



THE SOUTHERN REGISTER

A Publication of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

The University of Mississippi

OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI, U.S.A.

FALL 2024



I fell on a sidewalk in Jackson earlier this summer. I had hurried out of a meeting already in progress to retrieve an item I'd forgotten in the car, and in my rush I caught my sandal on some uneven pavement. I scraped my face and nose, cut my cheek, bloodied my knees. I'm fine now, but I gave the room quite a shock upon my return. What sticks with me from the episode is that falling happens so suddenly, but at the same time allows for fully formed thought, in my case "stop before your face hits the concrete." But I couldn't stop; the momentum was too great.

I experienced the loss of Ann Abadie in much the same way. The information that she was ill and that she would not recover came as twins. Yet the news of her passing still felt like a swift and sudden blow, and it took my breath away. How could this be so, when not a week earlier I'd been sitting on the corner of her couch, drinking iced tea? We talked about her paper at the upcoming Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference, about next year's Oxford Conference for the Book, about my children, about a recipe I'd shared with her, about the unforgiving heat. And then I left to return to the work she had begun decades ago.

It is not an exaggeration to put this simply: there would be no Center for the Study of Southern Culture today without Ann. Saying it doesn't diminish the contributions of scores of other people over the institution's nearly fifty years. When I became the director in 2019, much was made of the fact that I am the first woman in the role, following in the extraordinarily capable footsteps of Bill Ferris, Charles Reagan Wilson, and Ted Ownby. A single person often emerges as the titular leader of an organization, but successful leadership never consolidates there. Ann's vision for the Center suffused it, energized it, sustained it, propelled it toward making its maximum impact on the campus, on the region, and beyond. It's true that she didn't like the spotlight, but we shouldn't confuse that reticence for center stage with an absence of

purpose or a lack of confidence in her own ideas. Ann was deeply invested in the region's literary, musical, and artistic wealth, and she saw it as the South's language for engaging the broader nation.

Ann did not take lightly to interruptions to or deviations from the course she had set. I know this from experience. But I also know why: Ann believed deeply in the work she was doing, and when you are led by conviction, byroads can seem like fatal detours. Ann was a force, and her momentum propels us right now, today, into another academic year.

It turns out that we were unwittingly polishing Ann's legacy all summer in Barnard Observatory. We have refinished the hardwood floors throughout the ground level, and we've refreshed the walls with coats of paint, all as we look forward to our fiftieth anniversary in 2027. The Center was conceived in the era of paper, and we still have most of it, covered in Ann's meticulous handwriting, all in pencil. From my start here twenty-eight autumns ago, my impression had been of a fully formed entity, yet in our summer clean-out, we unearthed drawers of projects marked "unsuccessful grant applications" and boxes labeled with names of initiatives I don't recognize. Paradoxically, I take comfort from that knowledge of certain failure because what I carry from it is a legacy of a resilience. Through all the different iterations of university administration and Center leadership, there is Ann's handwriting: neat, legible, cursive documentation of her unswerving commitment to a Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

Beyond our mutual association with the Center, Ann and I are most fundamentally linked through our love of literature, and it was that bond, too, that we celebrated when I became the first English professor to serve as Center director. Upon my arrival here many years ago for my job interview, it was the brightness in Ann's eyes that I fastened onto when the talk turned to interdisciplinary teaching and the contributions I could make. Like Ann, I am not from Mississippi, and like Ann, the state first existed for me in the words of its most famous son, William Faulkner, encountered in a college classroom far away from Oxford. Like Ann's, my feet got tangled in the tumble of words that is his prose, and neither of us ever managed to free ourselves. How perfect, then, that talk of the Faulkner Conference wound its way through our last conversation, and what a happy accident that I fell down into Mississippi and met Ann Abadie. It is a privilege to go to work every day in the Center that emerged from her vision.

Katie McKee

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Published by
The Center for the Study of Southern Culture
The University of Mississippi
662-915-5993
cssc@olemiss.edu • southernstudies.olemiss.edu

Fall 2024

On the cover: *The Barton House* (detail), by Shiraz Ahmed

REGISTER STAFF

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Living Blues News

Women have always played vital roles in the blues despite experiencing widespread marginalization in the genre. As Deitra Farr told me, “Women have always been second-class citizens in the blues world. Women did not, and do not, get what they deserve.” With this issue, we shine a light on a few of the many deserving women whose presence and voices help keep the blues alive and vibrant for current and future generations.

This issue’s cover artist, Deitra Farr, is familiar to any regular *Living Blues* reader. She is part of the family. Her Artist to Artist column has been in every issue for nearly twenty years now. I still remember when Deitra approached me about doing the column. I loved the idea of a musician casually talking to another musician about whatever came up between them. I knew that she would get things out of people that no one else could. And she has. I also remember when I misspelled her name early on and she chided me and said, “It is Deitra, like Deity!” I never did that again. Deitra has settled into her place as a strong voice for the music—and especially for women in the blues. She is a mentor to many of the younger artists emerging on the scene; in fact, they call her “Mama D.” These days she spends much of her time helping artists take steps forward in their careers through the wisdom she generously shares.

Like Deitra, the other women featured in this issue are passionate about the blues and their roles in furthering the art form. Mizz Lowe has been one of Bobby Rush’s dancers for two decades. I remember when Rush was beginning to cross over from the chitlin’ circuit to the festival circuit, he took a lot of flak from people saying his act was degrading to women. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Bobby celebrates the power of women, and Mizz Lowe is a perfect example of that power. Kat Riggins is an energy-packed dynamo and is passionate about the blues. With her band, Blues Revival, her mission is to “inspire a new love for the blues in all of its glorious manifestations.” Veronika



Jackson has been playing solo acoustic folk and blues music for more than fifty years, and as she notes, she has a desire to keep acoustic blues going in its grassroots, authentic form. Candice Ivory recently released a tribute to pioneering guitarist Memphis Minnie, offering her own soulful interpretations of a dozen of Minnie’s songs. Pianist Eden Brent is keeping a torch going for the deep tradition of piano blues from the Mississippi Delta. And this issue’s Let It Roll article takes a look at one of the pioneering women of the blues, Ida Cox. Cox, like Memphis Minnie, could go toe to toe with any man. As she says in her song “Wild Women Don’t Have the

Blues,” “I’ve got a disposition and a way of my own / When my man starts kicking I let him find another home.”

With this special issue, we highlight the importance of women’s contributions to and presence in the blues—from the earliest days to the present—and celebrate the enduring power of blues women.

Congratulations to all of the 2024 *Living Blues* Awards winners. This year’s big winners are again Christone “Kingfish” Ingram and Shemekia Copeland. Kudos to first-time winners Jerry Jemmott, Anne Harris, and D. K. Harrell. Thanks to all of you who took the time to vote.

Brett J. Bonner



southtalks

— SERIES —

CENTER FOR THE STUDY
OF SOUTHERN CULTURE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, AT 4:00 P.M.
204C Bondurant Hall • University of Mississippi

“The Cash Value of Racism in America—and Its Schools”

Tracie McMillan



After journalist Tracie McMillan began reporting on the material advantages of racial privilege in America, she wound up writing about the public schools of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Using the story of two millennial sisters—the Becker girls—as a starting point, McMillan pieces together a seventy-year history of the school district. In this talk, McMillan will use the Becker girls’ story to explore how racism has shaped our public institutions—and ultimately weakens them for everybody.

Tracie McMillan has covered America’s multiracial working class as a journalist with publications ranging from the *New York Times* to *Mother Jones*, from *National Geographic* to the *Village Voice*. She is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The American Way of Eating* and *The White Bonus: Five Families and the Cash Value of Racism in America*. A graduate of New York University, McMillan grew up on a dirt road outside Flint, Michigan. She splits her time between Brooklyn, New York, and Detroit.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, AT 6:00 P.M.
Overby Center Auditorium

Our Movement Starts Here
Film Screening and Panel

**Ben Chavis, Dollie Burwell,
Melanie Ho, and John Rash**



Our Movement Starts Here is a feature-length documentary film by directors John Rash and Melanie Ho that chronicles the story of a rural, majority-Black community in North Carolina that made history in 1982 by fighting the state’s toxic landfill, an event that is often said to have sparked the environmental justice movement.

The film will be followed by a conversation with the filmmakers and two of the participants in the film, Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis and Mrs. Dollie Burwell. See page 14 in this issue of the *Southern Register* for more information on the film and panel.

Fall 2024

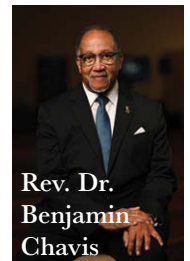
SouthTalks is a series of events (including lectures, performances, film screenings, and panel discussions) that explores the interdisciplinary nature of Southern Studies. This series is free and open to the public and typically takes place in the Tupelo Room of Barnard Observatory unless otherwise noted. Visit the Center’s website for up-to-date information about all Center events.

During the 2024–25 academic year, the Center for the Study of Southern Culture’s programming focus turns to “Southern Environments.” We will begin with its most obvious interpretation—the natural world—but we will quickly move to a broader understanding of “environments” as a variety of constructed and organic spaces in which multiple forces interact. We will ask questions about how the history and the idea of “the South” shaped those worlds and about how the people living in them influenced their development.

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

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, AT NOON
Barnard Observatory

“Southern Environmental Justice”
Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis



In this SouthTalk, Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis will speak on the evolution of the environmental justice movement, which is often said to have started as a local grassroots movement in North Carolina in 1982. Today the environmental justice movement has grown into a global movement for environmental justice, equality, and equity.

Dr. Benjamin Franklin Chavis is an esteemed civil rights leader, global business leader, faith leader, and public intellectual. He was born in Oxford, North Carolina. His family has been deeply rooted in Granville County, North Carolina, as landowners, farmers, educators, theologians, physicians, and activists for more than 250 years. Chavis is the host of *The Chavis Chronicles*, a television broadcast that airs weekly on PBS.

See pages 14 and 15 in this issue of the *Southern Register* for more information on Chavis and the struggle that spurred on the environmental justice movement in America.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, AT NOON
Barnard Observatory

“Surplussed Atlanta: The Built Environment of Homelessness”

Chuck Steffen



Downtown Atlanta is known for its glass office towers and professional sports venues. It is also known for having the densest population of unhoused persons in the metropolitan

area. For nearly half a century, a succession of city governments, hotel and convention interests, real estate developers and property owners, neighborhood associations, and university administrations have pursued a campaign to relocate this population from the central business district to lower-income Black neighborhoods on the south and west sides of the city—either that or put unhoused people in jail. In his talk, Chuck Steffen will place this campaign in the context of efforts to transform the downtown built environment after the Second World War. The actors who tore down and rebuilt the heart of the “City Too Busy to Hate” created a built environment in which homelessness could and would flourish.

Chuck Steffen is a retired historian who spent forty years teaching at Murray State University and Georgia State University. He has written on a range of topics, from US labor politics in the early national era to the politics of homelessness in the neoliberal era. His books include *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763–1812*; *From Gentlemen to Townsmen: The Gentry of Baltimore County, Maryland, 1660–1776*; and *Mutilating Khalid: The Symbolic Politics of Female Genital Cutting*. Toward the end of his classroom days, Steffen became interested in viewing the politics of homelessness and housing through the lens of a camera.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, AT NOON

Barnard Observatory

“When the South Was West: The Mississippi and the Founding of the Nation”

Susan Gaunt Stearns



Susan Gaunt Stearns

In 1789, three weeks after George Washington took office, twenty-two-year-old Andrew Jackson stood along the banks of the Mississippi River at Natchez and swore his allegiance to Spain. Washington’s oath is celebrated by American historians and laypeople alike, but understanding why Jackson, future president of the United States, would vow to be a loyal Spanish citizen requires rethinking what we know about the founding of the United States and the origins of the Deep South.

In the decades following the American Revolution, western expansion hinged upon American settlers gaining access to the trade of the Mississippi River, but in 1784 Spain closed the Mississippi to American trade, an event that nearly severed the nascent ties between the Euro-American communities of the Mississippi River Valley and the nation taking form as the United States. For two decades, Americans schemed, negotiated, and fought for control over the Mississippi and, with it, sovereignty over the vast continental interior. In this SouthTalk, Stearns explains why understanding the controversy over the Mississippi—why it mattered and how its meaning changed over time—is a necessary precursor to understanding the place of the future Deep South within the American republic.

Susan Gaunt Stearns is an associate professor of history at the University of Mississippi. Originally from New York City, she earned her bachelor’s degree from Yale and her PhD from the University of Chicago. Susan’s work focuses on the relationship between economic life and political ideology in early America, especially on western expansion’s role in defining the American republic. Her first book, *Empire of Commerce: The Closing of the Mississippi and the Opening of Atlantic Trade*, was published by the University of Virginia Press in 2024.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, AT 6:00 P.M.

Gilder Jordan Lecture

Nutt Auditorium, University of Mississippi

“Making ‘Actual Freedom’: The Civil War and Enslaved People’s Legal Consciousness”

Thavolia Glymph



Thavolia Glymph

A now large and robust body of literature has enriched our understanding of the flight of enslaved people to Union lines during the Civil War. Relatively little attention, however, has been paid to the role enslaved people’s understanding of the law played in the decision to flee in pursuit of freedom. In this year’s Gilder-Jordan Lecture in Southern Cultural History, Thavolia Glymph explores enslaved people’s legal consciousness—their knowledge and understanding of US and Confederate law—and how it guided the decision to flee and the arguments they made in defense of this decision.

