college-bridge summer courses to Freedom Project high schoolers."

In 2018 Donnelly spent a semester as a visiting fellow at the University of Mississippi researching and writing his dissertation, which he is now turning into a book manuscript, "Confederate Sympathies: The Civil War, Reunion, and the History of Homosexuality, 1850–1915."

"So, that's all to say that, while a New Englander, I have deep roots now, through working and teaching,



in Mississippi," he said. "One part of my own research focuses on the long literary tradition of New Englanders trying to make sense of the US South, a tradition which, as is often the case with our research, I awkwardly join. Additionally, Mississippi was where I first learned how to be a teacher. Every time I've taught or learned here, I've been pushed—by fantastic colleagues and tremendous students—to develop as a teacher, to think and write more clearly, and to act more thoughtfully because of the region's legacy of activism and the stakes of inaction. I'm excited for that to continue at UM."

Donnelly, who earned his BA in English and history from Boston College and his doctorate in English from Harvard University, was a post-doctoral fellow in the Mellon/ACLS Public Fellows Program, serving as education programs manager for the National Book Foundation. His work has been supported by research fellowships from the Boston Athenaeum, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Center for Mark Twain Studies, and the Library Company of Philadelphia.



“What excites me about working with Southern Studies students and colleagues is the program’s interdisciplinary orientation and that no matter the specific texts or tools we’re using, everyone is grappling with a set of questions about the US South—its history and its present,” Donnelly said. “My own work is interdisciplinary—I primarily use the tools of literary studies, and often literary texts, to understand history and how that history shapes life today. I share with many of my Southern Studies colleagues the opinion that literary texts are a unique and invaluable archive for understanding the history of what people thought, believed, and experienced, and that the tools developed in literary studies are useful far beyond books and poems. My research tends to focus on the eras of the Civil War and Reconstruction, and I’m interested in thinking about how the events, beliefs, and actions of these moments determined, and continue to determine, US history.”

Donnelly’s courses for the fall include SST 101 and English 224. “We’re going to ask (and try to answer) a number of big questions that will orient students to the long-standing and pressing debates in the field: is the US South exceptional to the American national narrative or its best example? How exactly do the histories of enslavement and segregation in the region continue to determine social life today? Is the South a real place or is it a made-up, imaginary concept? We’ll be thinking about these questions as we think about our own experiences as southerners or (like me) as nonsoutherners who are in the South and dive into a range of perspectives from literature, art, music, and film,” Donnelly said. “I’ll be teaching the survey of American Literature, 1865 to the present. We get to cover some of the best texts ever written, so I am eager to read Faulkner, Morrison, and Baldwin with UM students.”

Besides looking forward to the joys of teaching on campus, Donnelly is looking forward to the very practical matter of a good meal. “Oxford has been a warm, welcoming

community,” he said. “And the food is also better than in New England.”

Ryan Parsons earned his bachelor’s degrees in international studies and Chinese from the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at the University of Mississippi, and a master of philosophy degree in development studies from the University of Cambridge. In May 2022 he completed his doctorate in the joint degree program in sociology and social policy from Princeton University.

His general interests cover community and urban sociology, political sociology, and stratification. His research is motivated by prior experience working in China and the Mississippi Delta region. For his dissertation he studied the structure of community life, race relations, and reactions to economic change in a rural Mississippi town.

Before studying at Princeton, Parsons was a project manager at the University of Mississippi’s McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement. “I knew I wanted to focus on Mississippi early on in the PhD program, and I ended up moving down to the Delta in 2018 to do fieldwork for my dissertation,” Parsons said. “As I got closer to graduation this past fall, I started thinking about the kinds of jobs I wanted, and the position here at UM felt like a perfect fit from the beginning. I’m excited to be in an interdisciplinary space and in a community that values engagement with partners and communities around the state.”

Parsons worked as an AmeriCorps VISTA and then as a project manager from 2012–15 with the McLean Institute, which works to support a culture of engagement between the university and off-campus partners and communities, particularly through relationships that help fight poverty in Mississippi. While there, he had the opportunity to get to know some of the graduate students at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the kind of energy they bring to campus.

“My own work focuses on the experiences of Mississippi communities,

particularly those facing social and economic disadvantage,” he said. “I’ve always been committed to community engagement in my work, and I hope to get students involved with community work around Mississippi.”

Parsons’s teaching load includes SST 401: Seminar in Methodology and the cross-listed SOC 414: Race, Place, and Space.

“I’m planning for the seminar to be sort of an introduction to ways of *doing* Southern Studies, something like a methods class,” he explained. “Each week we’ll consider a book, documentary, or other major work about the South and talk about how it came together. What argument is being made here? How did the argument come together? What sort of evidence was used? Are we convinced? The works I’ve selected are loosely related to the question ‘What does it mean to call the South home?’ By the end of the class students should feel ready to embark on major projects of their own.”

For the Race, Place, and Space course, he will be exploring how “race” and “space” come to define each other in the United States. “One theme I’m excited about doing with this class is building in an ethnography lab,” he said. “Each week students will conduct observations of some space on campus, and over the course of the semester they’ll work on an analysis of how race, place, and space are operating here at UM. I’ll be working in some really interesting interdisciplinary spaces, and I’m excited to get to know colleagues across campus.”

Parsons is also writing a book about Sunflower County that draws on his dissertation field work, and he enjoys spending time with his dog, Sharkey. “I was looking at a map of Mississippi one day, saw Sharkey County, and thought, ‘That’d be a good dog’s name.’ I went to the shelter here in Oxford a few weeks later and adopted her,” Parsons said.

Welcome back to campus, Andy and Ryan. (And Sharkey, too.)

Rebecca Lauck Cleary



*Bruce, Mississippi (2008)*

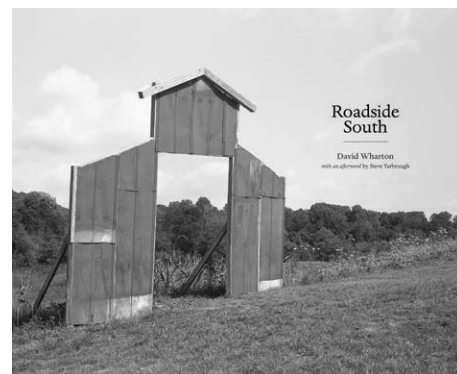
# On the Road Again

David Wharton Publishes Third  
Book of Photographs in Trilogy

The American South, especially its small towns and rural areas, is largely connected not by interstate highways but through a weblike network of country roads, many of which appear only on the most detailed of maps. These are the backroads that most southerners drive on every day. Unlike the interstates, whose roadsides have been largely scrubbed clean of regional character, these smaller roads travel through unplanned, vernacular landscapes, revealing much about local life, both past and present, and

suggesting that we make connections between the two.

