

THE SOUTHERN REGISTER

A Publication of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

The University of Mississippi

OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI, U.S.A.

WINTER 2025





The end of the semester is nearing as I write this, and you will read it early in the new year. We begin 2025 on the high notes of 2024. In fact, last Thursday was surely among my favorite days as director. There was so much going on in Barnard Observatory that we were nearly bursting at the seams, and when I needed to run back upstairs to retrieve a forgotten item, the din from downstairs brought me up short on the landing as I listened to the waves of conversation.

At the far end of Barnard, in the lecture hall, a class was in session. In the Gammill Gallery, the new student photography show had just gone up in anticipation of the annual Fall Documentary Showcase. Meanwhile in the foyer, guests were milling around another exhibit, this one about the lives of LGBTQ+ Mississippians as they are represented in the UM Archives and Special Collections, the final project of a cross-listed course called *Queer Mississippi*. And spread out through the rest of Barnard's first floor—in the conference room and next to the front desk, tucked under the stairs and set up beside the copier—were students from one of three senior-level capstone courses for Southern Studies majors and minors, all prepared to talk through visual representations of their final projects. The range of topics they engaged was eclectic and only partially represented here: the correlation of race and fraternity membership, the function of family potlucks, the influence of Italy on southern foodways, enrollment trends at UM, a photographic juxtaposition of life and death at a hunting camp, tailgating in the Grove (for good or ill, there's always one about tailgating in the Grove), a website of family oral histories, a study of Black female doctors practicing in the South, an analysis of the connections between economic class and food choice.

There are few better representations of what we do in Southern Studies than the activities of that one afternoon. We study “a South” that is both invented and historical, geographic and political. That “South” is “Souths”—plural, diverse, and changing. No one passing through Barnard during the final week of last semester could have concluded

otherwise. Undergraduate students don't have all of the answers—sometimes they don't even have the questions—but I am convinced that they will be better writers, critical thinkers, and engaged citizens because they grasped in Southern Studies how small questions always unfold into much larger ones.

A few weeks before this satisfying hum of activity, however, I had a different kind of day. The Wednesday afternoon following the November presidential election was sticky—quite literally. The humidity felt close, the air-conditioning in Barnard had been off for weeks, the mood was uneven—some students and faculty and staff were despondent, others a little giddy, all weirdly weary from the tension connected to the rollercoaster of this particular election season. Mid-afternoon the fire alarms in Barnard began to wail like banshees, provoked by no discernable cause but unrelenting in their insistence that we empty the building. In the scramble to be sure everyone was out, I found myself suddenly alone with the noise; I could see the crowd outside on the grass, but inside I felt momentarily suspended in sound. After the all-clear came, we stumbled to the end of the day with our ears ringing.

No matter our individual politics, we all can see that higher education is under assault these days—too expensive, too doctrinaire, too elite—but the alarm isn't only coming from inside the building. College presidents are summoned for grillings before Congress and the vocabulary of campus life has become self-conscious around values until recently thought fundamental to shared experience. I've been a professor for long enough to now be teaching the children of former students, and I've frankly reached the end of entertaining complaints that colleges turn students into liberals. If that were true, the state of Mississippi would be a different place, populated as it is by so many citizens and leaders educated in Oxford. What outcries about post-secondary instruction miss are its fundamental goals: to teach students to think for themselves, to make informed choices about the sources they consult, and to be able to defend articulately and thoughtfully the positions they adopt, wherever they fall on the political spectrum. We're doing that work here when we ask students to make public presentations of their research, when we help them hone the clarity of their writing, when we encourage them to engage one another in dialogue. The future of whatever we call “the South”—and all that constitutes the nation—depends upon a continued commitment to transmitting those skills.

So, here's to the start of a new year—and the promise of a new semester.

Katie McKee

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On the cover: *Books Pollinate Our Brain Gardens*, by Blair Hobbs

REGISTER STAFF

Editor: James G. Thomas, Jr.
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— SERIES —

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOUTHERN CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, NOON

Barnard Observatory

“Photography and Textiles”

Coulter Fussell



Coulter Fussell

Quilter and textile artist Coulter Fussell will present a visual slideshow surveying the development of artworks she sews at her studio in Water Valley, Mississippi. Her public-facing art studio is supplied entirely by community clothing and textile donations. She will focus on her latest developing series, which combines crowd-sourced textiles and crowd-sourced photography. Fussell’s works compare global conflicts, both historical and current, with interpersonal psychodramas—all while documenting rural landscape. Experimental enthusiasm, optimism, humor, and the philosophy that craft is the beginning and end of all art guides her work.



Spins

Fussell was born and raised in Columbus, Georgia, an old textile town. She is the youngest family quilter, hailing from generations of seamstresses and quilters. Fussell has exhibited at galleries across the country, and her works are in the permanent collections of the Columbus Museum of Art and the Mississippi Museum of Art.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 4:00 P.M.

Barnard Observatory

“An Evening with Steve Holland: Film and Conversation”

Steve Holland, Rex Jones, and Katie McKee



Steve Holland



Rex Jones

This SouthTalk will combine two of the Center’s favorite things: film and discussion. We invite former SouthDocs producer and current assistant professor of broadcast and digital journalism at Mississippi State University, Rex Jones, to screen his documentary *Jesus Was a Democrat*. The film captures funeral-home owner and Mississippi legislator Steve Holland as he

Spring 2025

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 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.