Thavolia Glymph holds the Peabody Family Distinguished Professorship in History, is a Faculty Research Scholar and professor of history and law at the Duke Population Research Institute, and is president of the American Historical Association. For more on Thavolia Glymph and this year’s Gilder-Jordan Lecture in Southern Cultural History, see page 11 in this issue of the *Southern Register*.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, AT 5:30 P.M.

Gammill Gallery • Barnard Observatory

We Birthed a Movement

Jenny Labalme



Jenny Labalme

Jenny Labalme, who was a student-photographer during the 1982 protests against a PCB landfill in Warren County, North Carolina, will discuss the exhibit *We Birthed a Movement*, which showcases a largely Black, rural, North Carolina community’s fight to block a toxic waste landfill that culminated in six weeks of civil disobedience. Labalme has numerous photos in the exhibit and served on a history subcommittee that advised the University of North Carolina archivists and curators on assembling relevant materials for the exhibit.

Labalme spent almost two decades working first as a photo-journalist and later as a journalist for publications in North Carolina, Alabama, Mexico City, and Indianapolis. Her protest photos have appeared in the *Washington Post*, the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum, and the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina, as well as in numerous books, scholarly articles, and the documentary film *Our Movement Starts Here*, produced by the University of Mississippi's Southern Documentary Project. For more information about Labalme, her photos, and the 1982 protest, see page 15 in this issue of the *Southern Register*.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, AT NOON

Barnard Observatory

“Country Queers: Lessons from a Decade of Documenting Rural LGBTQIA2S+ Histories”

Rae Garringer

In 2013, frustrated by the lack of easily accessible rural queer stories, Rae Garringer bought an audio recorder for \$200 and started recording oral history interviews with rural queer and trans friends in central Appalachia. They had no formal training in oral history or audio recording, and no idea what they were doing. Since then, the project has grown to include a collection of more than ninety oral histories, a traveling gallery exhibit, a podcast, and a book. In this presentation, Garringer will share photos made along the way, audio excerpts from oral history interviews, and read from their forthcoming book, *Country Queers: A Love Letter*.

Rae Garringer is a writer, oral historian, and audio producer who grew up on a sheep farm in southeastern West Virginia and now lives a few counties away on S’atsoyaha (Yuchi) and šaawanwaki (Shawnee) lands. They are the founder of *Country Queers*, a multimedia oral history project and podcast documenting rural and small-town LGBTQIA2S+ experiences since 2013; the author of *Country Queers: A Love Letter*; and the editor of the forthcoming *To Belong Here: A New Generation of Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Appalachian Writers*. When not working with stories, Rae spends a lot of time failing at keeping goats in fences, swimming in the river, and two-stepping around their trailer.



LOU MURPHY

Rae Garringer

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, AT NOON

Barnard Observatory

“Vibe of the South: Ordinary Blackness/Carceral Intimacies”

Corey J. Miles

In this SouthTalk, Corey J. Miles will journey to the inner lives of southern trap rappers to explore how both



Corey J. Miles

frustration and care for the region refuse traditional explanation. Miles is an ethnographer of the Black South and an assistant professor of sociology and Africana studies at Tulane University. His book, *Vibe: The Sound and Feeling of Black Life in the American South*, investigates the ways Black people have built the South while being simultaneously excluded from it.

In his work, Miles captures the complexity of Black life and death in the American South. His work has been published in the *Journal of Hip-Hop Studies*, *Cultural Studies*, the *Howard Journal of Communication*, *Humanity and Society*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, AT 5:00 P.M.

Barnard Observatory

“Revolutionary Verticality? The Black Panther Party as Media Company”

Rich Purcell



Rich Purcell

At the height of its influence, the Black Panther Party was one of the most important and controversial political parties in the United States. It was well known for confronting anti-Black racism, police brutality, and the carceral state, as well as for establishing community-based mutual-aid programs. Lesser known was the party’s establishment of Stronghold Consolidated Productions, Inc., a business entity that the Black Panther Party incorporated in 1970 to manage its finances, print *The Black Panther* newspaper, and to negotiate various book, music, film projects.

In this SouthTalk, Rich Purcell, the Hubert H. McAlexander Chair of English at the University of Mississippi, will draw from material about Stronghold Consolidated Productions, Inc. from Huey P. Newton and Black Panther Party archives to reveal the party’s cinematic aspirations and its attempts to control the party’s intellectual property. Purcell will illuminate how the Black Panther Party’s intensely capitalistic relationship to intellectual property vis-à-vis Strongarm Consolidated Productions, Inc. both connects with and clashes with its own and other left-progressive theories of media, revolutionary cinema, and finance capitalism in the 1970s.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, AT 6:00 P.M.

Barnard Observatory

Fall Documentary Showcase

The Fall Documentary Showcase is a celebration of the work of Southern Studies documentary students. Each artist presents their work, followed by a Q&A session.

Fall 2024 Southern Studies Course Offerings

This fall, Southern Studies classes focus, as usual, on a wide variety of topics—from southern mythologies to the role of placemaking in literature. For a full list of all Fall 2024 Southern Studies courses, as well as courses in other departments that satisfy Southern Studies major/minor requirements, visit the Center’s website.

SST 103: Southern Mythologies and Popular Culture **Instructor: Matt O’Neal**

This course explores multiple mythic visions of the American South using popular writing, advertising, music and music videos, film, and other visual media to identify stereotypes and mythologies and to analyze how those representations have been constructed and circulated.

SST 106: Introduction to Southern Documentary **Instructor: Shiraz Ahmed**

This course surveys documentary practice in the American South with an emphasis on visual media. Students will learn to critically evaluate documentary films and photography about the American South and to apply cultural and regional studies models to the study of the documentary form.

SST 118: Introductory Topics in Southern Music: Country Music **Instructor: Darren E. Grem**

Where did country music come from? Where is it now? Where is it headed? This multifaceted (and often misunderstood) genre of American popular music has deep roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century

“global South” and important implications for the cultural and political shape of whatever constitutes “the South” or “southern.” This course explores country music via an interdisciplinary history, detailing its roots in the racial and musical context of the region’s rural and borderlands folk cultures. Then it explores country music’s transformation via racially segregated, twentieth-century urban contexts into a popular commercial industry, selling complex visions of “rural” pasts and presents that still resonate today.

SST 401.1: Southern Musicians, Southern Music **Instructor: Adam Gussow**

Of all forms of southern culture, southern musical idioms—including jazz, blues, gospel, country, and rock and roll—have arguably contributed most significantly to American popular culture and the world beyond America’s borders. Music from the US South offers not just a series of distinctive Euro-African creole blends (melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic), but enduring images of a mythic “Southland” and the charismatic performers that emerge from it. This seminar makes a series of interdisciplinary incursions into that musical archive, drawing on a wide range of textual modes, including autobiography, ethnography, cultural history and criticism, feature film, music videos, and audio recordings.

SST 401.2: Oral History: From Root to Stem **Instructor: Annemarie Anderson**

This SST 401 class explores the

interdisciplinary roots and best practices of oral history. Along the way, students learn about significant oral history scholarship, methodology, and theory. Students have the opportunity to engage with oral history through readings, primary-source documents, and audio documentaries and podcasts. The class culminates with a hands-on oral history research project.

SST 401.3: Media Production **Instructor: Shiraz Ahmed**

This class allows Southern Studies students the opportunity to choose their topic and a methodological approach in pursuit of completing an independent research project. Students engage with scholarly work and popular media to develop their own research questions related to the modern South. Coursework is divided evenly between independent research, project development, audio and photo production, and seminar discussions, with the latter half of the semester focused on the creation of a final capstone project and exhibition of student work.

SST 599: Geography and Southern Literature **Instructor: W. Ralph Eubanks**

This seminar examines the role of geography and place in shaping twentieth century and contemporary southern literature. The texts for this class explore the identities that define the South and the issues that plague this region, as well as the ways southern literature is defined by geography, history, culture, voice, and perception.

Welcome, or Welcome Back

Greeting New Hires to Barnard

By Rebecca Lauck Cleary

This fall, there will be many new (and returning) folks walking upon the newly refinished floors of Barnard Observatory. Feel free to say hello, take them out for a coffee, and get to know them. Here is some background on each of them so you can find some commonalities.

Shiraz Ahmed

**Assistant Professor of Practice,
Southern Documentary Project**

Shiraz Ahmed is an experienced and award-winning journalist, instructor, and documentary artist who has created work for commercial and nonprofit media, academic institutions, and a Fortune 500 company. His pedagogical experience has focused on personal storytelling and working with oral histories in text and audio.



This fall, Ahmed will be teaching one of the three sections of SST 401. “I’m hoping to activate students’ curiosity by having them apply lessons from the documentary work we watch and discuss to their lives and issues that they are passionate about,” Ahmed said. He feels it is important to help marginalized teenagers and young adults become better communicators of their stories, ideals, and futures.

He earned a BS in journalism and international studies from Northwestern University and a Master of Fine Arts in experimental and documentary arts from Duke University. This year he screened his film *This World* at the Rubenstein Arts Center in Durham, North Carolina, and his short film *The Safety Net* at the Freep Film Festival, at the Prison City Film Festival, and at the Duke Independent Film Festival. Last year, his solo show of photography, *The Beards of Muslim Men*, was on display at the Duke Chapel in Durham.

Previously, he has taught an intro to audio documentary class and was a graduate student mentor at the Franklin Humanities Institute, where he managed a team of four undergraduates who produced an oral history podcast and where he created and taught workshops on audio producing and postproduction. A detail from his photograph *The Barton House* graces the cover of this issue of the *Southern Register*. “It’s related to a film about my friend’s family home in west Houston that flooded during Hurricane Harvey and had to be torn down and rebuilt higher,” he said.

For fun, he likes to run, play soccer, and garden—anything that gets him outdoors and away from the screen.

Annemarie Anderson

**Assistant Professor of Practice and
Southern Foodways Alliance Lead Oral
Historian**



Annemarie Anderson is a familiar face around Barnard Observatory, as she was previously the Southern Foodways Alliance oral historian from 2018 to 2022.

In 2022, Anderson began work as director of the Alabama Center for Traditional Culture. There she supervised a staff of two folklorists and one administrative assistant; built relationships with local, state, and regional partners to foster folklife initiatives in Alabama; and managed all aspects of *Arts Fell on Alabama*, the center’s public radio program on their local NPR affiliate.

But Oxford pulled her back, and she returns this fall in the role she had before—in addition to being an assistant professor of practice, which means she’ll teach a section of SST 401. “Having done culture work in nonprofit and state government settings, I’m hoping to teach students how oral history can be a valuable skill set for a surprising variety of research and creative projects,” she said.

Anderson earned her bachelor’s degree in history and English, followed by a master’s degree in oral history, both from the University of Florida. She then earned an MFA in Documentary Expression from the University of Mississippi. Some of the oral history projects she led for SFA focused on women food journalists, sorghum, and Summer Avenue in Memphis.

“My dog, Neville, defended my MFA prospectus with me. Really, he just sat in my lap the whole time, but he counts it. He is looking forward to seeing everyone in Barnard again!” she said. Alongside Neville, Anderson can usually be found with her knitting needles, as that is one of her favorite pastimes.

Tom Attah

**Associate Professor of Southern Studies
and Sociology**



Tom Attah wins the award for arriving from the farthest location, as he was an associate professor and course leader for popular music performance at Leeds Arts University in Leeds, England. He

is also a guitarist and singer who has performed on major stages, including at the Glastonbury Festival, and he maintains an active international performance schedule. His research interests include the ethnomusicological study of the effects of digital technology on popular music performance, particularly blues music and blues culture. He has a BA in popular music studies from the University of Sheffield, a postgraduate certificate in academic practice from the University of Salford, and is a fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

“I was born and raised in the South—of the United Kingdom!” Attah said. “I hope to bring the British diaspora experience to University of Mississippi students and colleagues.” For his first semester in the classroom on this side of the pond, he said, “I look forward to sharing the tools to think critically and creatively about sociology and Southern Studies with students and learning from their experiences and ideas.”

His forthcoming publications include chapters on cover versions of popular music, women in electronic music, and an edited collection on pop music autobiography for Bloomsbury. He is also the editor for a series of books on popular music to be published by Manchester University Press.

Attah said that for fun, he enjoys music and books: performing, reading, and writing. “It would be great to play blues with colleagues and students,” Attah said.

Andrew Bryant

Administrative Coordinator

Andrew Bryant took over the front desk in the Barnard Observatory lobby at the beginning of August. The Pittsboro, Mississippi, native has lived in Oxford for six years. Although his official title is administrative coordinator, he will handle an array of tasks, including answering questions about the university’s Academic Common Market, handling travel authorizations, and preventing students from mistakenly wandering upstairs to the SFA office.

“To me, the Center is the total package when it comes to my interests. I love southern art, food, books, and music, and the Center has a hand in cultivating all of these in a really meaningful way,” said Bryant, who earned a history degree from the University of Mississippi.

Bryant, like Kell Kellum before him, is also a musician, and he is a singer-songwriter who founded the band the Water Liars, whose name was derived from the first story in Barry Hannah’s collection *Airships*. “I like to travel and to spend time with my wife and kids. I also love music, both listening to it and playing it. I play multiple instruments as much as I can,” he said.