Photographer David Wharton, assistant professor of Southern Studies and the director of documentary studies at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, has been traveling throughout the American South since 1999, resulting in the first two books of his Trilogy of the American South—*Small Town South* (2012) and *The Power of Belief: Spiritual Landscapes from the Rural South* (2016). As he journeyed, he often paused to make pictures of



places that did not fit the themes of those earlier books. These are scenes that speak to a sense of wonderment, or curiosity, about how those



landscapes came to be and how they reflect a complex past with a modern-day world in which the urban competes with the rural in nearly every way.

In *Roadside South*, the third book in Wharton's captivating Trilogy of the American South, he photographs the quirky and the humorous, the sometimes sad, sometimes ironic scenes that are commonplace along the local, county, and state roads of the South. As Steve Yarbrough writes in his afterword, "Again and again, in this fine book, Wharton sees things in a deeper, richer, more idiosyncratic manner than most of us are able to." No artist has revealed the on-the-ground truth of the South as Wharton has, giving rise to a new understanding of and appreciation for a distinctive regional culture that all too frequently, and often mistakenly, is imagined as a bastion of rural and small-town virtue.

"Having been a photographer for most of my adult life, I am tempted to declare that all photographs are metaphors," Wharton writes in his



*Cave City, Kentucky (2013)*

introduction. "I won't go that far, but I believe that's the case with the roadside photographs in this collection. Few images are identical to what they purport to be, and it is my hope that the lasting value of the pictures may reside not in the pure visual actuality of what they depict but in what they lead viewers to think about and/or feel. Rather than being seen as photographs of southern places, I hope they can be

understood as photographs *about* Southern places."

Images from Wharton's *Roadside South* are currently on exhibit in the Center's Gammill Gallery in Barnard Observatory through September 30, and he will present a SouthTalk lecture on his work in the Tupelo Room at noon on Wednesday, September 7. He will also have a reading at Square Books at 5:30 p.m. on September 20.



*Coweta, Georgia (2017)*



*Quitman, County, Mississippi (2017)*

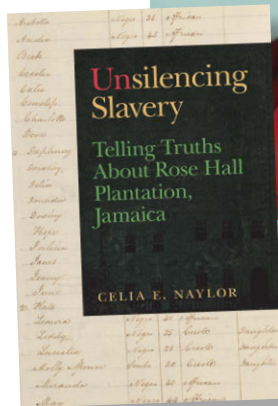
# Center Partners with UGA Press on Book Projects

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the University of Georgia Press (UGA Press) are happy to announce that a continuing book partnership project is off to a fruitful start.

In late 2020 the Center and UGA Press began brainstorming ways the two institutions could begin a collaborative project as publishing partners. After a series of conversations, the idea they ultimately landed upon was one in which representatives from the Center would annually review UGA Press's list of books they intend to publish and, in consultation with the UGA editorial team, identify a book for which the Center would like to serve as a publishing partner. The selected books deal with "the South" broadly conceived.

The authors of each text partner with the Center's associate director for publications, James G. Thomas Jr., for developmental editing of the work, with an eye toward accessibility for audiences that extend beyond the academy. The first book in this collaboration has now been published: *Unsilencing Slavery: Telling Truths about Rose Hall Plantation, Jamaica*, by Celia E. Naylor, a book that explores the silenced history of Rose Hall Plantation in Jamaica against the popular legend of the "White Witch of Rose Hall."

Over one hundred thousand people visit Rose Hall Plantation every year, many hoping to catch a glimpse of Annie Palmer's legendary ghost. After experiencing this tour with her daughter and leaving haunted by the silences of the tour, Naylor resolved to write a history of people of Rose Hall who actually had a right to haunt this place of terror and trauma: the enslaved. Naylor deftly guides us through a strikingly different Rose



Celia E. Naylor

Hall than she experienced on that tour. She introduces readers to the silences of the archives and unearths the names and experi-

ences of the enslaved at Rose Hall in the decades immediately before the abolition of slavery in Jamaica. She then offers a careful reading of Herbert G. de Lisser's 1929 novel, *The White Witch of Rosehall*—which gave rise to the myth of the "White Witch"—and a critical analysis of the current tours at Rose Hall Great House.

"This was a wonderful book with which to begin this partnership," Thomas said. "Celia Naylor is an incredibly accomplished scholar, and her previous work on the connections between African Americans, Black Indians, and Native Americans in the US informs *Unsilencing Slavery* in a multitude of interdisciplinary ways. This is an exciting book, one that will be touted as an example of new methods for uncovering seemingly lost histories."

Naylor's interdisciplinary examination engages different modes of

history making, history telling, and truth telling to excavate the lives of enslaved people, highlighting enslaved women as they navigated the violences of the Jamaican slavery and plantationscape. Moving beyond the legend, she examines iterations of the afterlives of slavery in the ongoing construction of slavery museums, memorializations, and movements for Black lives and the enduring case for Black humanity. Alongside her book, she has created a website as another way for readers to explore the truths of Rose Hall: [rosehallproject.columbia.edu](http://rosehallproject.columbia.edu).

Celia E. Naylor is a professor in the Africana Studies and History Departments at Barnard College, Columbia University. She is the author of *African Cherokees in Indian Territory: From Chattel to Citizens*. A native of Kingston, Jamaica, Naylor currently lives in New York City.

The Center looks forward to welcoming Naylor to the UM campus in the spring to present a talk on her book. Keep an eye on upcoming issues of the *Southern Register* and on the Center's website for details of that event.



# "Whose Stories Are Told?"

## A Conversation with Jodi Skipper with Rhondalyn K. Peairs

Jodi Skipper is an associate professor of anthropology and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. Her research seeks to understand how historic preservation projects might play a role in imagining more sustainable and healthy futures for US southern communities. During her time at UM, she has worked with Behind the Big House, a slave dwelling interpretation program in Mississippi, which has expanded to the state of Arkansas.