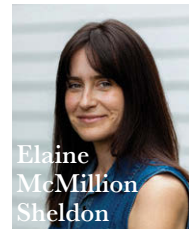
nears the conclusion of his thirty-six-year tenure in office. After the film, Center director Katie McKee will engage in a conversation with Holland, a Southern Studies alum. They will discuss how Holland navigated his intersecting environments—politics, his work at the funeral home, and his late-in-life decision to pursue a Southern Studies degree.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 6:00 P.M.

Overby Center Auditorium

Screening of *King Coal* + Q&A with Director

Elaine McMillion Sheldon



Elaine McMillion Sheldon

Elaine McMillion Sheldon is one of the Center’s visiting documentarians this spring. She will screen her film *King Coal*. A lyrical tapestry of a place and people, *King Coal* meditates on the complex history and future of the coal industry, the communities it has shaped, and the myths it has created. While situated in the communities under the reign of King Coal, the film transcends time and place, emphasizing how all are connected through an immersive mosaic of belonging, ritual, and imagination. Emerging from the long shadows of the coal mines, *King Coal* untangles the pain from the beauty and illuminates the innately human capacity for change.



Sheldon is an Academy Award-nominated and Emmy and Peabody Award-winning documentary filmmaker based in Appalachia. Known for her intimate, nuanced portrayals of rural communities, she brings an honest, humanizing lens to stories often

overlooked by mainstream media. With *King Coal*, Sheldon continues her exploration of Appalachian culture, drawing audiences into the heart of coal country to see a world beyond stereotypes and headlines.

This Visiting Documentarian Series is made possible in part by the Berkley Hudson Visiting Documentarian Fund.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 4:00 P.M.

Barnard Observatory

“Computers, Welfare, and Southern Politics: The Technological Environments of Government in Mississippi”

Marc Aidinoff



Marc Aidinoff

In this SouthTalk, Marc Aidinoff will explore what the government looks like when it becomes computerized and how the expectations of citizenship changed once it did. Moving from 1970 to the present, Aidinoff will trace the changing politics, practices, and technological environments of government in Mississippi by examining the computers that made the state function. It shows how questions of race, gender, and poverty became coded as technical choices of program administration.

Marc Aidinoff is an incoming assistant professor of the history of technology at Harvard University. His current book project, *Rebooting Liberalism*, examines the experiences of welfare in the US South in order to understand the changing politics and practices of an increasingly digital system of government.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, NOON

Barnard Observatory

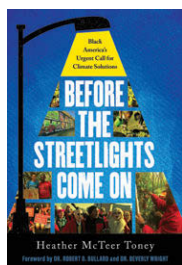
“The South’s Environmental Legacy: From Personal Accountability to Collective Power”

Heather McTeer Toney



Heather McTeer Toney

Heather McTeer Toney will discuss how the South’s environmental history—ranging from agriculture to extractive industries—has shaped individual and collective behaviors. She will focus on reframing the conversation from personal recycling habits to holding industries accountable and advocating for policy reform.



McTeer Toney is an attorney, environmentalist, speaker, and writer. She was the first Black, first female, and youngest mayor elected in Greenville, Mississippi, at age twenty-seven. In 2014, she was appointed by President Barack Obama as regional administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency’s

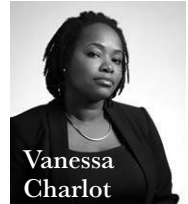
Southeast Region. Formerly the senior director for Moms Clean Air Force and vice president of community engagement for the Environmental Defense Fund, McTeer Toney currently serves as the executive director for the Beyond Petrochemicals Campaign. She lives with her husband and three children in Oxford, Mississippi. Her latest book is *Before the Streetlights Come On: Black America’s Urgent Call for Climate Solutions*.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 4:00 P.M.

Barnard Observatory

“Snapshot: Climate, Exhibition and Conversation”

Vanessa Charlot, Kariann Fuqua, and Brooke White



Vanessa Charlot

In the fall of 2023, *Southern Cultures* published *Snapshot: Climate*. This issue featured more than sixty photographs and accompanying short reflections from artists, activists, photojournalists, and scientists to provide a “snapshot” of climate impacts across the South. The feature became a travel exhibit featuring twenty-five photographs from the issue. The exhibit *Snapshot: Climate* will open in the Gammill Gallery in Barnard Observatory on January 21 and close on February 28. In this SouthTalk, University of Mississippi professor Kariann Fuqua will moderate a conversation with two featured artists in *Snapshot*, Vanessa Charlot and Brooke White.



Brooke White



Kariann Fuqua

Vanessa Charlot is an award-winning photographic artist, filmmaker, and assistant professor of media and communication at the University of Mississippi School of Journalism and New Media. Brooke White is director of the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Kariann Fuqua is an instructional assistant professor of art and the director of the Museum Studies Program at the University of Mississippi.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, NOON

Barnard Observatory

“Art in Barnard”

Robin Whitfield



Robin Whitfield

Robin Whitfield is a Mississippi painter whose mission is to connect to nature and to help others do the same. Whitfield will discuss her work, which begins with observations of nature in rivers, swamps, and forests. Her paintings are poetic explorations of visual and ecological relationships. She works on

RORY DOYLE

paper with traditional watercolors or directly with foraged plant and mineral pigments.

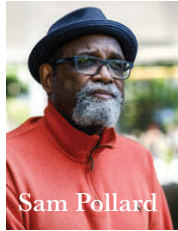
Whitfield lives and works in Grenada, Mississippi. She is currently a forest technology student at Holmes Community College.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 6:00 P.M.