Melanie Ho

Assistant Professor of Practice, Southern Documentary Project

Melanie Ho is a Vietnamese American filmmaker, writer, and Jacksonville, Florida, native who started at SouthDocs in 2022 as a producer/director. She received her MFA from the University of California, Santa Cruz’s Social Documentation program. Her documentary *sống ở đây | to live here*, explores the Vietnamese community in New Orleans and the relationship between land and labor as seen through their foodways. Her work focuses on trauma, familial relationships, gender, displacement, and intimacy.

Ho was hired as the first professor of practice this spring. Although she has taught classes in the MFA program, this fall she will teach SST 638: MFA Postproduction and will coteach SST 601 with Simone Delorme. “I hope to establish a space where students can find community in each other, by supporting ideas, projects, and individual and collaborative growth,” Ho said.

In 2023, she was named one of ten NextDoc fellows, a yearlong national program that brings emerging nonfiction storytellers between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five from diverse backgrounds together with award-winning filmmakers to learn, share, and build their skills. Additionally, the Gotham Film and Media Institute and HBO Documentary Films announced Ho as a member of the inaugural cohort for their Documentary Development Initiative.

Before she begins to think about making a film, instead of picking up a camera, she instead goes a different route. “Creative writing has been the starting point for my understanding and creating of documentary films,” Ho said. When she is not making films, she enjoys cooking and eating.



Matt O’Neal

Assistant Professor of History and Southern Studies

Matt O’Neal is a bit of a familiar face, as he started as a visiting assistant professor here in 2023 and was recently hired in a full-time capacity. He earned a BA in history with a minor in political science from the University of Kentucky, a master’s degree in history from Auburn University, and his doctorate in history from the University of Georgia. It is telling that he said he’ll be at the football game this September “wearing the correct shade of blue” when the University of Mississippi plays Kentucky.

After he finished his master’s at Auburn, he worked at the Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center. “It is a small museum, and so I did lots of things, one of which was helping to repair a log cabin replica of the childhood



home of Booker T. Washington,” O’Neal said. “I also got to meet Fred Gray, the civil rights attorney who represented Rosa Parks, the Selma marchers, and the Tuskegee Syphilis Study participants in their class-action lawsuit against the federal government. He is the founding director of the museum and signed my paychecks. That was pretty cool.”

Starting in August, O’Neal will be teaching SST 103: Southern Mythologies and Popular Culture. “We’re going to investigate some of the central myths of southern history and culture, including those about the Old South, the civil rights movement, and Appalachia,” O’Neal said. “The overall goal is to get students to think about how ‘the South’ came to occupy a central place in the American imagination. I think it will be a class that challenges them—and me—to reexamine these ideas and assumptions and why they came to be.”

Outside of the classroom, he likes to spend time with his wife, Allie, and son, Jim. “I like to drag my wife and kid around to see historic sites,” he said. “We took a trip to Shiloh battlefield last fall that was fun—for me at least.”

Xavier Sivels

Instructor in Southern Studies and Undergraduate Adviser

Xavier Sivels, last summer’s *Study the South* Fellow, joins us as an instructor in Southern Studies. He earned his BA in history and philosophy from Virginia State University and a doctorate in history from Mississippi State University. His dissertation is “Freakish Man: Sexual Blues, Sacred Beliefs, and the Transformation of Black Queer Identity, 1870–1957,” which he spoke about in a SouthTalk last spring titled “‘Ain’t I Pretty?’ Sweet Daddy Grace and the Sacred Blues of the Badman.” Previously, Sivels was an instructor of early US history, Mississippi history, early world history, and African American history at Mississippi State University.

Sivels wrote the article “Black Trans Women Face a Unique Threat Rooted in Centuries of History” for the *Washington Post* in March 2022 and was an advanced doctoral fellow at the Center for Black, Brown, and Queer Studies. He received the Society of Mississippi Archivists Distinguished Student Presentation Award in 2022.

“One thing that I hope to accomplish in the classroom this fall is to make a genuine connection with my students. I want them to feel welcomed and supported,” Sivels said. In his spare time, he likes to listen to vintage records. “I have a collection that I am constantly adding to.”



Welcome to the Program

In addition to new and returning faculty and staff, here are our newest additions to our MA and MFA programs. Welcome to Oxford, everyone.

First-Year Master of Art

Ryley Fallon
BA in English and creative writing from North Carolina State University

Nicholas Harvey
BA in integrated studies from Jacksonville State University

Astrid Knox-McConnell
BA in history and politics of the Americas from University College of London

Samson Oklobia
BA in mass communication from University of Jos (Nigeria)

Alexandra Santiago
BA in university studies from the University of Mississippi

David Smith Jr.
BA in public policy leadership from the University of Mississippi

Turner Wolffe
BA in history from Loyola University in New Orleans

First-Year MFA in Documentary Expression

Christopher Fisher
BA in psychology from the University of North Carolina, MBA from North Carolina State University, DBA from Hampton University

Cassandra Hawkins
BA in psychology from Jackson State University, MA in English from Jackson State University, PhD in public policy and administration from Jackson State University

Greta Koshenina
BA in classics from the University of Mississippi, MA in Southern Studies from the University of Mississippi

Gilder-Jordan Lecture Set for October

Historian and Law Scholar to Discuss Enslaved People's Understanding of the Law

Thavolia Glymph will give this year's annual Gilder-Jordan Lecture in Southern Cultural History. Her lecture, "Making 'Actual Freedom': The Civil War and Enslaved People's Legal Consciousness," is set for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 8, in Nutt Auditorium.

A now large and robust body of literature has enriched our understanding of the flight of enslaved people to Union lines during the Civil War. In her lecture, Glymph will discuss how relatively little attention, however, has been

Thavolia Glymph



paid to the role that enslaved people's understanding of the law played in the decision to flee in pursuit of freedom. Glymph will explore enslaved people's legal consciousness—their knowledge and understanding of US and Confederate law—and how it guided the decision to flee and the arguments they made in defense of this decision. From this perspective, flight to Union lines appears less chaotic, directionless, and impulsive than some contemporaries and historians have argued. Glymph will discuss how the "army of slaves and fugitives, pushing its way irresistibly toward an army of fighting men," as one northerner described the refugees, would see the US Army not only as a "humanitarian shield" but "also a sword of justice."

Glymph is the author of the award-winning book *The Women's Fight: The Civil War's Battles for Home, Freedom, and Nation*. She earned her BA from Hampton University and her MA and doctorate from Purdue University. She holds the Peabody Family Distinguished Professorship in History and is a Faculty Research Scholar and professor of history and law at the Duke Population Research Institute. She is the current president of the American Historical Association.

Her book *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* was a winner of the 2009 Philip Taft Book Prize and a finalist for the Frederick Douglass Prize. She is coeditor of two volumes of *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861–1867* and numerous articles and essays. She is currently completing two book manuscripts, "African American Women and Children Refugees in the Civil War," supported by a National Institutes of Health grant, and "Playing 'Dixie' in Egypt: A Transnational Transcript of Race, Nation, Empire, and Citizenship." Glymph held the John Hope Franklin Visiting Professor of American Legal History at Duke Law School in 2015 and 2018.





PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY ALISSA RAE FUNDERBURK

The Interdisciplinary Study of the Politics of Place cohort on location in Jackson this past summer.

Reflections from the Field

Race, Power, and the Politics of Place

This summer, nine undergraduate students from across the country came to the University of Mississippi to participate in the Interdisciplinary Study of the Politics of Place summer program. This new program is sponsored by the Coalition for the Study of Race and Racism (CSRR), the newest institute at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, and is funded by the National Science Foundation. For ten weeks, students worked in teams with faculty mentors from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture to learn about and to put into practice basic principles of social scientific research design and methodology. The CSRR's program has a unique focus on the relationship between race, power, and place in the US South, and is the only one of its kind in the country. Below, students reflect on their experiences working with their faculty mentors to conduct research on race, place, and power in the US South.

“The Queer Mississippi Histories Project”
Dr. Amy McDowell, associate professor of sociology
Angelica Rivera Amaro, Widener University
Mae Bucks, Vassar College
Sam Street, Yale University

We spent this summer analyzing oral histories from two different LGBTQ+ archives, conducting and processing life history interviews, and learning about the politics of queer space in and around Oxford, Mississippi. We listened to and analyzed twenty-three interviews from the Queer Mississippi

Oral History Collection at the University of Mississippi and the Black Pride in JXN Collection at Jackson State University in order to develop a better understanding of how allyship appears and functions in the state with particular attention to the issues of race, place, and power. We found that allyship in Mississippi is complicated and messy, but nonetheless important to the possibility of queer life.

Our research and writing centered around the claim that in Mississippi, a place where anything short of outright rejection can feel like a gift, queer life-history interviews reveal that it may be necessary to partner with and accept support from people who do not wholly accept or condone queerness (in its many forms). This is particularly true when considering race and gender nonconformity. This was a surprising and challenging process as we sought to represent the nuances of the narrators' stories while drawing parallels between their stories. The process helped us to better understand how alliances allow for the possibilities of queer life in the Deep South.

“Whiteness in Crisis”
Dr. James (JT) Thomas, associate professor of sociology
Eden Ball, Smith College
Ryann Samuel, Oakwood University

We drew from more than one hundred in-depth interviews with white southerners to examine their memories and experiences with learning about race and what it means to be white. The interviews were completed and transcribed before our

arrival to Oxford, so we were able to hit the ground running. We worked with Dr. Thomas to develop research questions and then code the data to answer those questions. Ryann's research project explored what white southerners recalled learning about race from their parents and how they now talk about race with their own children. Eden investigated how white southerners navigate feeling connected to a region with a legacy of racial violence. Working with Dr. Thomas, we both developed skills in coding and analyzing qualitative data, and integrating our findings into a cohesive research paper. We also gained valuable experience presenting our individual research at the end-of-program conference, where we shared our work with both faculty and fellow researchers. This program provided us with both research experience and the confidence to present our work effectively for future academic pursuits, including graduate school and academic publishing.

"The Southern Latinx Artist Archive"

Dr. Simone Delorme, McMullan Associate Professor of Southern Studies and Anthropology
Eva Amaro, Kennesaw State University
Josselyn Ramirez Rodriguez, Wellesley College

Our research focused on how the Latino/a/x population is incorporated into social, cultural, and economic life in nontraditional destinations of migration in the US South. Our research was based on qualitative methodologies that included (1) participant observation at salsa venues, art workshops, and local venues in order to identify Latino artists, and (2) conducting oral history interviews with these artists in order to document their stories and experiences to create the Southern

Latinx Artist Archive, a new digital archive at the University of Mississippi. In our interviews we found that this population, although newly incorporated into the South, is not merely aspiring but are actively working toward leaving a legacy of perseverance through the work they are producing, whether it be through playing music, painting, or dancing. These Latino artists are carving out a space for themselves while simultaneously being a voice and representation for the Latino community in the South.

Overall, this experience has made us realize that even away from their countries of origin, Latinos are forming new communities, communities with which they are connecting while preserving aspects of their cultural background rather than fully assimilating to American culture. We saw this in the way the artists we interviewed had their work available for anyone to engage with, because to them this is what art is also about—displaying and teaching their culture to others. For example, Valentin, the director of Banda Resurgimiento, focuses on playing Mexican regional music in Memphis and shared that, "*Prefiero mil veces que alguien aprenda música a que se pierda* / I much rather someone learn music than have it get lost." In another interview, Edgar Mendez, co-owner and professional salsa dancer for Rumba Room, described how he teaches anyone who steps into his restaurant/dance studio how to dance, regardless of their experience or background dancing. In this process, they are also creating a sense of belonging for Latinos in the community by creating a space where Latinos are comfortable, seen, and heard through the creation of art.

We hope that Latino artists find the courage to share their stories when hearing these oral histories.



Oral history interviews being recorded in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, for the Southern Latinx Artist Archive

Our Movement Starts Here

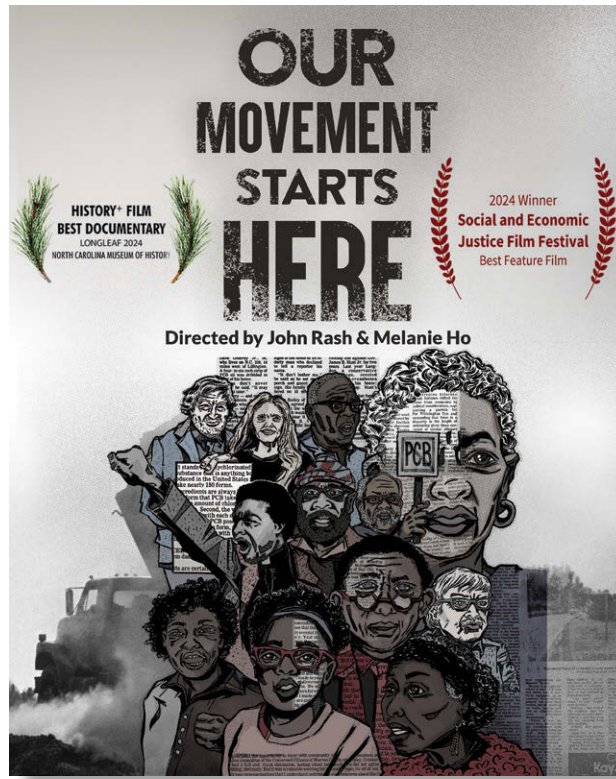
Center Film Makes Oxford Debut

Filmmakers John Rash and Melanie Ho had a busy summer showing their film, *Our Movement Starts Here*, at several film festivals and bringing home several awards. The film is a feature-length documentary chronicling the story of a rural, majority-Black community in Warren County, North Carolina, that made history in 1982 by fighting against the state's toxic landfill.