Skipper's new book, *Behind the Big House: Reconciling Slavery, Race, and Heritage in the US South*, asks the question, "When residents and tourists visit sites of slavery, whose stories are told?" All too often the lives of slaveowners are centered, obscuring the lives of enslaved people. *Behind the Big House* gives readers a candid, behind-the-scenes look at what it really takes to interpret the difficult history of slavery in the US South. The book explores Skipper's eight-year collaboration with the Behind the Big House program, a community-based model used at local historic sites to address slavery in the collective narrative of US history and culture.

In laying out her experiences through an autoethnographic approach, Skipper seeks to help other activist scholars of color negotiate the nuances of place, the academic public sphere, and its ambiguous systems of reward, recognition, and evaluation.

Rhondalyn K. Peairs recently caught up with Skipper to talk about the new book, writing for both academic and general audiences, and how cultural heritage tourism helps people to think about—and talk about—race in America.



Jodi Skipper

**Rhondalyn K. Peairs:** Your new book is a multiplicity of things. It was part memoir, part primer, part community ethnography, even part testimony. Did you initially plan the book to be that way, or did it grow to be that organically?

**Jodi Skipper:** I think that it was organic, but that is because I did not really have a method for writing in mind. I just kind of wrote. I was more interested in writing through this book, as I felt things were coming to me, and how it might be most accessible to other people at a particular level. But I didn't really think about the structure.

I just knew that I had to be in it. However I had to balance, to some extent, how much this book might be about me, as opposed to being about me thinking through slavery, race and tourism.

**RP:** So how did you envision that readers might connect or use this multifaceted work?

**JS:** The publisher is an academic publisher, yet one of their goals is to have this accessible to broad audiences. I do not think that goal is very realistic in a lot of ways, because academics are not really trained to write for broad audiences. But in my

mind, when I first started writing this book, I thought that is what I was doing. So at the least, what I wanted to do is have a book that was accessible to the people who were in it.

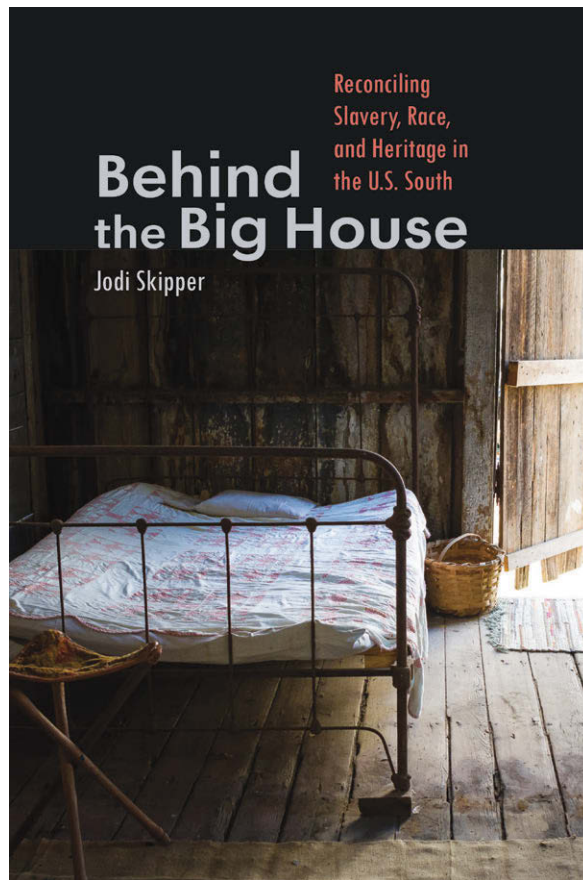
**RP:** This book seems very personal to you. How is the story you are telling about Behind the Big House your story as well?

**JS:** I didn't come to do this work because I made this conscious decision to do these things on my own. There might be particular parts of me that had certain interests, but there were people who helped to develop that interest. And I start with

my cousin Geneva because she was one of those people who helped to develop that interest. I don't think it was intentional, but in a way it was intentional in that she wanted to expose me to supplementary education that she probably knew I didn't have. I think that she probably also thought that's what community does. That was her sense of what community does for people, especially a Black community in a majority White space that doesn't affirm who we are. So, when I talk about Cousin Geneva, I talk about the example of her introducing me to people who are Haitian and from Martinique. People who are also Black Creole, part of the African diaspora and who are descendants of enslaved people, but who live in a very different part of the world. Because our experiences are so similar, she wanted me to understand that although they live in a different place, they were still like me in so many ways. I interpret that as this very Pan African experience that she was trying to show me. They were not just Black US American, as opposed to something White, rather there was a larger phenomenon going on here. I used her as one example, but she was also an exemplar of several women in my life.

**RP:** Your book covers many interconnected topics such as enslavement, heritage, racial reconciliation efforts, and tourism whether they be grassroots or institutional. Was there one thing that you wanted to emphasize over the others?

**JS:** I wanted to show White people who were doing work that I considered antiracist without being forced to do so. I wanted to show Black folks who consistently committed their lives to not just Pan-Africanism, but to loving Black people unconditionally for decades without hesitation. It doesn't mean that it's perfect, but it means that nobody's



making them do this. And I think for me, a lot of my struggle has been with feeling like people have to be convinced. That is part of being embedded in academia, but I think even in my life too. Now we see people literally fighting against having diverse types of knowledge. At a very basic level, I wanted to show what it means to just be and live in that and not take that thing for granted. I hope that resonates above anything else.

**RP:** Debates about race and heritage ebb, flow, and crest. We have seen them at a crest for the last three years or so. Whether we discuss the legacy of enslavement or the legacy of the Confederacy and the place of its iconography. Our contemporary context has been pervaded with Black Lives Matter protests, police violence, a string of racially motivated murders from Martin and Aubrey to Taylor and Floyd, and debates over CRT. We now have demands for wholesale book banning and burning as well

as threats to women's bodies springing anew.