Meek Hall Auditorium

Screening of *Lowndes County and the Road to Black Power* + Q&A with Director

Sam Pollard



Sam Pollard

This spring, Sam Pollard is one of the Center’s visiting documentarians. Pollard is a feature film and television video editor and documentary producer-director. In December 2022, the streaming service Peacock began featuring *Lowndes County and the Road to Black Power*, a film Pollard codirected with filmmaker Geeta Gandbhir. Through first-person accounts and searing archival footage,

Lowndes County and the Road to Black Power tells the story of the local movement and young Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organizers who fought not just for voting rights, but for Black Power in Lowndes County, Alabama.

In the fall of 2023, HBO premiered *South to Black Power*, which Pollard codirected with Llewellyn M. Smith. The documentary film stars *New York Times*

columnist Charles Blow and was inspired by his book *The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto*.

This Visiting Documentarian Series is made possible in part by the Berkley Hudson Visiting Documentarian Fund.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, NOON

Barnard Observatory

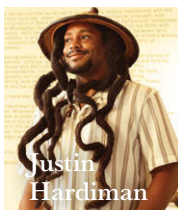
“Rootswell & SOIL: Reimagining Community Through Food, Art, and Stories of the Mississippi Delta”

**Tyler Yarbrough
Justin Hardiman**



Tyler Yarbrough

Rootswell is a growing movement in the Mississippi Delta, uniting farmers, chefs, corner stores, farmers’ markets, and creatives to transform the region’s food landscape. In this SouthTalk, we will hear from the organizers revitalizing a Clarksdale neighborhood through initiatives like a



Justin Hardiman

reimagined corner store, community murals, and programs that connect families to fresh produce.

Tyler Yarbrough, a Delta native, returned home with a Public Policy Leadership degree from the University of Mississippi to focus on economic and community development. He has led advocacy campaigns at both the state and national levels and is currently improving community health through economic development as the director of Mississippi Delta programs at Partnership for a Healthier America.

Justin Hardiman, a self-taught photographer and visual artist from Jackson, Mississippi, blends minimalist and documentary styles inspired by his home state. His work highlights overlooked aspects of his community, showcasing Mississippi’s potential and celebrating the Black southern experience.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, NOON

Barnard Observatory

“Making the Appalachian South in Black and White”

Matt O’Neal



Matt O’Neal

What is “Appalachia”? Where is it? Who lives there? This talk will outline the creation of the Appalachian region in late-nineteenth century America and explain how it came prepackaged with assumptions about its racial and ethnic makeup. If we look beyond the myths surrounding its origins, we can see the mountain South not as a “strange land” inhabited by a “peculiar people,” but as a dynamic place deeply intertwined with modern American life. From the 1870s to the present, Black and white residents of the region have laid claim to an “Appalachian” identity, a process with implications that reach far beyond the borders of this oft-misunderstood corner of the South.

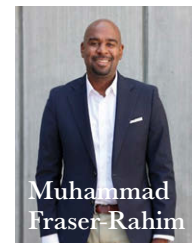
Matt O’Neal is assistant professor of history and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. He has published articles in the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* and in the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, and he has been featured in a documentary by the Black in Appalachia project. He is currently turning his dissertation into a book with the University of North Carolina Press.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, NOON

Barnard Observatory

Gullah/Geechee Muslims: Identity, Memory and the Making of American History

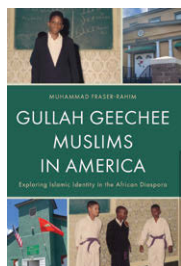
Muhammad Fraser-Rahim



Muhammad Fraser-Rahim

Dr. Muhammad Fraser-Rahim will discuss his his book *Gullah Geechee Muslims in America: Exploring Islamic Identity in the African Diaspora*.

Through meticulous research, interviews, and documentation the book presents a unique and significant contribution to religious studies, Africana studies, and anthropology by shedding light on a previously understudied aspect of the Gullah/Geechee community and culture. Previous



studies of enslaved African Muslims have claimed that Islam, as a conscious practice, vanished by the eve of the Civil War. However, Muhammad Fraser-Rahim highlights the continuity of Islamic belief and practice in the South Carolina Lowcountry. For scholars who have spent decades researching the retention of African culture among the enslaved and their descendants, this book reveals certain challenges and poses new avenues of research.

Muhammad Fraser-Rahim is an associate professor at the Citadel, the military college of South Carolina. He is a scholar of Islamic, African, and Middle Eastern history, with additional specialization on Muslim communities in the West. He is the author of several books and frequently advises on topics at the intersection of religion, policy, and politics, most recently on the award-winning opera *Omar*, about the life and legacy of Omar Ibn Sayyid.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, NOON
Barnard Observatory

Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts: Food, Place, and the Ancestors

Crystal Wilkinson



In this SouthTalk, Crystal Wilkinson will discuss the role food plays in her writing. Drawing from material from her memoir *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts*, she explores how food functions as inspiration, as a tie to one's past, and as an important marker of cultural identity.

Wilkinson is also the author of a collection of poems and three works of fiction. Her short stories, poems, and essays have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *The Atlantic*, *The Kenyon Review*, *STORY*, *Oxford American*, and *Southern Cultures*. Kentucky's Poet Laureate from 2021 to 2023, she currently teaches at the University of Kentucky, where she is Bush-Holbrook Professor in Creative Writing.

This SouthTalk is cosponsored by the Southern Foodways Alliance.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, NOON
Barnard Observatory

“Pigs in the Parlor”: The Legacy of Racial Zoning and Its Impact on Land-Use Policies in the South”

Jade A. Craig



Racial zoning was the preferred method of establishing residential segregation in the South in the early twentieth century until the US Supreme Court formally struck it down in 1917. Jade A. Craig argues that racial zoning should be understood not merely as a historical moment in land-use policy but as an enduring logic and metaphor. The logic of racial zoning exemplifies anti-Black land-use policies that confine African Americans to specific areas, perpetuating the degradation of these spaces. Craig's talk will focus on the impact of zoning and discriminatory land-use policies within and around small, low-income, rural communities, specifically in the southeastern United States. It will also address the role of fair-housing laws in challenging these policies, including both its potential and its limitations.