"It was shocking that this story hadn't been told in a book or in a film, especially because those protests are said to be associated with the first time the terms 'environmental justice' and 'environmental racism' were used," Rash said. "So, I began the film project by looking at a contemporary example of a community in eastern North Carolina that was fighting environmental injustices, and I discovered that forty years prior, just a few counties away, a similar community fought the same fight. I determined that the question the film should ask is, 'How can this still be happening in the same state forty years later?'"

After he visited Warren County and started to build relationships in the community, he realized the story was largely forgotten and needed to be amplified. "I felt it was important to make a film that could inspire current and future generations of activists who are facing their own struggles for environmental and climate justice," he said.

In 2022, codirectors Rash and Ho involved their MFA graduate students in assisting with the production of the film, spending a week in North Carolina conducting first-person interviews with more than twenty of the original activists and documenting a



week of events that marked the fortieth anniversary of the Warren County struggle for environmental justice.

The film has more screenings on its calendar, including the Mississippi premiere at the Overby Center at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 19. A discussion with the filmmakers and two of the participants in the film, Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis and Dollie Burwell, will follow the screening. Additionally, Chavis will give a SouthTalk presentation, "Southern Environmental Justice," at noon on Friday, September 20. "Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis and Dollie Burwell were gracious enough to share their stories in our film, and now folks in Oxford will have the opportunity to engage with them personally," Rash said. "They have such amazing life experiences and have accomplished so much, and the film only captures

one moment of their very long and important legacies."

The current exhibit in the Center's Gammill Gallery, *We Birthed the Movement: The Warren County PCB Landfill Protests, 1978-1982*, also focuses on the Warren County landfill protests.

The film is currently on the international film festival circuit. In May, *Our Movement Starts Here* won the History + Best Documentary Film award at the 2024 Long Leaf Film Festival at the North Carolina Museum of History, and in July the film won Best Feature-Length Film at the 2024 Social and Economic Justice Film Festival in San Francisco.

In an interview with the North Carolina Local News Network, Ho said that the film is categorized as a historical documentary, but it exists in

the present and future as much as it does in history. "This is really something that the younger generation has to think about and has to work together with each other and with folks in the past to continue thinking about ways that climate justice and environmental justice are being navigated," she said.

It will be a busy fall semester of screenings, but Rash sees this as continuation of the work of the film. "It's a unique opportunity to be invited to a community to discuss a film," he said. "The impact of those community engagements might be more important than the film itself. I see both the production of the film and the in-person engagement with communities as equally weighted responsibilities when telling these kinds of stories."

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Children and teenagers lie on a North Carolina road in 1982 to protest and block trucks hauling PCB-laced soil.



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We Birthed the Movement: The Warren County PCB Landfill Protests, 1978–1982

Gammill Gallery Exhibit Focuses on Environmental Justice

This new exhibit currently on display in the Center's Gammill Gallery, *We Birthed the Movement: The Warren County PCB Landfill Protests, 1978–1982*, focuses on a rural, low-income, and predominantly Black community in North Carolina and its efforts to halt the creation of a toxic-waste landfill. That community's pushback and subsequent nonviolent protest resulted in a North Carolina movement for environmental justice.

Among the items on display are photos, letters, arrest records, and other documents that detail and explain the four-year fight. The battle started in 1978, when North Carolina governor James B. Hunt Jr. announced a plan to build a dumpsite in Warren County, North Carolina, to store 31,000 gallons of cancer-causing, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that had been dumped illegally on 240 miles of North Carolina roadways earlier that summer.

Between 1978 and 1982, local citizens mounted legal and scientific challenges. By 1982, after attempts to block the

landfill through the court system had failed, the community decided as a last resort to engage in civil disobedience to try to physically stop the trucks from hauling the PCB-tainted soil to the landfill.

The participants were a multiracial coalition of children, their parents, nearby church ministers, elected officials, civil rights veterans, and students. The six weeks of demonstrations failed to stop the trucks, but the protests attracted local and national media attention. They also helped spur several landmark studies that found that people of color are more likely than white Americans to live near landfills and toxic and hazardous waste facilities.

We Birthed the Movement was curated in collaboration with protest participants, eyewitnesses, and those who continue to organize for justice in Warren County. Jenny Labalme, who photographed the protest and who has written extensively about it, will be in Gammill Gallery at 5:30 p.m. on October 10 for a gallery walk.

Food in Film

Film Residencies Support Southern Filmmakers

This summer, three filmmakers gathered to take part in the Southern Foodways Alliance’s third-annual Prototype Film Residency. Zaire Love, the SFA’s Pihakis Filmmaker, worked with these dynamic filmmakers, who came to be known as the Fairy Griots. For eight weeks, this talented group shared their passion of telling the South’s foodways stories. By the end of the residency at the end of July, the filmmakers—Aisha Nga, Patrice E. Jones, and Caleb Owolabi—had produced films they then shared in a showcase in Barnard Observatory and that they are now ready to submit to film festivals.

AISHA NGA

Atlanta, Georgia

A Tale of Two Teas

As a filmmaker and entrepreneur, Aisha Nga has built a career crafting compelling narratives for television and digital platforms, including work for CNN, the Food Network, and the Travel Channel.

Nga’s Prototype Film Residency project explores the complex past of tea through a unique lens, as her father’s family is from Libya and her mother is from the southern United States. “Growing up, I had very different unique tea traditions, and I’ve wondered if these two were connected,” Nga said. “This film residency gave me the space to research this and to find fascinating connections between the two. One of the things I found in my research for *A Tale of Two Teas* was that a lot of this is erased from texts and from history. This residency gave me the ability to bring those stories to life and to put those back into the collective consciousness.

“I’ll be forever grateful to Zaire Love, to the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, and to the University of Mississippi for giving me this ability and this unique opportunity to bring these stories into the collective and to inform people in an entertaining and educating way,” Nga said.



Aisha Nga

COURTESY AISHA NGA

“This film residency provided a safe space for me to explore and try different techniques in storytelling that I might not normally take in my career.”

PATRICE E. JONES

New Orleans, Louisiana

Living off the Legacy

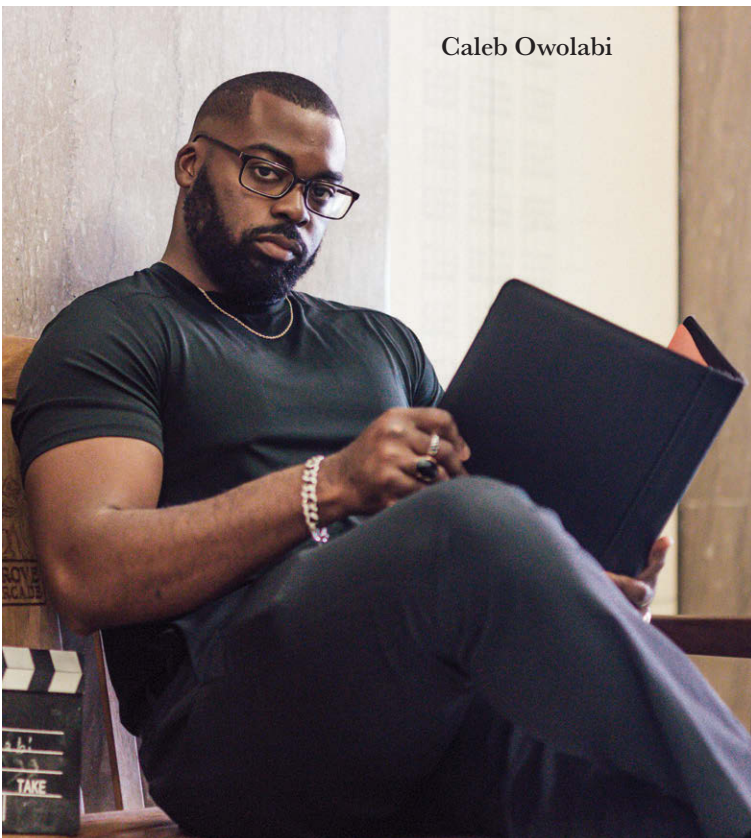
Patrice E. Jones is a visual storyteller and cultural preservationist based in New Orleans. Inspired by the rich legacy of her ancestors, Jones’s work explores liberation through land, tradition, and archival material.

For Jones, the Prototype Film Residency experience was life changing. “My whole family knows the story of our land and how we acquired it, but I saw it from different eyes for the first time because of the film that I made, *Living off the Legacy*. That catapulted me into a new place in my life where I feel like I need to be closer to the land,” Jones said. “For an experience to change possibly the trajectory of your life, it’s pretty powerful.

“It’s important to tell stories like mine, because I don’t think I’ve heard too many stories like mine. A lot of people, like me, had ancestral land but it got lost due to discrimination and oppression. There’s not a whole lot of us who still have held onto this land and held on to the stories and have the archival footage and pictures and stories to tell,” Jones said. “I think it’s kind of a rare story to tell, and it’s important that we’re getting an entire view of the history of this country and what was done to Black and Indigenous people on this land.”

CALEB OWOLABI
Asheville, North Carolina
Dynasty Dining

Caleb Owolabi is a dynamic media entrepreneur, has expertise in artistic media fields, and is known for his innovative strategies and leadership in the indie film industry. With a passion for empowering others, Owolabi



Caleb Owolabi

COURTESY CALEB OWOLABI



Patrice E. Jones

COURTESY PATRICE E. JONES

also shares his knowledge and insights through speaking engagements and mentorship programs for youth in government-subsidized areas of the South. His dedication to excellence and commitment to delivering results have earned him recognition as a leading figure in the world of film and media.

The film Owolabi produced in the Prototype Film Residency, *Dynasty Dining*, is about the food scene in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. “The residency was unlike anything else, because you are here in the South talking about southern culture,” Owolabi said. “Not only that, but you’re also immersed very quickly into developing your own film, the product of which you’ll share with colleagues and friends and family at the end of the residency. I found it very much appealing when I applied, but I was not prepared to see how not only informative, but how transformative of an experience it was, because the people I was in the cohort with were just fantastic.”



Ann Abadie, a South Carolina native, came to the University of Mississippi because of her love for the works of author William Faulkner. She leaves a remarkable legacy as creator of numerous academic and cultural initiatives at the Center, at the University of Mississippi, and across the state and region.

Ann Abadie Remembered as a Visionary

Administrator, Scholar Instrumental to Founding Center for the Study of Southern Culture

Ann Abadie admittedly did not like the spotlight, but she was a behind-the-scenes champion of culture, of literature, and of community.

Abadie, director emerita of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, died on July 30 and leaves a legacy of visionary leadership at the University of Mississippi and beyond. “There is not a Center for the Study of Southern Culture, as we understand it today, without Ann Abadie,” said Kathryn McKee, the Center’s director. “I don’t think we would have the contemporary Center at all without Ann’s vision and energy. She knew what the Center could be, and we are living that legacy every single day.”

Instrumental in the founding of the Center in the mid-1970s, Abadie served as interim founding director and then associate director from 1979 to 2011. Center founding director Bill Ferris said of Abadie, “Ann never ceased to amaze me as she nurtured people and their projects. The productivity and quality of her work was unparalleled. With her soft-spoken voice and steel will, she laid the foundation for the beautiful work that Katie McKee and her fine team do at the Center today. Future generations of students, scholars, and teachers will be inspired by Ann’s unswerving commitment to the study of the American South. I am forever grateful for the many

ways Ann enriched my world. She was a blessing to all who knew her.”

“At the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, we want to connect people so they can learn from one another,” said Ted Ownby, a former director of the Center. “Ann had a particular interest in connecting scholarship to audiences outside of universities. Whether it was gatherings of scholars with fans, or with novelists for adults with novelists for children along with editors and teachers, she was always looking for ways for the Center to bring together groups of people who might not otherwise be in the same place. That was one of her strengths and passions.”

She helped found the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference and coedited its annual volume of proceedings from 1974 to 2012. This year, the conference celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Abadie discussed the first conference and its unexpected impact in a recent article about the anniversary. “I called the *New York Times* book review section, and the only ad we could afford was one little column about an inch and a half across—just a little tiny thing,” Abadie said. “It came out and the phones started ringing off the hook from across the country and Paris and Japan and everywhere. Not Paris, Mississippi; the other Paris.”

It was Faulkner that initially drew the Greenville, South Carolina, native to Oxford for graduate school in 1960. Abadie had earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and history from Wake Forest University and ultimately received her master’s and doctorate in English from the University of Mississippi.

Richard Howorth, owner of Square Books, was a longtime friend. He recalled her pivotal role in creating the Oxford Conference for the Book. “I approached her at one point and said, ‘What if we had a different kind of conference that celebrated other writers and invited them to Oxford?’” Howorth said. “She said she it would take a few years, and sure enough, two or three years later, she said, ‘OK, what are we going to do?’ That’s how the book conference started.”

Howorth said Abadie did the “lion’s share” of the work on the conference, which was typical of her. “Among her many attributes, she was a hard worker,” he said. “She would be at the Center when there was only one light left on in the building, and it was hers.”

Not only did she excel in her many professional roles, but she also excelled in the kitchen. “She made a mean, locally known pound cake,” Howorth said. “She was a marvelous cook and learned all these Louisiana dishes that her husband, Dale, loved. Anything she took an interest in, she mastered.”