**JS:** I started making the big push to write the book right after Covid took hold in the US and George Floyd was murdered. For the first time you had White Americans being forced to engage being White. Likewise in the 1970s, think about people watching *Roots* and they were forced to see that slavery existed. For the first time, they are saying publicly I am something called *White* that is racialized and impacts my experience. For the first time, it was really okay to say White supremacy all over the news or say it in conversation with people in meetings, or even say *White* and have people maybe not get offended. We've almost done a complete reversal of that, at this point. I think if the book had come out in 2020, people would probably have felt a lot more comfort-

able publicly engaging with it. I think in 2022 there might be some hesitation with a direct confrontation with race and racism because of what's going on politically. I do think that at this particular moment when thinking specifically about race and racism, there is some hesitation. People are being restrictive in what they can or are willing to intentionally discuss.

**RP:** With the current societal backdrop in mind how do activities like *Gracing the Table* or *Behind the Big House* aid in racial reconciliation efforts or actual community change around the issues of race, heritage, or tourism?

**JS:** I think they each do different kinds of work. I even think that has shifted since I started working with *Behind the Big House*. When I started working with them, I felt like museums and historic sites were one of the few relatively safe spaces people had to even talk about these things. That there was



a disproportionate burden put on them to do what K-12 education and other institutions could not or did not normally do in many ways. So, I kept believing that. I knew that most people in the US were not doing that kind of work. We've made some progress since the mid-to-late 1990s, but it is still not the majority experience at historic sites. I know that people working at Behind the Big House do ask you questions that they would never ask somebody about race. They talk about racial things, racialized things, in ways that I am sure they would never talk to anybody else. I think there's a lot to be said about people having a space in which they can ask questions without negative consequences at the moment. Then when 2020 hit, I thought, well, now we could get a bit more complicated with things because people have some language now. But now we're back to historic sites being one of the few relatively safe spaces in which we could do this kind of work. This is true even more now, because of this anti-Critical Race Theory climate. We are even more disproportionately dependent on these spaces to do this work. The problem, at least for the moment, is we might not be able to engage with some of the K-12 students in ways that we have earlier on. We must rethink those methods.

What I learned through experience is that Black people still have disproportionately taken on that work. I think what 2020 did, again that one year did quite a bit, was hold at least some White people accountable for speaking in ways that they had not been held accountable. So, I do think we have a very special opportunity in racial reconciliation work now to have more equity in those roles. For a lot of White people, it's been, "Well, at least I showed up, but I'm not quite sure what else I am supposed to do here." Now there is a language for what else you are supposed to do.

**RP:** While I know that Covid-19 has sidelined annual Behind the

Big House programming in Holly Springs, Mississippi, it has had a more far-reaching impact in part because it has become a model for interpretation around enslavement throughout the US and especially in the South. Do you see Behind the Big House continuing to be both a model and sustainable in its own right?

**JS:** It is very vulnerable. If they are privately owned sites, there is a lot of vulnerability there, because owners die or sell for all kinds of reasons. I think there was more hope that it would expand and spread to other locations. It has spread to Arkansas, and then more recently to Columbus. It has expanded slower than I would like in other parts of Mississippi, but it's still happening. I think what makes it unique is that anyone who visits Behind the Big House and still thinks that they cannot do it just doesn't want to do it. That's how I feel. You can look at Monticello, Montpelier, and other places and say, they have resources, they have longer histories, they've got boards, they've got other things, they've got a structure to sustain this. But if you come to Behind the Big House you can't use that excuse. It is an all-volunteer effort. There are no full-time historians. It has no full-time anything. They are vulnerable sites, but it still happened from 2012 to 2019, consistently. It makes it very difficult for people to say I cannot do this. I think that is what a grassroots slavery interpretation project is about.

**RP:** You have a whole chapter about academic values. Your work during your tenure at the University of Mississippi lives at the intersection of some forward-thinking groups on campus such as the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the UM Slavery Research Group. There seems to be the potential to have something unique in the Deep South that studies enslavement. Where would you like to see these efforts going in the future?

**JS:** Well, I would like them to continue, as if state politics and national politics don't matter,

particularly. Fortunately, I do have colleagues still who operate that way. They keep it moving, regardless. Ideally, those are the people that will keep something like this going. I can't pretend that people probably won't be restricted by the social and political climate. I think that anybody at the University of Mississippi who's doing this kind of work has to ask themselves, what do you value? Who are your stakeholders here? Are you about repairing the damage that's been done to not just Black people, but to everybody? I mean, racism is an injustice across racial demographics. It continues to do damage, whether you think you're feeling it or not.

**RP:** Chimamanda Adichie always says there is a danger in having just a single story. How does heritage tourism expand the narrative for people? How do you see the potential for heritage tourism to actually impact reconciliation efforts?

**JS:** Cultural heritage tourism really has the ability to disorient people. I think we are socialized to pick sides. There isn't much nuance in that, for the most part for most people. I think that when you visit cultural heritage sites you're forced to engage and get that multiple story that you're talking about. It does disorient you a bit. I do think it makes it more difficult for you to pick a side, because your side is often a single story. Heritage tourism has the ability to shift that around. For people, they can empathize differently. I think part of empathy means that you at some point come to realize that you're sharing in that story. There are a lot more people who came before you. In some ways they are all responsible for the predicament that we are in now. I think at least that reality gave me a much bigger sense of responsibility to everybody, not just to certain groups of people. For me, that was anthropology and then historic preservation work. Not everybody is going to do that. Heritage tourism sometimes is all that you get.

# Sitting on Top of the World

Mark Coltrain



## Southern Studies Alum Mark Coltrain Reflects on Journey to Becoming an Oral Historian

A degree earned many years ago may seem like something in the rear-view mirror, but then an opportunity presents itself to connect the past and the present. For Mark Coltrain, that is the trajectory of his career as a librarian and oral historian.

Coltrain was an undergraduate English major at the University of North Carolina–Greensboro when he took a southern literature course in the spring of 2003. As a result, he and a friend from that class were inspired to take a road trip through the South, including through Oxford. “Among other places around town, we visited Barnard Observatory, and that’s where I first learned about the program,” Coltrain said. “It was exciting to me and seemed like it could offer students very rich educational and cultural experiences. When I was applying to grad schools a couple of years later, the Southern Studies program was at the top of

my list, and I was ultimately lucky enough to get to participate.”

While he was a Southern Studies master’s student, Coltrain was on the internship track and interned with *Highway 61*, where he gained valuable experience. “I spent time with Joe York, Scott Barretta, and Andy Harper learning about what goes into the production of a weekly radio show on blues music and culture, with obvious parallels to recording oral histories,” Coltrain said. “I’m grateful to them for their patience with me and sharing their time, instruction, and experiences. Joe was even kind enough to drive us to Birmingham to record an interview with one-man band Adolphus Bell, which became an episode that I coedited and hosted. I actually listened to it recently and it brought back a lot of memories from that trip and time in my life.”