Jade A. Craig is an assistant professor in the University of Mississippi School of Law. He teaches political and civil rights, constitutional law, real estate law, and fair housing law. In 2014, the Obama Administration appointed Craig as a special policy advisor to the assistant secretary in the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Craig is originally from Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He graduated with a BA from the University of Virginia and a JD from Columbia Law School.

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 4:00 P.M.
Barnard Observatory

“A Crowded Table”

Heidi Siegrist



Heidi Siegrist's book, *All Y'all: Queering Southernness in US Fiction, 1980–2020*, explores the boundaries of negotiating place and sexuality by using the concept of “southernness,” a purposefully fluid idea of the South that extends beyond simple geography and eschews familiar ideas of the southern canon. In her SouthTalk, Siegrist will explore literature that imagines building queer southern community through food.



Heidi Siegrist is an editor and the director of the Sewanee Young Writers' Conference at the University of the South.

This talk is cosponsored by the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies and is part of Oxford Pride Week. For more information about Oxford Pride, visit sarahisomcenter.org.

Center Gets to Know New Southern Studies Graduate Student Class

Our new class of graduate students in Southern Studies have a wide variety of interests and reasons to be in the program. Learn more about some of them below.

Cassandra Hawkins earned her doctorate in public policy and administration, her MA in English and BS in psychology with a minor in political science from Jackson State University.

Describe yourself in three words: *Resilient, strategic, and creative. I'd win gold in the Olympics if resilience could be a sport.*

What is your favorite quote? *"There is in this world no such force as the force of a person determined to rise."*—Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois

What could you give a TED talk about with zero preparation, and why?: *I could give a talk on navigating life's transitions with zero preparation. My life experiences have equipped me with valuable lessons in overcoming challenges, adapting to unexpected changes, and strategically navigating personal and professional environments.*

What would be your intro song?: *"Motivation" by T. I.*

What would be an important item for you take to a desert island?: *A Swiss Army knife.*

Why did you want to earn a degree in Southern Studies?: *I am deeply invested in the racial, socioeconomic, and educational landscapes within the South. I want to use my experiences and knowledge to tell untold stories and ultimately create awareness that leads to impactful change within the region.*

What are you most looking forward to about the



Cassandra Hawkins

program?: *I am looking forward to combining my creative and academic interests to understand the complexities of the South.*



Nicholas Harvey

Nicholas Harvey is from Boaz, Alabama, and earned their bachelor's degree in integrated studies from Jacksonville State University.

Describe yourself in three words: *Considerate, thoughtful, curious. I'd win gold in the Olympics if tabletop games could be a sport.*

What is your favorite quote?: *"Someone will remember us, I say, even in another time."*—Sappho

What could you give a TED talk about with zero preparation, and why?: *Tolkien.*

What would be your intro song?: *"Strife" by Trivium.*

What would be an important item for you take to a desert island?: *Lord of the Rings by J. R. R. Tolkien.*

Why did you want to earn a degree in Southern Studies?: *In order to advance my knowledge about the South, to gain critical skills, and to equip myself for further education with the ultimate goal of becoming a professor and a public-facing academic educating people about southern culture and identity.*

What are you most looking forward to about the program?: *The knowledge, scholarly community, and opportunities provided.*



Christopher Fisher is a first-year MFA student who earned a bachelor's degree in history from the University of North Carolina, a master's degree in business administration from North Carolina State University, and a doctorate in business administration from Hampton University.

Describe yourself in three words: *Love to learn. I'd win gold in the Olympics if being a good friend could be a sport.*

What is your favorite quote?: *"A man with vision shall be given provision."*

What could you give a TED talk about with zero preparation, and why?: *Chasing your dreams, because I have tried to make the most of my opportunities and maximize my potential.*

What would be an important item for you take to a desert island?: *A dehumidifier.*

Why did you want to earn a degree in Southern Studies?: *I want to be able to tell peoples stories and allow others to learn from their experiences.*

What are you most looking forward to about the program?: *Taking and developing black and white photos.*



Astrid Knox-McConnell earned her bachelor's degree in history and politics of the Americas from University College London.

Describe yourself in three words: *Curious, independent, hungry. I'd win gold in the Olympics if "trying to be funny but not always succeeding" could be a sport.*

What is your favorite quote?: *"When you are on your deathbed, you won't wish that you worried more"—My dad*

What could you give a TED talk about with zero preparation, and why? *"Vegetarianism Is Super Gay, Actually." Part of my undergraduate dissertation looked at 1970s vegetarianism and its queer, political roots.*



Astrid Knox-McConnell

What would be your intro song?: *"Beer Never Broke My Heart" by Luke Combs.*

What would be an important item for you take to a desert island?: *My inhaler.*

Why did you want to earn a degree in Southern Studies?: *The South is not a monolith, though it is often treated as such, especially by the international community. I want to explore different perspectives of the South, especially the perspectives of queer southerners, whose stories have not been highlighted as much as other southerners, nor other queer people. I also love southern food and want to be immersed in this culture as much as possible so as to begin to truly understand it.*

What are you most looking forward to about the program?: *I am really looking forward to getting to know my cohort, peers, colleagues, and faculty, and their academic/research interests; I am excited for us all to ramble on about the South and its many facets. I also am eager to get involved with the Southern Foodways Alliance and oral histories.*



Greta Koshenina

Greta Koshenina is an MFA student from Water Valley, Mississippi. She earned her BA in classics and MA in Southern Studies.