Abadie’s contributions extended to various cultural projects, including helping to edit the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, the *New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, and the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*. The University Press of Mississippi credits her as being the most published author in its repertoire, with thirty-six books in print and several others out of print. “Ann was an accomplished editor and a real wordsmith,” said former Center director Charles Reagan Wilson. “More than anyone else, she was responsible from

early on in maintaining a clear prose style for the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. She read virtually everything coming out of the Center: press releases, grant proposals, administrative reports, and book and journal publications the Center sponsored. If you were a steady follower of Center events or were just exposed to some activity, you could see that she allowed no misspelled words, grammatical errors, or factual mistakes.”

She also played a key role in establishing the Southern Foodways Alliance. Mary Beth Lasseter, codirector of the alliance, met Abadie more than twenty years ago. “She worked harder than any person I knew; I never saw her without a tote bag that held the book manuscripts and *Southern Register* articles she proofread between meetings,” Lasseter said. “She was never one to step out and claim credit for her work, but her legacy lives on in the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, the Oxford Conference for the Book, and countless other cultural events that exist due to her tireless efforts. “Oxford is a better place because she was a part of it.”

Her work earned her the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters’ Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement Award and the Southern Foodways Alliance’s Craig Claiborne Lifetime Achievement Award. “Ann Abadie is the reason why so much of what we celebrate in Mississippi’s arts and letters communities exists today,” said Jimmy Thomas, the Center’s associate director for publications. “Alongside Ann’s contributions to the written word stand her influences on organizations that are now part of the fabric of Mississippi’s cultural tapestry. Through her more than sixty years of involvement with arts and literary organizations across the state, Ann created, nurtured, and advanced a culture of arts and letters in Mississippi by a magnitude that is seldom accomplished by a single individual.”

Ethel Young Scurlock, dean of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, reflected on Abadie’s energy, artistic vision and love for bringing people together. “When Ann organized the book conference, she challenged the norm by bringing celebrated Black writers to Oxford, like Tayari Jones, Natasha Trethewey, Tyehimba Jess, Jerry Ward, and Thomas Sayers Ellis,” said Scurlock, whose friendship with Abadie spanned three decades. “While she officially retired from the university a while back, Ann never retired from bringing people together for riveting engagement of the arts. I will miss her love, light, and abundant energy.”

Ann is survived by her husband, H. Dale Abadie; three children; five grandchildren; two sisters; and several nieces and nephews. Visitation was held at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Oxford on Friday, August 2, followed by a funeral Mass.

Memorials can be made to the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at umfoundation.givingfuel.com/cssc or to St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church Benevolent Fund, 403 University Avenue, Oxford, MS 38655.

STORYTELLING AND POWER

Stories Are
Powerful.
Who Tells
Them Matters.

By Wayne Dowdy

The last book we read in Jimmy Thomas's Fall 2023 MA course on the Mississippi Delta was *Dispatches from Pluto*, the 2015 memoir from British travel writer Richard Grant. Early in the book, Grant writes that many people warned him that understanding the Mississippi Delta and its people was "an impossible task." As Grant seeks understanding of the region, he grapples with its "intangible, mysterious quality to life," its "contradictions" and its "weirdness." The Delta's incomprehensiveness is a refrain he refers to over and over in the book.

Wayne Dowdy

In the Mississippi Delta, there is massive underdevelopment of accurate and publicly accessible historical storytelling, or “interpretation.” The divestment from rigorous public-facing historical interpretation and the pervasiveness of interpretive models that imagine an idyllic southern past are, like so many things in the Mississippi Delta, about race and power. There are those who argue that the Delta is impossible to understand. A land of contradiction, mystery, and magic. What motivates those who romanticize the Mississippi Delta as an unsolvable enigma? Who benefits from the Delta being incomprehensible?

Last fall, I was a part-time, first-year Southern Studies MA student living in Cleveland, Mississippi, and working for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MS Delta NHA.) My work for the Heritage Area and my current enrollment as a Southern Studies student both derive from a love of southern history first cultivated at Millsaps College in Jackson.

In my first history course at Millsaps, with Dr. Stephanie Rolph, we learned about historical memory in the post-Reconstruction South from the writing of scholars like David Blight and W. Fitzhugh Brundage. I learned how white political violence was leveraged to overthrow multiracial democratic governments across the South. Coalitions of southern and northern white politicians and power brokers used commemoration, iconography, literature, and monuments to “reconcile” the nation, in the process shaping how people would come to understand what the South was and what it could be. In that course, I learned of the power and the limitations of storytelling to shape a region.

Despite the divestment from inclusive historical interpretation, there are many individuals and organizations working to tell a fuller story of the Mississippi Delta. With the Heritage Area, I’ve had opportunities to collaborate with colleagues who are addressing these structural disparities, empowering Delta residents to explore

Reading about the programming of the Center in the *Southern Register* and reading articles published in *Study the South* taught me about the kinds of work being done here.

and share their histories. In February 2024, MS Delta NHA, in partnership with the National Park Service and StoryWorks Theater, launched a pilot Cultural Heritage Ambassadors Program, grounded in the belief that stories are powerful and that who gets to tell the stories matters.

Over nine months, cohort members received training on cultural heritage interpretation and storytelling. This past summer they created a capstone project, a bus tour of Clarksdale, Mississippi, that tells a Reconstruction history of Coahoma County. What does it mean to remember the Mississippi Delta as a place once briefly governed as a

multiracial democracy and to also tell the story of how white rule was violently reestablished?

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture addresses questions of storytelling and power through its coursework, public-facing scholarship, and programming. Reading about the programming of the Center in the *Southern Register* and reading articles published in *Study the South* taught me about the kinds of work being done here. Bobby J. Smith II’s article “Mississippi’s War against the War on Poverty” in *Study the South* is my favorite kind of historical writing, critiquing the powerful and demonstrating that the Mississippi Delta as it exists today is neither inevitable nor natural, but the product of generations of successive investments, policy decisions, divestments, and grassroots struggles. The kind of writing that goes beyond the statement that “many people in the Delta are poor” to ask *why* that is.

The interdisciplinary scholar Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote about how history can either interrogate or support the powerful in his landmark text *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Trouillot wrote, “We are never as steeped in history as when we pretend not to be, but if we stop pretending, we may gain in understanding what we lose in false innocence. Naiveté is often an excuse for those who exercise power. For those upon whom that power is exercised, naiveté is always a mistake.”

Stories can obscure or clarify; lie or expose. The stories we tell ourselves about this region can limit our imaginations or expand them. There are many people in the Delta, in Mississippi, in the South, who are working to purge naiveté, who through cooperation and community, through art and scholarship, through storytelling in all its forms are making our world comprehensible and imagining how it can be better. I want to use my time in the Southern Studies program to be part of those interdisciplinary communities of practice that are asking *why* and *how* and *what if?*

Interpreting the Past,

George McDaniel Seeks to Tell Stories of People Who Have Been Marginalized by History

George McDaniel's enthusiasm is palpable. He recently became the director of interpretation at the five-hundred-acre Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in his hometown of Charleston, South Carolina, and he is excited to talk about the opportunities presented at this storied site along the banks of the Ashley River. In his new role, he is responsible for creating interpretative programs across the entire site.

McDaniel's work involves weaving the complex story of the Drayton family, who has owned the property for more than three hundred years, with that of enslaved and, later, free African Americans who have lived and worked on the site since the Draytons' arrival. In doing so, McDaniel hopes visitors will learn from this comprehensive narrative of the property.

"At Magnolia Plantation and Gardens we have three pillars, which are history, horticulture, and nature, and I interweave all three into interpretation across the site," McDaniel said. "Magnolia has made a conscious and concerted effort to move toward being a nationally renowned historic site, in keeping with other sites in Charleston, such as Drayton Hall and Middleton Place."

For McDaniel, who earned his master's degree in Southern Studies in 2018, being at Magnolia is a seamless transition from his graduate

work and life experiences. Previously, he earned a history degree at Davidson College and then toured the Southeast as a musician. While in Oxford, he focused on African American and public history, emphasizing interpretation at the L. Q. C. Lamar House and at the Burns-Belfry Museum and Multicultural Center, which was the first African American church established in Oxford after the Civil War. He also served on the University of Mississippi Slavery Working Group, which researched and interpreted the history of slavery at the university, and was a founding member of the Lafayette Oxford Community Archive Library.

"Over the past few years since leaving Oxford, whether I was working for Audubon South Carolina researching enslaved freedom seekers in the swamps of the Lowcountry, or uncovering the world of an eighteenth-century Quaker in Revolutionary Charles Town for South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust, I was always looking for different avenues to explore and tell the stories of people who have largely been marginalized by history, which was instilled in me at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and through Southern Studies," McDaniel said.

There is no "typical day" for McDaniel, as a site with more than two hundred thousand annual visitors

is constantly evolving. However, McDaniel is focused on research that allows him and the interpreters at Magnolia to tell a much broader story of the place and its residents. According to their website, "It's about the people who toiled in the rice fields—enslaved men, women, and children who lived and worked on the property. Four former slave cabins have been preserved and restored. They now provide a focal point for education and discussion about the history of slavery and African American culture."

Magnolia was one of Charleston's first tourist destinations. Although tourists traditionally visited Magnolia for the historic gardens, McDaniel plans to bring the story of the enslaved and free African American workers to the forefront, which he believes is crucial in telling the Magnolia story. "African Americans were the ones who cleared the swamp to make the rice fields, and then harvested the rice fields," he said. "We have a unique situation where visitors can explore our trails on foot or even ride the nature train to see the environment from which those fields were carved. Further, visitors can encounter the alligators and snapping turtles and water moccasins and copperheads, which would have been confronted by the enslaved."

As a part of that telling, McDaniel understands the need to give voice to

Imagining the Future



George McDaniel at work at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in Charleston, South Carolina

COURTESY GEORGE MCDANIEL

those who have long been voiceless. “We’ve been able to identify the names of 537 people who were enslaved here. So as part of the large Juneteenth celebration, with Joe McGill from the Slave Dwelling Project and other people doing living history, we had a ceremony where the names of all 537 were read aloud.”

McDaniel credits his time in Southern Studies, especially his work with Jodi Skipper and Behind the Big House and her southern heritage tourism course, as being the foundation of his work. “In this position as the director of interpretation, I’m having to think about all these facets and different things that sometimes I’m not familiar with. For example, I’m not a horticulturalist,” McDaniel

said. “But I’m a historian, and given that Southern Studies is an interdisciplinary program, it’s invaluable in working in public history because you’re thinking on your feet quickly and learning all of these different things. I even utilize William Faulkner and thinking about what it means to be in an historic plantation and what this specific site can tell us within the larger context of the South.”

He also credits Janisse Ray’s memoir *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* and poems by Jake York for providing inspiration. “I often think of Jake’s poem ‘Gone with the Wind,’ which has that poignant repeating line about things that are ‘not here anymore.’ I am drawn to that idea of historical memory and how that shapes the

world in which we live. I especially enjoy exploring how we can use that in our interpretation here at Magnolia,” he said.

McDaniel’s long-term goal is to transform Magnolia into a world-class historic site. “I’d like to realize the magnificent potential of Magnolia and, in doing so, to elevate its status as one of the top sites in South Carolina as well as at the national level,” he said.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

If you are a Southern Studies student interested in an internship with McDaniel, email him at gmdaniel@magnoliaplantation.com. If you would like to be featured as part of the In The Courtyard alumni feature, email rebeccac@olemiss.edu.

Getting to Know the Blues

Study the South

Research Fellow Spends
Time in the Archives



COURTESY MANDY TRUMAN

Mandy Truman

Each summer for the past four years, the Center's *Study the South* journal sponsors a fellow to conduct research in the University of Mississippi's Archives and Special Collections in the J. D. Williams Library in support of a dissertation or book project. This summer's research fellow was Mandy Truman, a doctoral student at Texas State University in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies.

The title of her project is "Knowing the Blues: Music Tourism, Historical Representation, and Cultural Economy in Clarksdale, Mississippi." She first became interested in researching blues and music tourism in Clarksdale after participating in an undergraduate cultural geography field course through Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas.

"The weeklong field course in Clarksdale immersed undergraduate geography students in the culture and history of the Mississippi Delta and in the city through visits to places such as Red's and the Riverside Hotel," Truman said. "From my very first visit, I was drawn to this city by the people I met, the music I heard, the places I experienced, the interactions I encountered, and by my wanting to understand the long history of the Delta that remains visible in many ways. The more I visited Clarksdale, the more I knew I wanted to focus on this city for my graduate studies—to understand the development of the blues tourist economy."

For Truman, the city's rich blues and civil rights history, specifically in what was historically the Black side of town, known as the New World District, is a rich subject matter. "Blues tourism developed in downtown Clarksdale, where buildings have been restored and new



Boxes of materials from the Sid Graves Collection in the University of Mississippi's Archives and Special Collections

businesses have been established. But downtown Clarksdale was historically known as the white side of town, where blues music would've never been heard during the Jim Crow era. In the New World District, though, where Black businesses thrived and supported the community, blues music developed, evolved, and could be heard on every corner since the early 1900s," she said.

Every visit Truman made to Clarksdale saw the growth of mostly white-owned businesses downtown, while the number of demolished buildings and empty lots in the New World District also continued to increase. "After witnessing the rapid decline and continued demolition of historic structures in the New World District, I knew I would focus my dissertation research on understanding what this portion of Clarksdale meant to the Black community members who lived there. Residents there still have valuable stories to share about blues and civil rights history," she said. "I also wanted to focus on the uneven development of the city's blues tourist economy and why there has been no effort made to preserve the historic Black part of town, while downtown Clarksdale continues to benefit from the Black culture and traditions that evolved in the New World District."