After graduation in 2007, he

returned to the east coast to earn his MLIS from UNC–Greensboro in 2012 and worked as a librarian and as the assistant director for instructional and research services at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte. Then in 2019 he was hired as the information literacy librarian for the First Year Experience at Appalachian State University in Boone.

His Southern Studies degree prepared him for that role in many ways. “I worked a lot with Greg Johnson in Archives and Special Collections, which I enjoyed very much—especially doing work in support of the Blues Archive,” Coltrain said. “Between that experience and my undergrad studies, when I worked as a student assistant in UNCG’s music library, I was destined to end up in an academic library. I gained more of an appreciation for supporting historically



excluded communities while I was a Southern Studies student as well, which is part of the reason why I spent most of my library career—until I arrived at Appalachian State—in a community college.”

Another benefit of working in Special Collections while a Southern Studies student was learning the process of preserving primary sources and providing access to researchers. “Much of my Southern Studies coursework informed this perspective as well, whether it involved reading oral histories or conducting interviews with people to inform research projects. I was fortunate to get to participate in the Field School for Cultural Documentation program from the Library of Congress, which was sponsored by the American Music Archive and the University of Mississippi.”

His newest role as the oral historian at Appalachian State in Boone, North Carolina, starts in September. His main priorities will be assessing their current oral histories, since he is already aware that some are missing informed consent forms, some lack transcripts, and interview recordings are in different formats.

“From there, I will determine what steps we need to take to better

preserve, organize, and make histories more accessible,” Coltrain said. “In terms of generating new collection materials, I’ll also be interviewing people connected to our collections. We are home to the W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection, the Stock Car Racing Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts, and University Archives and Records Management Services.”

Coltrain said he is particularly interested in focusing on current students. “We have many diverse communities right here on campus that would enrich and diversify the University Archives,” he said. “A third of Appalachian State’s enrolled students are first generation college students, and I’d love to start there. My hope is that by adding those voices, stories, and experiences to the official repository, it might be a small way to create more of a sense of belonging for current and future students, especially if we can collaborate with the teaching faculty to integrate these interviews into the curriculum, as well as promoting them in other ways.”

Coltrain said he is excited about the transition to oral historian, a job that fell in his lap and seemed like an amazing opportunity. “I’ve been lucky to work at places where

I’ve had freedom to initiate projects that might fall a little outside of my day-to-day responsibilities,” Coltrain said. “If anyone reading this is interested in that type of work and works in a place with similar freedom, I’d suggest doing the same thing and try to be creative about it. The great thing about oral history is that anyone can do it, and there are so many great resources online.”

What interests him most is having the opportunities to help create bodies of knowledge on topics or events that are possibly one of a kind. “That really seems like valuable work, especially if I’m able to establish relationships and build trust through things like participatory research to get perspectives of people who’ve been historically excluded. Sharing those interviews with students, faculty, and researchers for use in projects also seems exciting,” Coltrain said.

He recently conducted interviews of performers at the MerleFest music festival, which allowed him to practice the technical side of recording. “I was so nervous, but it was a lot of fun talking to artists who knew Doc and Merle Watson and who’ve been performing at the festival for many years,” Coltrain said. “Before this job, I thought the door had closed for me on working in the field of Southern Studies. I’m thrilled about this new and unexpected path, and I hope I’m able to reconnect with some of the individuals I met and worked with while I was a student in the Southern Studies program in 2005–07.”

In addition to collecting oral histories, Coltrain enjoys listening to records and chasing after his young child. “I have a toddler, so she takes up most of my time when I’m not working, which is endlessly fun, inspiring, and exhausting, in a good way,” he said. “Beyond that, I’m a vinyl collector. I never get tired of visiting thrift stores and flea markets to look for records.”

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina



MARIE FREEMAN, APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# Southern Foodways Alliance Fall Symposium Focuses on Barbecue

The Southern Foodways Alliance's 2022 Fall Symposium will be held October 21 and 22 in and around Oxford, Mississippi, and in SFA's home in Barnard Observatory.

This year, we ask questions about what barbecue is, who makes it, and how the craft is changing. From sliced beef brisket to pulled pork, from tacos to fire-roasted vegetables, barbecue speaks to the past, present, and future of the South and to the stories of pitmasters—the places they work, the smoke they conjure, and the sauces they stir.

South Carolinian writer Latria Graham makes an argument for her home state as the cradle of American barbecue, drawing a line from the transatlantic slave trade through the port of Charleston. Farhan Mustafa, who grew up in the barbecue-rich city of Greenville, North Carolina, explores the goat-roasting traditions of his own Muslim family and others around the region. And restaurant critic Hanna Raskin asks, "When



barbecue comes to town, are alcohol sales an essential part of the business plan?" Atlanta-based Jiyeon Lee serves Korean barbecue, and Durham, North Carolina's Ricky Moore fries catfish. Grammy Award winner Cedric Burnside plays original songs inspired by his family's north Mississippi roots, and Richmond, Virginia-based artist, musician, and archivist Paul Rucker debuts his "Barbecue Suite."

SFA continues working to build an audience for our in-person events that represents the diversity of people living and working in the South, invests in vital futures for SFA and the region, and reflects the economic realities of the contemporary food and media industries. To that end, a portion of Fall Symposium passes are reserved as "pay-as-you-can" tickets, with full access to the event.

## SFA Film Residency: The Prototype

In early June the Southern Foodways Alliance welcomed four filmmakers from throughout the South to participate in its inaugural film residency program. This program gives southern filmmakers dedicated time, space, and resources to make a film about foodways in the South through the voice of their community and the power of their own lens. As a part of the residency the filmmakers received a two-month stay in Oxford, a filmmaking stipend, weekly workshops, cohort field trips, access to filmmaking resources, and a space to showcase their work.