Describe yourself in three words: *Adventurous, artistic, giggly. I'd win gold in the Olympics if reading could be a sport.*

What is your favorite quote?: *"Our bodies are swarms of aliveness, composed of microbes and fungi, metabolically dependent on plants and animals for sustenance, and wildly, generatively entangled with our landscapes and communities."—Sophie Strand*

What could you give a TED talk about with zero preparation, and why?: *The relationship between Mary Magdalene (Miriam) and Jesus (Yeshua). I'm obsessed with the book The Madonna Secret by Sophie Strand, a retelling of the story of*

Yeshua and Miriam, re-rooted in place and narrated from a historical feminist perspective. It's compelling to me because of the deep influence of Christianity in the South, although the mythology and stories are taken out of ecological and historical origins, resulting in a distilled form of spirituality that often others people and groups.

What would be your intro song?: *"Suzanne" by Leonard Cohen.*

What would be an important item for you take to a desert island?: *My pillow.*

Why did you want to earn a degree in Southern Studies?: *Growing up in rural Mississippi, I have always been interested in the nuanced history of the South and the way this place is subjectively perceived by individuals and groups. This program offers a varied and diverse perspective of the place I call home.*

What are you most looking forward to about the program?: *I am excited and honored to return to a cohort that inspires creativity and builds an interdisciplinary environment that re-roots and contextualizes southern narratives.*



David Smith Jr. is originally from Mound Bayou, Mississippi, and earned his public policy leadership degree from the University of Mississippi.

Describe yourself in three words: *Steadfast, humorous, and reflective. I'd win gold in the Olympics if running backwards could be a sport.*

What is your favorite quote?: *"Whatever you heard about me is true; I change the rules and do what I wanna do."—Prince*

What could you give a TED talk about with zero preparation, and why?: *How Prince contributed more to music than MJ.*

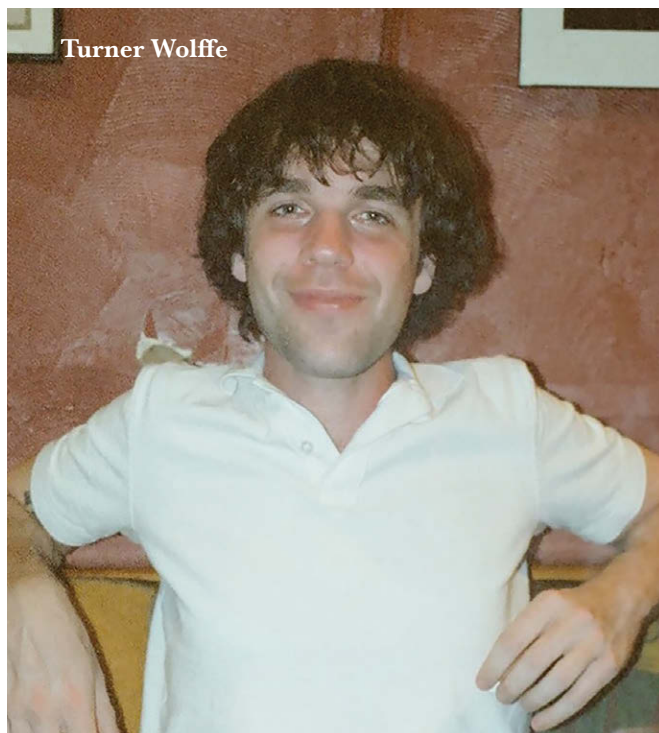
What would be your intro song?: *"777-9311" by the Time.*



What would be an important item for you take to a desert island?: *Music.*

Why did you want to earn a degree in Southern Studies?: *To study the South and Mississippi from an interdisciplinary approach—to then use these tools and apply them as a leader and policymaker in the state in the near future.*

What are you most looking forward to about the program?: *To network with my peers, professors, and others interested in the South.*



Turner Wolffe

Turner Wolffe earned his bachelor's degree in history from Loyola University in New Orleans.

Describe yourself in three words: *Kind, loving, self-mythologizing. I'd win gold in the Olympics if quoting Miami Vice (2006) could be a sport.*

What could you give a TED talk about with zero preparation, and why?: *Robert Altman's Nashville, 1970s country music, spectacle.*

What is your favorite quote?: *"We marveled at inventions that erased centuries of gestures and effort."—Annie Ernaux*

What would be your intro song?: *"2HB" by Roxy Music.*

Why did you want to earn a degree in Southern Studies?: *To continue my study of southern history and culture, and to explore southern foodways.*

What are you most looking forward to about the program?: *With my history background, I'm most excited to study in an interdisciplinary environment, engaging new perspectives with likeminded individuals.*

Photographing Place in the American South

In Andy Harper's fall Southern Studies 540 course, Photographing Place in the US South, students made photographs in and around Oxford, and in-class activities examined the idea of "place," reviewed the visual landscape/place tradition, considered various examples of cultural- and social-landscape

photography, and discussed student-made photographs. Late-semester class sessions were devoted to editing and curating student photographs for an exhibition in the Gammill Gallery in the fall of 2024.

Here is a selection of photographs from the exhibition.