Truman had conversations with many people who experienced the New World District while it was thriving, and it became clear to her that blues music and the civil rights movement both created unity and identity within the Black community, and both were used as forms of resistance. "After speaking to community members, it is apparent that

while living under the constraints of the Jim Crow era, Black residents of the New World District were united by the civil rights movement. Blues music also brought people together and created strength within their community," Truman said.

"Materials in the J. D. Williams Library's Archives and Special Collections helped me to understand this connection between blues music and the civil rights movement," Truman said. "I looked to the early issues of *Living Blues* magazine to read through articles and interviews with blues musicians discussing their early lives and how this influenced their music. Descriptions and the language used by the musicians provided an understanding of the racial environment they lived in, shaping their thoughts and understanding of the world around them."

She also utilized the Freedom Riders Oral Histories in Special Collections. "This collection provided many testimonies of how the freedom riders would create music in their jail cells inside Parchman Penitentiary, not only to defy the guards who demanded they remain quiet, but to uphold their sense of connectedness," Truman said.

Additionally, she said the Sid Graves Collection provided an understanding of the establishment of the Delta Blues Museum, which was founded by Graves and was one of the earliest blues attractions in Clarksdale for international travelers. "The documents I was able to observe showed early planning and early ideas, including a hand-drawn sketch of the museum in blue pen ink on a piece of notebook paper drawn by Sid himself," she said. "Sid understood the significance of blues history and culture and knew the value in preserving this history."

She examined a collection of Clarksdale documents, which contained a range of items that included blues festival flyers, Rooster Blues Records catalogs, "Here's Clarksdale" booklets from the mid 1970s, as well as a newspaper article from the mid-nineties discussing the goal to revitalize Clarksdale's New World District.

Research in the archives usually comes with a surprise, and for Truman, that was when she discovered a newspaper article about preserving the New World District in the Clarksdale Collection. "The New World and the history that it holds was actually found to be valuable, and it was believed that this history would draw tourists looking to experience the culture, heritage, and traditions that were shared by the Black residents in this portion of town," Truman said. "What surprised me the most during my research was discovering the overlooked opportunity to restore that part of town—the part of town that holds the history that is now being celebrated in the Clarksdale's revitalized downtown. This huge, missed opportunity would've allowed the stories, memories, culture, and traditions of the Black community in the New World District to live on for others to experience and share."

Previous *Study the South* research fellows include Bobby J. Smith II and Anna F. Kaplan, whose subsequent work was published in *Study the South*, and Xavier Sivels, who starts as an instructor in the Center's Southern Studies program at the University of Mississippi this fall.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

BITA HONARVAR



The Blue Willow Inn in Social Circle, Georgia. Its new owners hope to reopen the restaurant by Thanksgiving of this year.

BREAKING the Pattern

New Owners Shift Course at the Blue Willow Inn,
a Longtime Lost Cause Dining Destination

By Justin Lo • Photography by Bita Honarvar

You can glimpse the South in the West African dishes that Carmenia Morgan-Tyrus cooks at her little bistro in Covington, Georgia, a franchise-heavy exurb thirty miles east of Atlanta. She prepares jollof rice the way her late half-sister, Musulyn Morgan, taught her, “like a jambalaya without all the seafood,” she said. Over pale, starchy orbs of fufu, she ladles some stock fortified by shards of smoked meat and shellfish, an African pepper stew that echoes gumbo’s spicy richness. (She also fries a terrific chicken, which diners at the table next to mine don’t hesitate to mention.)

Even so, this Covington strip-mall spot feels worlds away from the Blue Willow Inn and Restaurant in the neighboring city of Social Circle, a touristy dining destination once-famous for its Southern granny-style cooking and hospitality, where the same Liberian-born immigrant is poised to take the helm, both as co-owner and head chef.

Musulyn’s International Restaurant, named for Morgan-Tyrus’s older half-sister, is ensconced beside a bustling karate dojo. African tribal masks grace the restaurant walls, along with a framed photo of Morgan near the front.

The Blue Willow Inn resides in a century-old, 7,000-square-foot, neoclassical mansion, which served as a whites-only clubhouse for much of the twentieth century. It’s often repeated that *Gone with the Wind* author Margaret Mitchell was a frequent visitor—perhaps even based the mythical Tara on the home—its luster and grandeur long-linked to a whitewashed narrative of the antebellum South.

For three decades, before abruptly closing at the beginning of Covid, the Blue Willow pushed a plantation garb-wearing, porch-sitting vision of its own, sanitized for the enjoyment of culinary travelers from 180 countries and all fifty states. Neither slavery, nor descendants of enslaved people, were featured in this retelling. Indeed, the *Blue Willow Inn Cookbook*’s chapter regarding the history of Southern food omits any mention of

the many generations of Black cooks who helped shape the cuisine.

African American businessman Andre Merkerson saw a business opportunity when he took over this local landmark in 2022. He had a vision for the Blue Willow where folks who looked like him weren’t relegated to the kitchen and edited out of the narrative. But he first needed to find a chef undaunted by its scale and its history.

Merkerson first learned of Musulyn’s from his wife and soon heard a friend rave about the restaurant. Acting on their suggestion, Merkerson pitched Morgan-Tyrus the idea of reopening the Blue Willow Inn together immediately after tasting her food. She accepted the challenge. After all, this wasn’t the first time she’d had to branch out.

As a teenager in the 1980s,

Carmenia Morgan-Tyrus sits outside the Blue Willow Inn in Social Circle, Georgia. The former restaurant will soon be renovated and reopened with Morgan-Tyrus at the helm as co-owner and chef.



BITA HONARVAR

FROM THE PAGES OF GRAVY

Morgan-Tyrus emigrated across the Atlantic from West Africa. As the mother of a six-month-old, she moved from New England all the way down to Georgia. As a middle-aged medical professional, she pivoted from nursing to culinary school after her half-sister's pancreatic cancer diagnosis in 2014. And as a rookie restaurant owner, she had opened Musuly'n's less than two years before Merkerson approached her, following a decade in private catering. Joining the effort to reopen the Blue Willow—a task fraught with the burden of meeting the community's high expectations and the weight of pushing the restaurant beyond the stale narratives once central to its success—is her next challenge.



There are, of course, other dining rooms in the South with Lost Cause origins. This ideology spread like a virus, infecting the region's political and cultural institutions in the post-Civil War era.

At the heart of it, the Lost Cause was as much about reclaiming power on behalf of white Southerners as it was about redeeming them. This insidious myth was often wielded by the plantation class as a central tenant of a multi-pronged cultural attack: It aided violent campaigns to reverse political gains and freedoms won by African Americans during Reconstruction. It set the stage for white resistance to racial integration when federal law dismantled repressive Jim Crow practices. It rewrote history, promoting the ideas that the Civil War had been fought over states' rights rather than slavery and that all enslavers were benevolent toward those they held in bondage.

In Richmond, Virginia, where I live, traces of it endure at a place called the Commonwealth Club. This highfalutin gentlemen's club, founded in 1890 by former Confederate soldiers who originally voted to name it the "Lee Club," was a notorious den of Lost Cause exploits. Toasts were raised each year to Jefferson Davis, president of

the Confederacy, on the anniversary of his inauguration. Balls were thrown in honor of Generals Lee and Jackson. For years, it was tradition for the club's long-serving Black maître d' to delight drunken crowds with his recitation of Lee's Farewell Address.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the club infamously feuded with legislators over its exclusionary practices after members refused to invite Black or (white) female officeholders to high-profile political events held there. (They eventually capitulated to public pressure and accepted their first Black member, a doctor, in 1988, although they continued to refuse admittance to women.) While the city itself, the former capital of the Confederacy, has since toppled the chiseled visages of its fallen leaders, portraits of them are still on display throughout the club.

If its members' staid taste in matters of food and wine are any indication—think Caesar salad followed by crab cakes—change doesn't come easily or often to a Lost Cause-era dining room weighed down by distorted ideas of the former Confederacy and the antebellum way of life it sought to defend. The Commonwealth Club website continues to proclaim itself "proud of its history," a history it seemingly refuses to interrogate and that threatens both its present and its future.

What makes the Blue Willow's story so remarkable is how it's working to find a way forward, away from the past, both real and imagined.



The Blue Willow Inn's story begins in 1917. John Upshaw Jr., a wealthy farmer, built the house that would later become the Blue Willow. Sited on a five-acre plot that had been in his family since the mid-1800s, Upshaw and his brother had turned the land into a lucrative cotton plantation after the turn of the century. Fronted by fluted Corinthian columns and a grand, two-story portico, it was a spitting image of his brother Sanders'

place across the street, erected a year earlier, except bigger and better. Upshaw made sure of this, outfitting the brick mansion with all manner of opulence—beveled glass fanlights in the entryway, paneled mahogany doors, inlaid oak floors from room to room, and a stained-glass window above the landing. In lieu of the slate on his brother's roof, he sprang for red tile.

Margaret Mitchell, whose novel became a defining work of Lost Cause literature, was originally wedded to Upshaw's cousin Red and visited the home throughout their courtship. It's said that the writer based the primary love interest of *Gone with the Wind*, a smuggler-turned-Confederate soldier named Rhett, on her first husband.

The white supremacist cause must have resonated with Upshaw, so much so that, after he and his wife Bertha passed, the property was converted into a racially segregated clubhouse in the 1950s, consistent with the man's dying wishes.

In his will, Upshaw specifically bequeathed a successive interest in both of his plantations "for the benefit of the white children" of Social Circle. As for the house and land on North Cherokee Road, he left them to a cadre of social clubs. Among those he charged with running the Bertha Upshaw Clubhouse—as he specified it was to be called—were local chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), a Confederate heritage group; and the Daughters of the American Revolution, a historically white organization with a record of racial exclusion. The Baptist and Methodist missionary societies were also named, as was the World War I veterans' association and the PTA.

The white residents of Social Circle regularly used the Upshaws' former home for meetings, dinners, school proms, and dances. At one meeting in March 1972, a local UDC chapter leader regaled members with details about the dedication of a marble statue of Margaret Mitchell in the Georgia state capitol rotunda.

Andre Merkerson, co-owner
of the Blue Willow Inn.



A city-run community pool was added to the side of the property, along with a Little League baseball field out back—both of which were reserved for white residents, even after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Citing discrimination, several local residents and the federal government eventually sued the clubhouse in 1974 and 1975. Black residents claimed that they sought to use the club facilities but were refused access. A federal judge ruled in their favor and ordered that all clubhouse facilities be racially integrated.

In a final show of resistance, the local clubs renounced title to the Upshaw house rather than comply with civil rights laws.



The Upshaw house sat empty, in defiance of racial progress, until a white Church of God minister named Homer Harvey came along in 1985 and

purchased the place for his congregation. Several years later, Harvey agreed to sell it for \$200,000 to his friends and parishioners Louis and Billie Van Dyke, the couple who brought the Blue Willow to life. (The reverend's wife's recipe for pineapple casserole appears in the restaurant's first cookbook, published in 1996.)

The Van Dykes, who previously owned a few restaurants in the area, debuted their Southern buffet-style dining room on Thanksgiving Day, 1991. As befit its name, the walls were decorated with the blue willow–patterned china they avidly collected. Fresh flowers adorned the tables. And local high-school students dressed in wide hoop skirts, dubbed “the Antebellum Girls,” doled out glasses of fresh lemonade and tea to arriving guests.

“Guests at the Blue Willow Inn Restaurant are encouraged to absorb and enjoy the slower pace of the Old South,” the owners declared in their 1996 cookbook. “[They] are treated

to genuine Southern hospitality of a bygone era.”

White food writers happily reinforced this storyline. “For here the clock has stopped,” wrote Jane and Michael Stern, professing love for the Blue Willow in a second cookbook that the well-known duo authored with the Van Dykes. “This is the Old South, where beautiful wasp-waisted girls flutter about in silk gowns offering sweet tea to those who are sitting on the porch awaiting supper.”

Dining in Historic Georgia, a 1992 restaurant guide that features a pretty photo of the Blue Willow on the cover, had this to say: “Take your Yankee friends. THIS is The South.”

The restaurant “transforms even the staunchest ‘Yankee’ into a pleasant ‘Carpetbagger,’” joked the *Forsyth County News* in 2001, adding that, after trying the food, “those folks become ‘Damn Yankees’ who never again want to leave.”

Tourists eagerly exploring the antebellum trail came by the busload. In its heyday, the Blue Willow Inn welcomed thousands of guests each week.

Tourists eagerly exploring the antebellum trail came by the busload. In its heyday, the Blue Willow Inn welcomed thousands of guests each week. And for six years straight, it was voted *Southern Living's* best small-town restaurant in the South.

As the foot traffic grew, so, too, did the square footage of this theme park-y tribute to this version of the old South. The Bertha Upshaw Clubhouse swimming pool was paved over and replaced by a gift shop bordered with decorative fountains and the baseball field bulldozed to make room for a mall-sized parking lot and shopping village that housed a vintage diner.

Inspired by Mrs. Wilkes' Dining Room, an iconic, communal, eat-your-fill-style boardinghouse restaurant in Savannah that supplied some of their recipes, the Blue Willow was centered on a bountiful U-shaped buffet. Fried chicken and baked ham, black-eyed peas and porky collards, sweet potato soufflé and buttermilk biscuits, peanut butter pie and peach cobbler. It was the fried green tomatoes, however, that put the restaurant on the map, thanks to the 1991 Hollywood film *by that name* and a timely review from syndicated columnist Lewis Grizzard titled, "Fried Green Tomato Hunt Ends at Blue Willow Inn."