The inaugural cohort

affectionately named themselves "The Prototype." These filmmakers include Janeen Talbott of Florida, Kelsey Scult of Louisiana, Brittny Miller of Mississippi, and Jai Williams of Texas. At the end of the residency, the cohort screened their films in Barnard Observatory. Janeen Talbott's film, *Where There Is Smoke*, tells the story of the harmful effects of burning sugar cane and its negative impact on the Black residents in "the Muck" in Florida. *Knead*, by Kelsey Scult, is an experimental film about a bread baker's journey with dough and how the personification of dough aligns with

how he sees his own life. Brittny Miller's film, *From Their Hearts to Our Hands*, tells the story of two families in Mississippi who share their reasons for keeping the tradition of cooking and gathering alive. *Down South Diaspora*, by Jai Williams, is a poetic film about two Black women farmers who bridge the gap between West African and African American cuisines in the South while also harvesting their own tea in Water Valley, Mississippi.

These films will be released monthly through SFA's Film Fridays on social media platforms: SFA's YouTube channel and SFA's website.



# Summer Issue of *Gravy* Explores Culinary Legacies of the Great Migration

The summer issue of SFA's *Gravy* quarterly explores the culinary legacies of the Great Migration through the foodways of African Americans in the Midwest. Audrey Petty, a native of Chicago and former SFA board member, guest edited the issue. Her writing has been published in *Callaloo*, *Saveur*, *Oxford American*, *Poetry*, the *Best American Food Writing* series, and *The Chicago Neighborhood Guidebook*. She is the editor of *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing* and coeditor of *The Long Term: Resisting Life Sentences, Working toward Freedom*. A teaching artist in the Prison + Neighborhood Arts Project, Petty directs the Sojourner Scholars Program at Illinois Humanities and is a senior fellow at the Invisible Institute.

In this issue of *Gravy*, Petty explains, "The authors write from and of their homeplaces in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin. They write from and of kitchen tables—complicated sites of storytelling and instruction. They

Guest editor of the summer issue of *Gravy*, Audrey Petty



MAURICE RABB



ARTWORK BY SIMONE MARTIN-NEWBERRY

ponder silences and mysteries. They invite us to sit with the act of migration itself. At the very least, it is some kind of leap; an act of seeking. These *Gravy* authors document leaps and arrivals and narrate how worlds were remade along the way."

Petty and *Gravy* contributors Emily Hooper Lansana, Lolly Bowean, and Saleem Hue Penny traveled to Jackson, Mississippi, on August 13 to participate in an event at the Mississippi Museum of Art (MMA) called "*Gravy* Writers at the Great Migration Crossroads: The Midwest Speaks." The event placed the writers in conversation with works from MMA's exhibit "A Movement in Every Direction:

Legacies of the Great Migration." Earlier in the summer, as part of the same programming season, MMA presented an encore screening of *We Dance*, a short film featuring Wideman/Davis Dance that debuted at SFA's 2021 Fall Symposium.

SFA members receive a subscription to *Gravy*, and both individual copies and subscriptions are also available through Hub City Press ([hubcity.org](http://hubcity.org)). Visit [southernfoodways.org](http://southernfoodways.org) to read a selection of pieces from the issue.

In 2023 SFA will continue to explore the Great Migration among other diasporic movements into and out of the South under the programming theme "Where Is the South?"

*The editors of the online Mississippi Encyclopedia have recently added new entries on Wesley Crayton, who was Vicksburg's first Black alderman, a lifelong leader of the Republican Party, and a businessperson with a varied career; on the WLBT weatherman Woodrow "Woodie" Assaf; and on the Sullivan-Kilrain Fight, which took place on July 8, 1889, and lasted seventy-five sweaty, blood-soaked rounds. Here's another recent addition, this one on a beloved eatery in Greenwood with a long and complex history.*

Welcome to the



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## “Crystal Grill”

The Crystal Grill, a popular restaurant with a long history in Greenwood, provides insight into Mississippi's business history, the Greek culture of the Mississippi Delta, racial segregation, and the civil rights movement. As one of the oldest family-owned restaurants in the state, its history tells the story of a local business that has actively resisted the comforts of corporate-run culinary experiences.

The building where the restaurant resides—on the corner of Lamar Street and Carrollton Avenue—was built in 1914 and once housed both the Lamar Hotel and the Elite Café, which Nick Apostle and Jim Liollo turned into the Crystal Grill in 1936. Briefly just a sandwich shop, within just three years the Crystal Grill was advertising twenty-four-hour service and air-conditioning.

The restaurant prospered early on, but Jim Liollo's brother-in-law, Mike Ballas, was responsible for much of the success the restaurant later experienced. The son of Greek immigrants, Ballas was born in Pensacola, Florida, in 1918 and spent most of his youth with his

family on the island of Skopelos in the Aegean Sea. At age eighteen, he moved to the Mississippi Delta and then served in the United States military during World War II. In 1949, after the war, Ballas married Deomi Liollo in Greece and returned to the Mississippi Delta to work at a restaurant in Clarksdale. In 1952 his brother-in-law, Jim Liollo, asked him to take over the Crystal Grill for a few months while he was out of town.

The Crystal Grill grew dramatically under Ballas's command while his brother-in-law was away.

Ballas expanded the dining area and kitchen by purchasing the lobby of the Lamar Hotel and built new booths, improved the quality of seafood and meat, and began presenting meals on new Shenango china. Within three months of Ballas's command, the restaurant's profits more than doubled. Ballas eventually bought out his brother-in-law's business partner, Nick Apostle, leaving Mike and Jim the sole proprietors, and together they continued to expand the restaurant. Although Ballas renovated areas of the building, some of the original tile



WILLIAM S. HAMMONS III



from 1914 is still visible in one of the main dining rooms.

The Crystal Grill became the Whites-only Crystal Club after the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Crystal Club required a membership key for admission, which cost a single dollar and was only granted to White patrons. Greenwood's mayor at the time, Charles E. Sampson, was a staunch segregationist, and he threatened economic ruin to businesses that voluntarily integrated, so Ballas and his partner followed the path of other local restaurants and became a "club." The restaurant did not open to the public for about ten years. Upon ending the "club" status, the restaurant returned as the Crystal Grill and has served all customers openly since.

Mike's son, John Mike "Johnny" Ballas, began working at his father's

restaurant as a child. He became a full-time employee in 1974 after graduating from Mississippi State University. When Jim Liollo retired in 1977 Mike and Johnny Ballas again expanded the Crystal Grill, adding a new skylight dining area. With the completion of this latest expansion, the restaurant has more than two hundred seats to accommodate its patrons.