From the project *The Luv Shak: A Hidden Gem in Oxford*, by Avery Agee



From the project *Our Water Tower Town*, by Alivia Berryhill



From the project *Spaces in the South: North Mississippi Hill Country Identity*, by Ellis Farese



From the project *Trails in Oxford*, by J P Hogan



From the project *Stuck in Time*, by EmmaClaire Mitchell



From the project *Southern Comfort: The Family of City Grocery*, by Gracie Miester



From the project *The Crossroads Gin and Its Place in the Delta Landscape*, by Sela Ricketts



From the project *The South in Black and White*, by Margi Troxler



From the project *Framing Faulkner's Legacy: A Photographic Journey Through Rowan Oak*, by Abby Wagner



From the project *Skateboarding Allowed (Continued)*, by Olivia Whittington

FINDING A HOME IN SOUTHERN STUDIES

Gibson Russell is a freshman majoring in Southern Studies from Pineville, Louisiana. After learning about the unique aspects of the Southern Studies program, he knew this was the place for him. Kennedy Judson, a senior IMC major who was the Center's intern for the fall semester, recently caught up with Gibson to talk shop.

"I thought, why not fully immerse myself in Ole Miss? Why not attend this school, adapt to its traditions and way of life, and gain an education only they could offer? This was a huge factor in my decision, and this mindset has since opened my eyes to how fascinating the South—particularly the "Velvet Ditch" we're in—truly is." —*Gibson Russell*

Kennedy Judson: What are some of your favorite courses or professors you've taken through the program, and why?

Gibson Russell: So far, my favorite course has been The History of Country Music. I wasn't much of a country fan before, but after taking this course, I find myself listening to songs like Tammy Wynette's "Stand by Your Man" and Charley Pride's "Kiss an Angel Good Mornin'" every day. I've loved listening to Dr. Darren Grem cover everything from the foundations of country music to the complex politics of Nashville's Music Row, all while occasionally playing a song by ear on his guitar. As for a favorite



COURTESY GIBSON RUSSELL

Gibson Russell

professor, it would be an injustice not to mention Dr. Katie McKee. Dr. McKee is my Southern Studies 101 professor. Having the opportunity to pick her brain about the wide range of topics covered in SST 101 has been

invaluable. She's been incredibly helpful and encouraging when it comes to exploring subjects more deeply, and her thoughtful teaching approach makes her my favorite professor so far.

KJ: What are some ways your studies connect to your personal interests or experiences?

GR: I feel like my personal life and studies have become deeply intertwined. Studying Southern culture in the South itself has been immensely helpful. I'm a very visual learner, so being able to see and experience the things we're studying is crucial to my education. It's almost like I'm reinventing my understanding of the South. Just as Croft students study abroad to understand their region, I feel like I'm spending four years "abroad" in the South.

KJ: What is a typical class schedule for you on weekdays?

GR: On Mondays and Wednesdays, I have Southern Studies 118 (The History of Country Music) at 1:00 p.m. and Astronomy 101 at 6:00 p.m. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I start with Southern Studies 101 at 9:30 a.m., followed by Honors 101 at 11:00 a.m., and anthropology at 1:00 p.m. I have Fridays completely free, which has given me time to explore campus and the Oxford community.

KJ: Are there any clubs or organizations you're involved in that relate to Southern Studies?

GR: I'm currently part of a new organization called the Center Circle, which aims to build a sense of community among undergraduate Southern Studies students. I'm excited to see where it goes since this is the first time the Center has sponsored something like this.

KJ: Do you have a favorite spot on campus, and if so what do you love about it?

GR: My favorite spot on campus has to be a nice little study nook within Barnard Observatory. It's just so cozy and quaint. Very quiet as well.

KJ: What has been the most memorable experience in the program so far?

GR: My most memorable experience in the program so far has just been meeting other SST majors and figuring out why they chose Southern Studies.

KJ: How has your perspective on the South/southern history changed?

GR: The South is so much more than just a region. I knew this to be true before, but I didn't understand the depth behind it. Diving deeply into topics I've always been curious about has been incredibly rewarding.

KJ: Are there any specific projects or assignments you're particularly proud of?

GR: I'm currently working on a podcast episode about the life and work of Clementine Hunter. It's been exciting because I've discovered more personal connections to her than I expected. This project has helped me not only learn about the South but also see how my own life relates to the region through this program.

KJ: Can you share a moment/experience that you think captures the essence of being a Southern Studies student?

GR: An experience that really captures the essence of being a Southern Studies student is when I tell someone my major, and they give me a funny look before asking what I study in class or what I plan to do with the degree after graduation. It's a universal experience for Southern Studies majors. University students might recognize the program, but outsiders are usually completely bewildered.

KJ: Do you have any favorite books, films, or music related to southern culture that inspire you?

GR: I've always been drawn to old-time jazz and swing music. Artists like

Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Louis Armstrong, and Ella Fitzgerald have always been a favorite "guilty pleasure," but as I learn more about the South, I'm able to pick apart these songs and understand what the artists were conveying.

KJ: What are your plans after graduation, and do you see your Southern Studies background influencing your future?

GR: After graduation, I plan to go into hospitality and management and stay in the South. Since the South is known for its hospitality, I believe my Southern Studies background will help me understand why we do things a certain way here and enable me to contribute meaningfully to the industry.

KJ: What advice would you give to incoming students interested in Southern Studies?

GR: Just go for it. College is the time to explore. Pursue what interests you, and if it doesn't turn out as you expected, try something else. Southern Studies might not be for everyone, but I've found a true home here, and I hope others can find theirs as well.

KJ: Is there anything else you'd like to share that would help others understand what it's like to be a Southern Studies student?