Assisting Mrs. Van Dyke in the kitchen were several African American women, including longtime head cook Ann Lowe, who'd been there since day one and was an essential part of the operation. A few of the recipes in the Inn's cookbooks are attributed to Lowe, who's since retired, including one for the chicken stew she'd make for her ailing employer during flu season.

Still, it was always the Van Dykes' names that appeared in books, newspaper writeups, magazine profiles, and television spots.

Some residents of Social Circle took pride in the restaurant, which became its main tourist attraction and employed close to a hundred people in town. Downtown director Amber McKibben said it was where a lot of her high school friends worked in the 1990s and where her family would take out-of-town visitors. It's also where she and her husband hosted their wedding rehearsal dinner. And despite the Confederate pageantry, the restaurant's food began to attract Black patrons as well: When Andre Merkerson's parents first moved to Georgia in 2003, they'd often call their son, then still living in New York, to rave about the Blue Willow's Sunday brunch.

"Everyone knows Social Circle for the Blue Willow," McKibben said.



Social Circle, a city of only eleven square miles a little under an hour outside of Atlanta, has changed a lot in recent years. Its population has nearly doubled to around 5,000 people since the Blue Willow first opened. Newcomers are attracted by global companies, such as Facebook and Takeda Pharmaceuticals, that have recently opened offices there. Modern eateries and cafés have replaced antique shops.

This city, whose infrastructure was once so critical to the Confederate cause it was burned to the ground for it, has made gestures toward better race relations as well. In 2021, the city council, comprised of an equal number of Black and white council

members, dedicated the bridge along old Highway 11 to Robert "Bobby" Howard. Howard, an African American civil rights activist and resident who passed that year, was one of the lead plaintiffs in the desegregation lawsuit against the Upshaw property.

This evolving narrative of the city is mirrored by big, historic changes taking place at the Blue Willow Inn itself—changes that many are excited about, said McKibben. She believes that reopening the restaurant will help draw more business to Social Circle.

The 2008 recession, coupled with some lousy property investments, outstanding loans, and the fact that the Blue Willow had ceased turning a profit, left the Van Dykes no choice but to file for bankruptcy in 2010. Louis died later that year.

Billie Van Dyke sold the restaurant as part of the bankruptcy proceedings but continued to run it by leasing it back from its new owner. Hard as she tried to keep things going, tour buses dwindled and business slowed. The Blue Willow abruptly closed in the early weeks of the Covid pandemic.

Then, in 2022, Merkerson bought the estate for \$2.5 million with the help of several out-of-state investors. The native of Queens, New York, moved to Covington seventeen years ago for its investment potential. Today, he owns some 500 rental units in Georgia.

It was his parents who put the Blue Willow Inn on his radar. Ever since relocating to Georgia a few years before him, they'd been smitten with the food. Although Merkerson's grandfather was born in nearby Fulton County, these New York natives had never previously enjoyed what one



A platter of cassava leaf stew, rice, and plantains prepared by chef Carmenia Morgan-Tyrus, owner of Musulyn's International Restaurant in Covington, Georgia.

might consider a proper Southern meal in the South. They'd drive forty-five minutes to the Blue Willow on Sundays after church.

After acquiring the Blue Willow, Merkerson convinced celebrity disc jockey Clyde "DJ Boof" Joseph, who is also Black, to invest in the project. The restaurant is currently being renovated, and the goal is to reopen before Thanksgiving 2024.

For Morgan-Tyrus, whom Merkerson chose to run the operation, it's a dream come to fruition. She and Musulyn had envisioned one day owning something like the Blue Willow, an all-in-one venue consisting of a dining room, event space, and gift shop.

Her current restaurant in Covington specializes in what Morgan-Tyrus calls "Afrofusion" cuisine, a creative mix of Southern, Afro-Caribbean, and West African fare. This isn't exactly the genre that the Blue Willow is known for. At the same time, the root of Southern food runs deep for her—not only because it originated with the enslaved people of West Africa, but also because her birthplace of Liberia was once a settlement of freeborn and emancipated Black folks from

America, whose own repatriation led to that of the cuisine they carried with them.

It is that deeply held connection to the South she wants to bring to the table.

"It's something that I'm confident I can do—and do it even better," said Morgan-Tyrus, who, while vowing to stay within the boundaries of the Blue Willow's traditional cuisine, aims to put her personal mark on it—like enlivening collards with her own spice blends or amping up the chutney on the signature fried green tomatoes.

She and Merkerson have plans beyond reopening the main dining room. They're developing the Blue Willow's first-ever bar program and adding coffee shop to the mix.



Although the history of the Blue Willow Inn has had many named authors, none of them were Black. Now, for the first time in the structure's 107-year existence, Black people and perspectives will be incorporated into the story, one that is theirs to tell at last.

Others, in Mrs. Van Dyke's shoes, may have stood against anyone who dared to encroach on their legacy. But not the longtime matriarch of the Blue Willow.

"It hurt me for it to be empty and sitting there just wasting away," she said, noting that the building had gone into "really bad disrepair."

Van Dyke, now eighty-seven, confessed that she never quite healed from the pain of having to sell the business after her husband passed. But again, when compelled to decide between letting their legacy languish and seeing it sold to someone new, the choice was always clear. So, when the owner pulled the plug during the pandemic, she knew the only way of ensuring the lights stayed on at the Blue Willow was for them to find another buyer.

It was still hard, of course, for Van Dyke to think of handing over the reins to a stranger—or to imagine the Blue Willow ever serving alcohol. Ultimately, though, she saw a worthy successor in Morgan-Tyrus, to whom she's given her blessing and imparted recipes and decades of institutional knowledge. She even wants to come out of retirement to greet guests at the door.

As the Blue Willow Inn's cofounder, she says she couldn't be more pleased for the West African chef to carry on the restaurant's legacy. "[Morgan-Tyrus] is a very unique person, and I'm just thankful that she's going to be in charge of it," said Van Dyke. "She has the love for it—like I did."

The significance of all this isn't lost on its new owners. "We are just excited about the opportunity to change not only the face of Blue Willow, but also the neighborhood of Social Circle," said Merkerson, highlighting Morgan-Tyrus' Liberian heritage and the involvement of Black entrepreneurs.

While capitalizing on the restaurant's name and popularity, which Merkerson believes will help in promoting its reopening, he bills the rebirth as "Blue Willow 2.0." And unlike their predecessors, he and Morgan-Tyrus won't be sticking to a whitewashed script about the past.

This essay was first published in the Summer 2024 issue of Gravy, the Southern Foodways Alliance's journal.

Providing Inspiration

Berkley Hudson Gift Provides Support for Visiting Documentarians Series

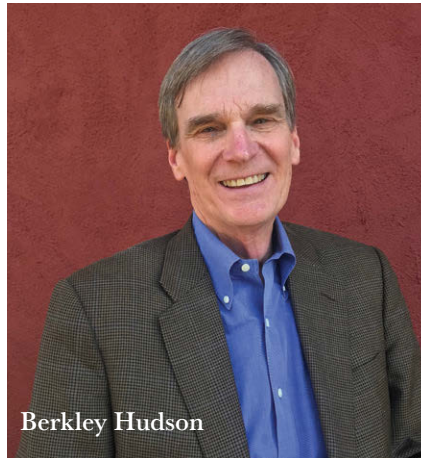
Training the next generation of storytellers through documentary study is a key component of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. A generous \$60,000 gift from Berkley Hudson will facilitate bringing visiting documentarians to the Center to show students what they are doing out in the field.

“I think there is a big spectrum for what constitutes innovative and creative work in documentary, and I think the Center does a fantastic job of encouraging that,” Hudson said.

Originally from Columbus, Mississippi, Hudson is an associate professor emeritus at the Missouri School of Journalism. He earned his bachelor’s degree in history and journalism from the University of Mississippi, a master’s degree from Columbia University, and a doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. For twenty-five years he was a journalist working at both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Providence Journal*, where his work received numerous awards.

Hudson has been familiar with the Center since the early 1980s. While a journalist working in Providence, Rhode Island, he interviewed former Center director Bill Ferris and wrote an article about Oxford. He wrote three entries in the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, about civil rights activist Medgar Evers, the composer William Grant Still, and railroad engineer Casey Jones, and then wrote about the “Encycloparty” for the *Los Angeles Times*. He also wrote a *Mississippi Encyclopedia* entry about photographer Birney Imes.

The field of documentary studies is significant to Hudson, as he has curated and researched the photographs taken by O. N. Pruitt, a white conservative photographer who documented



Berkley Hudson

TOM RANKIN

Black and white community life in Columbus from 1920 to 1960. Pruitt’s photos included family picnics, parades, funerals, executions, and a lynching. Some of them are even of Hudson and his family as boys at his grandmother’s house. In the 1970s, Hudson along with Imes, Jim Carnes, David Gooch, and Mark Gooch—five boyhood friends—discovered the Pruitt photographs and, in 1987, preserved the collection. Hudson wrote his dissertation about Pruitt and put together a traveling exhibition sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities in February 2022. The University of North Carolina Press, in partnership with Duke University’s Center for Documentary Studies, published his companion book, *O. N. Pruitt’s Possum Town: Photographing Trouble and Resilience in the American South*. Hudson discussed the photograph collections as part of the Center’s SouthTalks series in 2022.

“I think documentary is a really broad field in a lot of ways,” he said. “What does it mean to document? What are documents? And even things like my working on the Pruitt project, it just totally shifted how I thought about images as documents

of culture and all kinds of ways people live their lives. There is an importance of having the images and studying images and publishing images and researching images.”

Katie McKee, director of the Center, said she is deeply grateful for Hudson supporting the visiting documentarian series. “Professor Hudson is an accomplished documentarian in his own right, and we were admirers of his work even before he visited UM as part of the SouthTalks lecture series,” McKee said. “Thanks to his generosity, we will now have the resources to bring students—particularly in our MFA in Documentary Expression program—into close and regular contact with professional practitioners of the documentary arts, exposing them to a wide range of models for their own storytelling.”

Hudson said he is leaving it up to Center leadership to decide who will be invited as visiting documentarians. “There is so much innovation going on, and I just want there to be a place for experimentation and for people who are innovative in terms of doing documentary work,” he said.

Hudson invites others passionate about documentary work and the American South to donate to the endowment as a way to inspire and energize students at the Center. Checks, with Dr. Berkley Hudson Visiting Documentarian Endowment written in the memo line, can be mailed to the University of Mississippi Foundation at 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655. To learn more about supporting the Center, contact Delia Childers, associate director of development, at dgchilde@olemiss.edu or 901-409-5991.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Eudora Welty Award Winners Announced

Each year the Center 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, the awards are given for creative writing in either prose or poem form. 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, concluded with publication in 2017, and now also has an online component: MississippiEncyclopedia.org.

The first-place winner is Eden Bodie from Oxford High School for the short story “Girl.” The judges said the story was extremely clever and a provocative engagement with the futuristic landscape. It was a strongly crafted piece that showed creativity and imagination.



Mary Xie

REBECCA LAUCK CLEARLY



Eden Bodie

REBECCA LAUCK CLEARLY

This year’s second-place winner is “I Am a Dandelion,” a poem by Mary Xie from Oak Grove High School in Hattiesburg. The judges felt it was a thoughtful use of poetry to wrestle with internal struggle and important questions of identity, and that it channeled strong emotion into poetic form.

The award ceremony took place on Sunday, July 21. Both students were able to attend the dinner on the grounds at Rowan Oak that evening and the awards ceremony later that night at the Faulkner Conference.

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

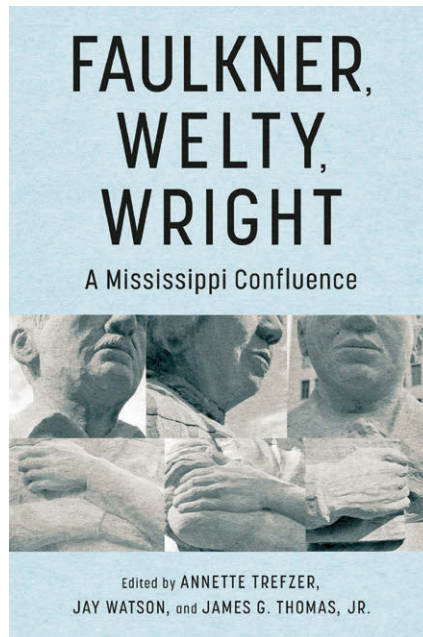
Faulkner, Welty, Wright: A Mississippi Confluence

A New Volume in the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Series Is Published

Working closely in each other's orbit in Mississippi, William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, and Richard Wright created lasting portraits of southern culture, each from a distinctly different vantage point. Taking into consideration their personal, political, and artistic ways of responding to the histories and realities of their time and place, this latest volume in the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Series, *Faulkner, Welty, Wright: A Mississippi Confluence*, published by the University Press of Mississippi, offers comparative scholarship that forges new connections—or, as Welty might say, traces new confluences—across texts, authors, identities, and traditions. The new volume is edited by Annette Trefzer, Jay Watson, and James G. Thomas, Jr.