The menu of the Crystal Grill is diverse. Mike Ballas taught himself how to cook using cookbooks and his own experimentation, and the menu ranges from traditional southern cuisine to American Italian, each with the Ballas's Greek flair. The Ballas's Greek heritage is especially evident in the salmon salad and seafood seasonings. The Crystal Grill is also well known for freshly made yeast rolls and "mile-high pie." The yeast rolls come from a recipe borrowed

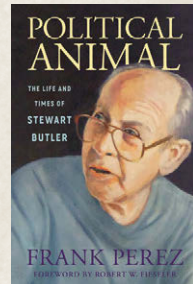
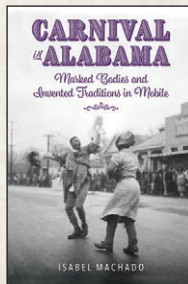
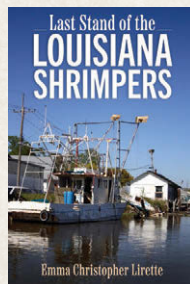
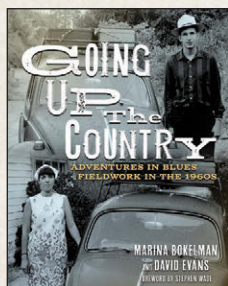
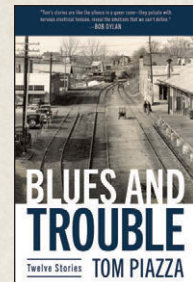
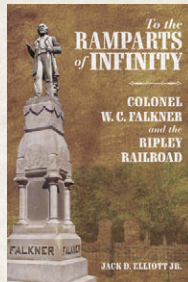
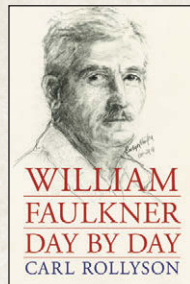
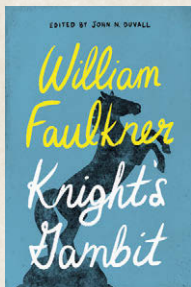
from Johnny's home economics teacher. The recipe for the "mile-high pie"—characterized by tall merengue and mastered by Mike Ballas in the 1940s—remains a family secret.

Mike Ballas passed away in 2015, and his son Johnny has had full control of the restaurant since then, serving both new and regular customers. Sunday is a particularly busy day for the Crystal Grill. When dining, one is presented with a "Four Faiths" placemat. The placemat has a Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox, and Protestant prayer, so people of various faiths can bless their meal. The restaurant continues to serve as a cornerstone of Mississippi family-owned business, Delta history, and the ever-changing nature of southern cuisine.

William S. Hammons III  
University of Mississippi



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# Stitched Memories

## The Work of Ethel Wright Mohamed

Ethel Wright Mohamed learned embroidery at a young age. Growing up the eldest of three daughters and one son, she explains, “When little girls would get too nosey, they would have to sit down and do a little handwork.” But it wasn’t until she was sixty years old that she discovered the creative expression that embroidery allowed her, which led to an artistic and philanthropic legacy.

Born in 1906 in the small community of Fame, Mississippi, Wright’s father was a farmer and tradesman. When Wright was fifteen, the family moved to Shaw, Mississippi, where she began working part-time at a bakery. There she met Hassan Mohamed, a thirty-two-year-old Lebanese man who came to America in search of economic opportunity, establishing a general store in Belzoni, Mississippi. The two courted, and they married in April 1924. Wright enjoyed working by her husband’s side in the general store while raising their eight children, and the business succeeded through the Great Depression and World War II.

After forty-one years of marriage, Mohamed passed from a long-term illness. Wright continued working in the general store during the day, but as their children were now adults and married, she experienced loneliness in the evenings. It was at this point that she returned to embroidery, creating images from her life with Mohamed. The stitches were like a family album for Wright, allowing her to recall the happiest moments of her life.

Initially Wright did not have the confidence to share her embroidery with others, and she kept it a secret. When a family member discovered how good her work



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was, Wright was encouraged to start displaying her images publicly at local establishments. Eventually she started showing

her work in Jackson, Mississippi, and Memphis, Tennessee. It was at one of these exhibits in 1973 that two Smithsonian Institute



researchers—who were traveling the country in search of traditional artists—discovered Wright’s work.

In 1975 Smithsonian Festival designer Janet Stratton commissioned Wright to create the banner for the Bicentennial Festival of American Folklife in Washington, DC. The banner is now part of the Smithsonian Institution’s permanent collection. Twelve of her pieces were displayed in 1976 and ’77 in the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. These events led to a rapid interest in Wright’s work, which became increasingly popular.

Ethel Wright Mohamed felt that her works were too personal to be sold, but after handing over the general store to her grandson, she opened her house for individuals and

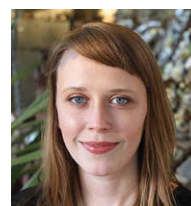
groups to view her work by appointment. She also donated several of her pieces for charity auction, raising \$250,000 for the American Heart Association, the Mississippi Agricultural Museum, and more.

This self-portrait, by Wright, was a gift to the University of Mississippi Museum by Bill and Marcie Ferris in 2019. Wright often stitched on house linens, and in this case the piece is an appliqué (meaning pieces of fabric are sewn onto a larger piece of fabric to create an image or pattern) on a pillowcase. Artists create self-portraits for a number of reasons, sometimes to practice figurative work without a model, to explore new styles or techniques, or simply to capture their own likeness. While we can’t know exactly why Wright chose to capture her own image, her

work often appears to be a celebration and documentation of her life, which she seemed to truly love. Ethel Wright Mohamed passed away in 1992 after a brief illness, but her memory—as well as the memory of her loving husband and children—is captured vibrantly in her work.

Amanda Malloy

*Amanda Malloy received her MA in Southern Studies from the University of Mississippi, focusing on southern photography. During this time she completed an assistantship with the University of Mississippi Museum. She is currently the visual arts editor of Mississippi Folklife.*




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# Eudora Welty Awards for Creative Writing Presented

Each year the Center for the Study of Southern Culture presents the Eudora Welty Awards in Creative Writing to Mississippi high school students during the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference. Established and endowed by the late Frances Patterson of Tupelo, two awards are given for creative writing in either prose or poetry. In addition to a cash prize, each winner also receives a copy of the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, a project that began at the Center in 2003, was published



Allie Sanford

JAMES G. THOMAS, JR.