GR: Being a Southern Studies student means constantly analyzing the world around you. Since day one, I can't hear an old country song without catching the "chugga-chugga" rhythm of a train barreling down the tracks, as Dr. Grem pointed out. Or I find myself reflecting on how SEC football feels like a religion, something we discussed in Dr. McKee's class. Being a Southern Studies major is, I imagine, like how a music major listens to the radio—always tuned into something deeper. For me, that's the South, and it's an incredibly immersive experience.



Supporting Working Writers

Ralph Eubanks Named President of Authors Guild

Writing may be a solitary profession, but having a community for writers to turn to in times of need is extremely helpful.

Ralph Eubanks has been a member of the Authors Guild more than a decade and recently became president of the organization. The Authors Guild is the nation's oldest and largest professional organization for published writers. Eubanks, Faculty Fellow and Writer-in-Residence at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, originally joined the guild to get help developing his first website and sorting out his freelance writing contracts.

"Along with a few other organizations—photographers and songwriters—I lobbied for the Copyright Alternative in Small-Claims Enforcement (CASE) Act, which established a small claims court to settle copyright violations of less than \$30,000. With piracy rampant, I felt it was important for authors to be able to put a claim through without it having to involve major infringement," Eubanks said.

Most people think of writers as bestselling authors, but there are many more who earn far less. The majority of the fifteen thousand members is made up of these authors. "Most nonfiction writers like me only earn \$20,000 per year on our writing, and for fiction writers I believe it is around \$15,000," Eubanks said. "While the guild supports preventing infringement on the work of bestselling authors, they also support writers like me who don't have bestselling books."

Eubanks, who was previously vice president of the Authors Guild, became interim president in April, and then president, and will serve until March 2026. His main goal is to make sure the Authors Guild, which began in 1912, continues supporting the work of freelance journalists in order to maintain democracy.

"To advocate for free speech, I plan to continue to stand behind our work against the banning of books that seems to be rampant at the moment," Eubanks said. "I also plan to stand firmly behind our efforts to prevent unauthorized use of the work of writers in training artificial intelligence sites. If an author's work is being used to train AI, the author should authorize that use. And if they authorize that use, they should also be compensated for it," he said.

In November, the Authors Guild spoke out against *The Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles Times* for not publishing their presidential endorsements for the first time in thirty-six years. Eubanks said he was very much behind the statement the guild made because he believes the organization should support the work of journalists and free speech.

"At our core, the Authors Guild is a free speech organization," he said. "As I said at the time, 'The revocation of the respective editorial boards' previous independence is troubling because it was a sudden reversal of policy and only days from the election. Moreover, they were rare instances of the owners' editorial interference, raising serious questions about conflicts of interest and whether external pressures came into play.'"

In addition to his work with the Authors Guild, Eubanks earned a Gold Award for coverage of diverse communities

Ralph Eubanks

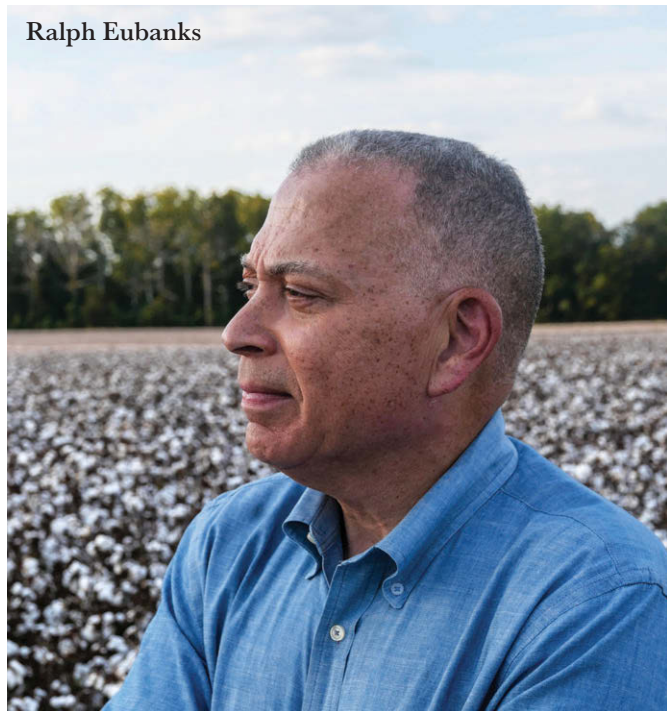


PHOTO BY MAUDE SCHUYLER CLAY

in the Lowell Thomas Journalism Awards competition for his 2023 *Outside* magazine article "Mississippi Delta: Returning Home to Its Haunted Pasts." The idea came about while he worked on his forthcoming book, which combines personal, historical, and current perspectives of the region. "I found myself walking Delta cotton fields, hiking levees, canoeing the Mississippi River, and biking to understand the landscape of the Delta, which is very much a character in my book," he said.

Eubanks had pitched the idea for an essay on exploring the Delta landscape beyond the blues to then-editor of *Outside*, Alex Heard—who also grew up in Mississippi. Heard knew of Eubanks's unique connection to the Delta and the state of Mississippi and felt he was the perfect person to write the essay. "I had the idea to assign an article for *Outside* magazine about the Mississippi Delta as a place where natural beauty—combined with major changes brought about over time by man and agriculture and industry and history—created a unique landscape with a special pull," Heard said. "The beautiful and haunting essay he delivered was rightly seen as an instant classic."

The award for the article came as a complete surprise to Eubanks, and winning an award named for Lowell Thomas holds significance for him. "As a kid I loved my View-Master, which is a very low-tech stereoscope, and I had a set of slides on all the places I wanted to travel to as a kid, particularly the great European cities," Eubanks said. "My View-Master came with commentary from Lowell Thomas, and I read the booklets from cover to cover to learn about the places I wanted to visit. I just never thought I would win an award named for Lowell Thomas, much less for writing about my own native soil."