“The concept for this collection is such a natural,” said coeditor Jay Watson, “I have a hard time believing that we somehow made it to 2021 without there having been a conference or an edited volume that brings together Mississippi's three greatest twentieth-century writers for comparative reflection and scrutiny. Especially in light of the emergent twenty-first century trio of Natasha Trethewey, Jesmyn Ward, and Kiese Laymon, it seems especially timely to revisit the giants of the state's twentieth-century literary landscape with an eye toward their achievements and their ongoing legacies.”

In the collection, contributors discuss a wide variety of these three authors' work, including Faulkner's *Light in August*, *Sanctuary*, and *Go Down, Moses*; Welty's *One Writer's Beginnings*, *The Optimist's Daughter*, and *Losing Battles*; and Wright's *Native Son*, *The Long Dream*, *12 Million Black Voices*, and *Black Boy*. Contributors to the volume include Anita



DeRouen, Susan V. Donaldson, Julia Eichelberger, W. Ralph Eubanks, Sarah Ford, Bernard Joy, John Wharton Lowe, Anne MacMaster, Rebecca Mark, Suzanne Marrs, Donnie McMahan, Kevin Murphy, Harriet Pollack, Annette Trefzer, Jay Watson, and Ryoichi Yamane.

Acknowledging that Mississippi ground was never level for any of the three writers, the fourteen essays in this volume turn from the familiar strategies of single-author criticism toward a mode of analysis more receptive to the fluid mergings of creative currents, placing Wright, Welty, and Faulkner in comparative relationship to each other as well as to other Mississippi writers such as Margaret Walker, Lewis Nordan, Natasha Trethewey, Jesmyn Ward, Steve Yarbrough, and Kiese Laymon. Doing so deepens and enriches readers' understanding of these literary giants and the Mississippi

modernism they made together. “This volume is necessary reading for anyone interested in how these three literary giants created Mississippi histories and stories from their unique vantage points,” said coeditor Annette Trefzer.

Annette Trefzer is professor of English at the University of Mississippi. She is author of *Exposing Mississippi: Eudora Welty's Photographic Reflections* and *Disturbing Indians: The Archaeology of Southern Fiction* and coeditor of *Global Faulkner*, *Faulkner's Sexualities*, *Faulkner and Mystery*, *Faulkner and Formalism: Returns of the Text*, and *Faulkner and the Native South*, all published by the University Press of Mississippi, and her work has appeared in many journals.

Jay Watson is Howry Professor of Faulkner Studies and Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Mississippi. He is author of many publications, including *William Faulkner and the Faces of Modernity*, *Forensic Fictions: The Lawyer Figure in Faulkner*, and *Fossil-Fuel Faulkner: Energy, Modernity, and the US South*. He is also coeditor of multiple volumes in University Press of Mississippi's Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Series.

James G. Thomas, Jr., is associate director for publications at the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture. He is an editor of the Center's twenty-four-volume *New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* and *The Mississippi Encyclopedia*; coeditor with Jay Watson of the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Series; and editor of *Conversations with Barry Hannah*. His work has appeared in *Ethnic Heritage in Mississippi: The Twentieth Century*, *Southern Cultures*, *Southern Quarterly*, and *Living Blues*.

Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference 2025

“Faulkner’s Bodies”

July 20–24, 2025 • University of Mississippi

Announcement and Call for Papers

www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/faulkner

Critics have long recognized William Faulkner as one of twentieth-century literature’s foremost students and chroniclers of the vicissitudes and viscosity of embodiment, in both human and nonhuman forms. There’s still much to be said, however, about the role of “the” body in his imagination and work: characters rendered in strikingly embodied terms; recurring scenes of bodily extremity and damage; narrative immersions in perception and affect; the often-violent inscription of identity, difference, and other modalities of meaning on bodies; not to mention the writer’s own complex embodiments of literary authorship. We will take up such questions and more at the fifty-first annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, over five days of keynote lectures and readings, academic panels, teaching sessions, exhibits, tours, and other activities.

Topics could include, but are not at all limited to: the authorial body: images, performances, physical conditions, textual traces; representing embodiment: style,

technique, narrative, lexicon; the body in Faulkner’s visual art: drawings, sketches, illustrations; readerly bodies: the somatics of response and reception; infirm bodies: diseased, disabled, debilitated, aging, injured, invalid; monstrous bodies: gothic, grotesque, carnivalesque; dead or “dying” bodies: corpses, cadavers, carcasses, remains; trauma studies approaches to embodiment and representation; interspecies embodiment or other forms of transcorporeality; animal and vegetal bodies/embodiment in Faulkner; Faulknerian anatomy; embodied memory; posthuman embodiment: prostheses, cyborgs, machines; bodies and/as identities: racialized, gendered, sexed, sexualized, queered, classed; the body and/in consciousness: perception, emotion, affect, interoception; embodied states, experiences, extremes: hunger, desire, pregnancy, pain, sleep, nausea, orgasm, etc.; cognitive approaches to Faulknerian textuality and narrative; and Faulknerian *disembodiment*: as ideal, as aspiration, as fate or doom.

Comparative approaches to

Faulkner’s work are welcome. We especially encourage full panel proposals for sixty-minute conference sessions. Such proposals should include a one-page overview of the session topic or theme, followed by 400–500-word abstracts for each of the panel papers to be included. We also welcome individually submitted 400–500-word abstracts for 15–20-minute panel papers. Panel papers consist of approximately 2,500 words and will be considered by the conference program committee for possible expansion and inclusion in the conference volume published by the University Press of Mississippi.

Session proposals and panel paper abstracts must be submitted by January 31, 2025, preferably through email attachment. All manuscripts, proposals, abstracts, and inquiries should be addressed to Jay Watson, Department of English, C-135 Bondurant Hall, University of Mississippi, P.O. Box 1848, University, MS 38677-1848. E-mail: jwatson@olemiss.edu. Decisions for all submissions will be made by March 15, 2025.



STUDY *the* SOUTH

A CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOUTHERN CULTURE PUBLICATION

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Announcing the 2025 *Study the South* Research Fellowship

Scholars researching the South 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.

The funds will support travel and lodging expenses, and the remainder serves as a stipend. Research should take place between January 2025 and December 2025. The deadline for application is December 1, 2024, and the selection committee will notify the awardee by January 15, 2025.

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.

All scholars, including advanced graduate students, are eligible for the fellowship. Candidates should send a description of a research agenda (500 words max.), citing research questions and specific collections that seem most useful, to James G. Thomas, Jr., editor of *Study the South*, at jgthomas@olemiss.edu.

CALL FOR PAPERS

About the Journal

Study the South is a peer-reviewed, multimedia, online journal, published and managed by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. Founded in 2014, *Study the South* (www.StudytheSouth.com) exists to encourage interdisciplinary academic thought and discourse on the American South, particularly through the lenses of social justice, history, anthropology, sociology, music, literature, documentary studies, gender studies, religion, geography, media studies, race studies, ethnicity, folklife, and visual art.

Study the South publishes a variety of works by institutionally affiliated and independent scholars. Like the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, *Study the South* embraces a diversity of media, including written essays with accompanying audio, video, and photography components; documentary photography; interviews with scholars and artists; video projects; and book reviews.

Submissions

To submit work for consideration to *Study the South*, please email a completed manuscript as a Word document, along with any available illustrations, graphics, video, or audio, to editor James G. Thomas Jr. at jgthomas@olemiss.edu.

Final manuscripts and projects must attempt to build upon and expand the understanding of the American South in order to be considered for publication. Copyright for essays published in *Study the South* is retained by the authors.



Welcome to the



MISSISSIPPI ENCYCLOPEDIA

The award-winning encyclopedia, now online.

The online Mississippi Encyclopedia has recently added new entries on football coach and player Archie Cooley and on the Mississippi Petrified Forest. Here's another recent addition, this one on the Mississippi Flyway.

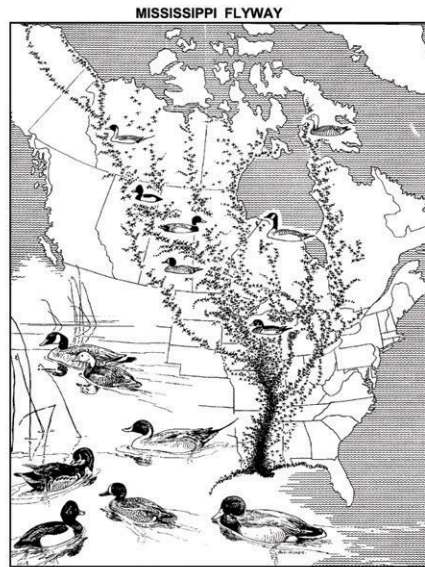
You can find this and other work about Mississippi's past and present online by going to www.mississippiencyclopedia.org.

Mississippi Flyway

The Mississippi Flyway is one of four migratory bird routes that spans the width of North America, extending into northern Canada and down into Central and South America as far as Colombia. The Mississippi Flyway, which flows through the length of the state, encompasses the Mississippi River and its basin, spanning twenty-one states (including Alaska) and narrowing where the Mississippi River feeds into the Gulf of Mexico. This avian flight path is used by large numbers of birds while migrating between their breeding grounds and their overwintering quarters.

Approximately half of North America's birds (between 320 and 350 species) depend on the Mississippi Flyway for their biannual migrations, making this area one of great importance to the biodiversity of not only the state of Mississippi but to all of North America. Notable species that traverse the Mississippi Flyway are Kirtland's warblers, eastern whippoorwills, peregrine falcons, whooping cranes, bald eagles, mallard ducks, and Canada geese. Critical resting and refueling stops along the flyway in Mississippi include the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, the Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge, and the Gulf Coast wetlands.

The Mississippi Flyway also contributes to the economy of the state, as it attracts thousands of hunters each year. For example, the Mississippi Delta region of the flyway attracted on average more than 14,000 duck hunters and 5,200 goose hunters each year between 2016 to 2020. More than 450,000 duck hunters and 285,000 goose hunters visit the entirety of the



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mississippi Flyway each year. Duck hunting on this flyway is so popular that the Mississippi Flyway contributes to 40 to 50 percent of the entire nation's duck harvests annually. The Mississippi Flyway, likewise, contributes to approximately 48 percent of the nation's waterfowl hunters, resulting in hunting-related economic impacts of \$1.44 billion annually. According to an article published in the *International Journal of Social Economics*, the opportunities created by hunting in the Mississippi Delta region of the flyway have generated more than 1,500 hunting-related part-time and full-time jobs.

The Mississippi Delta wetlands along the Mississippi Flyway compose an important habitat and ecosystem for North America's migrating birds. After the Great Mississippi Flood in 1927, the US Army Corps of Engineers began to levee and straighten the Mississippi River. These efforts were

meant to staunch the river's flooding, but they also reduced the historical floodplain of the Mississippi River by 90 percent. Today, the wetlands along the Mississippi River are experiencing the highest rate of ecosystem loss—a combination of habitat loss and habitat fragmentation—within the United States, with a loss of an estimated 18,500 acres a year. This loss is spurred in large part by human alteration of the Mississippi River, rising sea levels resulting from climate change, and urban and agricultural expansion.

Continued loss of these wetlands is expected to have dire economic consequences because of bird loss from the Mississippi Flyway due to habitat loss. Current estimates by the US Geological Survey predict that the loss of the wetlands will result in an annual decrease of 18,000 hunters and in hunting-related financial losses as large as \$32 million. States along the Mississippi Flyway, like Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee, have begun efforts to help restore and protect the wetlands, ultimately protecting the nation's avian biodiversity and the nation's hunting-related economy. The significant impacts that the Mississippi Flyway have on our nation's biodiversity and economy reinforces just how critical this area is to both the state and the nation.

Amy Sullivan
University of Mississippi

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Mississippi Encyclopedia are grateful to the Mississippi Humanities Council for its continued support of this project.

CONTRIBUTORS

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

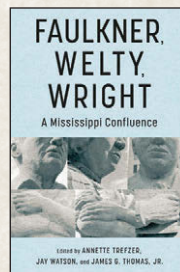
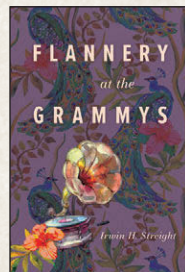
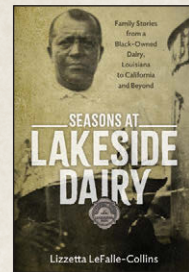
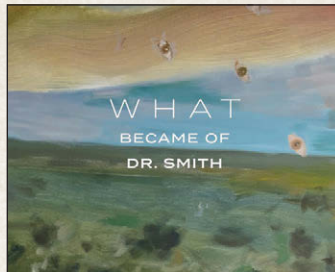
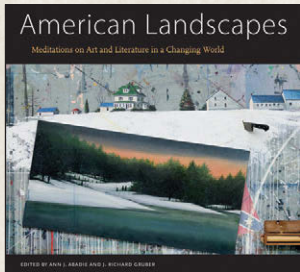
Amy Sullivan graduated from the University of Mississippi in May 2024 with a degree in biological science. She is currently working on a Master of Arts in Science Writing degree from Johns Hopkins University's Advanced Academic Programs division.

Save the Date!

The Thirty-First
Oxford Conference for the Book
will take place on April 2, 3, and 4, 2025.



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The theme for the Center for the Study of Southern Culture's upcoming 50th anniversary is "The South in All Directions." Your gift will help us take stock of the past, continue our work in the present, and plan a celebration for the future. Donate using the form below to support these ongoing Center activities and to help plan for our 50th-anniversary celebration in 2027. Thank you!

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