“powerful, tight imagery that said a lot with very little.”

There were also three honorable mentions this year: Summer Mason Lee of Oak Grove High School in Hattiesburg for the short story “Memorabilia”; Lesly Saucedo of Byhalia High School for the short story “My Fear Grows for You”; Pigah Vasighi of St. Andrews Episcopal School in Jackson for the poem “Red, Yellow, Blue”

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture congratulates this year’s winners on their success and encourages them to continue writing.



Trinity Scalia

in 2017, and is available online at [mississippiencyclopedia.org](http://mississippiencyclopedia.org).

This year’s first-place winner is Trinity Scalia from Jackson Prep High School in Jackson for the short story, “Thomas.” The judges said Trinity “has a mature command of language and paints a spare, yet rich, picture.”

This year’s second-place winner is Allie Sanford from New Hope High School in Columbus for her poem, “Love Is a Dog Named Señorita, Love Is an Antique Store.” The judges felt the poem had

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Brett J. Bonner** is editor of *Living Blues*.

**Rebecca Lauck Cleary** is the Center’s communications specialist. She received a BA in journalism from the University of Mississippi and her MA in Southern Studies.

**Amanda Malloy** received her MA in Southern Studies from the University of Mississippi, focusing on southern photography. During this time she completed an assistantship with the University of Mississippi Museum. She is currently the visual arts editor of *Mississippi Folklife*.

**Katie McKee** is the director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and McMullan Professor of Southern Studies and English.

**Jay Watson** is Howry Professor of Faulkner Studies at the University of Mississippi and the director of the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference.

## In Memoriam

Gerald Walton  
(September 11, 1934–February 24, 2022)

Richard H. King  
(March 2, 1942–April 19, 2022)

Jennifer Lawrence Bordelon  
(November 6, 1986–June 8, 2022)

Colby Kullman  
(March 22, 1945–August 9, 2022)

Sam Olden  
(March 27, 1919– August 12, 2022)





# 2023 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference to Explore “Queer Faulkner”

Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick once pointed out the oddly superfluous, unintentionally revealing nature of the question, “Has there ever been a gay Shakespeare?” How might reframing this question around a queer *Faulkner* prove similarly generative and unnecessary? Taking its title, “Queer Faulkner,” as both a description and an imperative, the forty-ninth annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha conference—scheduled for July 23–27, 2023, at the University of Mississippi—will explore the diverse expressions, meanings, and functions of nonnormative sexuality, gender, desire, and affiliation in William Faulkner’s life and work, tapping into the disciplinary ferment of queer and trans studies scholarship and the new paradigms and reading strategies it has established. In so doing, the conference seeks to broaden, deepen, and diversify ongoing conversations about sexuality and gender in Faulkner whose terms will inevitably be open to debate.

Does the transgressive spirit so many readers attribute to the author and his work extend to his portrayals of sexual and gender identities, preferences, practices? How and where does his art create space for queer energies? How and where does it work to contain or disavow them? What might queering Faulkner’s writings—whether with or against their grain—entail as a project of defamiliarization, decolonization, or reparation? Given the fraught nature of the term, what do we mean by “queer” anyway? Wherein lies its usefulness (as adjective, noun, or verb)

for students of Faulkner’s work, and wherein lies Faulkner’s usefulness for queer studies and LGBTQ+ teaching and scholarship?

An exciting roster of keynote speakers will lend their talents to fostering the conference dialogue. Two are appearing at the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha for the first time. LaMonda Horton-Stallings, professor and chair of African American Studies at Georgetown University, is author of *Mutha is Half a Word: Intersections of Folklore, Vernacular, Myth, and Queerness in Black Female Culture* (2007), *Funk the Erotic: Transaesthetics and Black Sexual Cultures* (2015), and *A Dirty South Manifesto* (2019). Scott Herring is professor of American Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Yale University and author of *Queering the Underworld: Slumming, Literature, and the Undoing of Lesbian and Gay History* (2007), *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* (2010), *The Hoarders: Material Deviance in Modern American Culture* (2014), and the forthcoming *Aging American Moderns*. He is also editor of *The Cambridge Companion to American Gay and Lesbian Literature* (2015) and coeditor of *Long Term: Essays on Queer Commitment* (2021).

Three keynoters are veterans of the conference. Jaime Harker, professor of English and director of the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies at the University of Mississippi, is author of *America the Middlebrow: Women’s Novels, Progressivism, and Middlebrow Authorship between the Wars* (2007), *Middlebrow Queer: Christopher Isherwood in America* (2013), *The Lesbian South: Southern Feminists,*

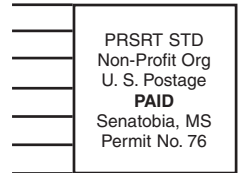
*the Women in Print Movement, and the Queer Literary Canon* (2018) and editor or coeditor of multiple volumes, including *Faulkner and Print Culture* (2017). She also coedited a special issue of the *Mississippi Quarterly* on Oprah Winfrey’s *Summer of Faulkner*. Michael Bibler, Robert Penn Warren associate professor of English at Louisiana State University, is author of *Cotton’s Queer Relations: Same-Sex Intimacy and the Literature of the Southern Plantation, 1936-1968* (2009) and coeditor of *Just below South: Intercultural Performance in the Caribbean and the US South* (2007). He is currently at work on a monograph, “Literally: the Queerness of Things Just As They Are.” Finally, Phillip Gordon, a graduate of the University of Mississippi’s PhD program in English, is associate professor of English and Gay Studies coordinator at the University of Wisconsin, Platteville and the author of *Gay Faulkner: Uncovering a Homosexual Presence in Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* (2019), as well as a novella and two volumes of poetry. We look forward to lively, thought-provoking sessions from these outstanding scholars.

Additional speakers will be selected through the conference call for papers, which can be viewed at <https://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/cfp/2022/02/17/queer-faulkner>. Discount rates for the conference are available for groups of five or more students. Contact Mary Leach at [mleach@olemiss.edu](mailto:mleach@olemiss.edu) for details. For other inquiries, contact conference director Jay Watson at [jwatson@olemiss.edu](mailto:jwatson@olemiss.edu).

Jay Watson



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