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

The Thirty-First Oxford Conference for the Book

April 2–4, 2025

A Celebration of Writers and Writing

This spring, the already impressive number of talented writers in Oxford will multiply as more than twenty of the nation's leading and emerging authors, poets, scholars, and artists gather for the annual Oxford Conference for the Book. Over three days, panels, discussions, and events will span the University of Mississippi campus and the city's historic downtown Square, transforming William Faulkner's hometown into a vibrant literary playground. Mark your calendars: April 2–4, 2025, promises a book conference you won't want to miss.

The thirty-first iteration of the conference, organized by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, is as expansive as ever, thanks to support from national sponsors and local partners, including the National Book Foundation, the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing, and the University of Mississippi. Each year, the conference engages a broad spectrum of local organizations and communities in new and exciting ways. This year's diverse lineup of book discussions and scholarly panels is complemented by art and music events, all of which are free and open to the public. With venues ranging from the J.D. Williams Library and the University of Mississippi Museum to Southside Gallery and Off Square Books—all within walking distance of each other—the conference offers an accessible and immersive experience for all.

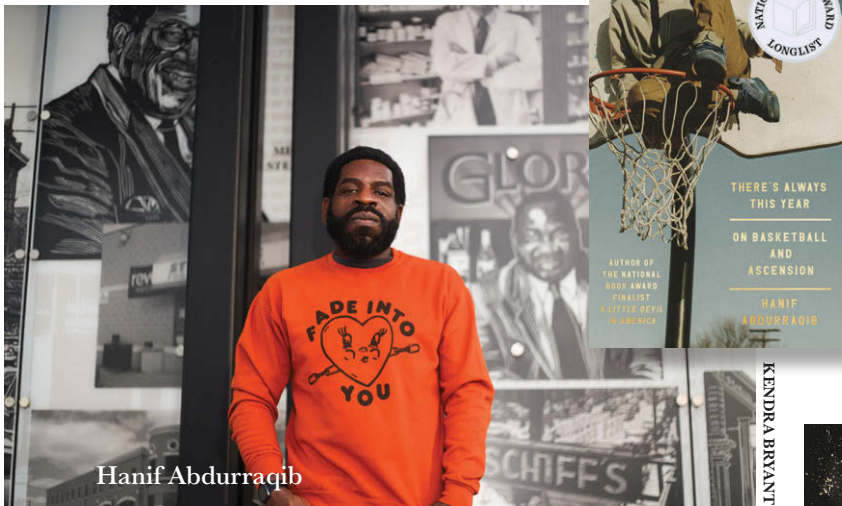


This year's artwork, titled *Books Pollinate Our Brain Gardens*, is by Oxford artist Blair Hobbs.

"I'm happy to say that people return to Oxford year after year for the conference," said Jimmy Thomas, conference director. "It's the perfect opportunity to experience the best of what the city and the university have to offer. At the same time, it's a community event that brings locals together to celebrate reading and writing. There really aren't many places like Oxford—it makes for a truly enchanting experience."

Organizers are finalizing the schedule, with a variety of events planned to kick off on Wednesday, April 2. The annual Author's Welcome Party at Memory House—one of the conference's few ticketed events—will open the festivities with live music, great food, and special craft drinks. Tickets are available for purchase on the conference website.

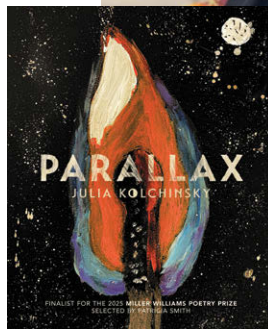
Thursday, April 3, begins on the UM campus with a discussion between Southern Studies instructor Xavier Sivels and author Elijah Wald, whose *Jelly Roll Blues: Censored Songs and Hidden Histories* explores the censored voices of early blues and jazz, guided by the songs and memories of Jelly Roll Morton. Wald, also a musician, will perform that evening on the *Thacker Mountain Radio Hour* at the Powerhouse. His 2016 book, *Dylan Goes Electric! Newport, Seeger, Dylan, and the Night That Split the Sixties*, was recently adapted into the film *A Complete Unknown*, starring Timothée Chalamet. Joining the evening's lineup is acclaimed



Hanif Abdurraqib



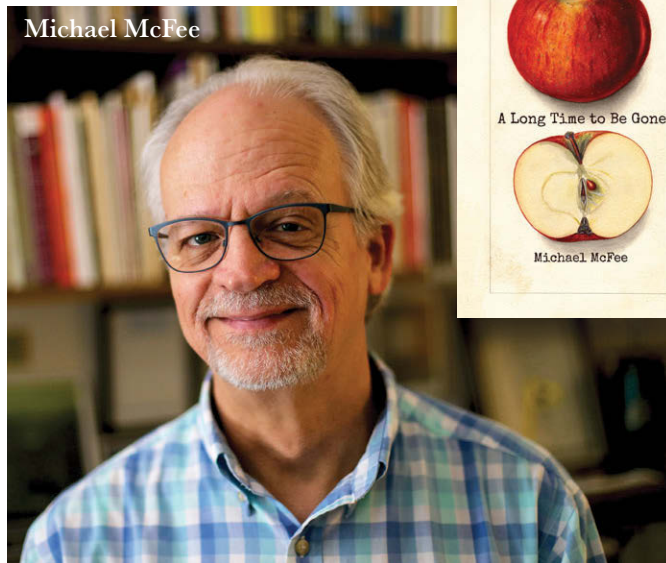
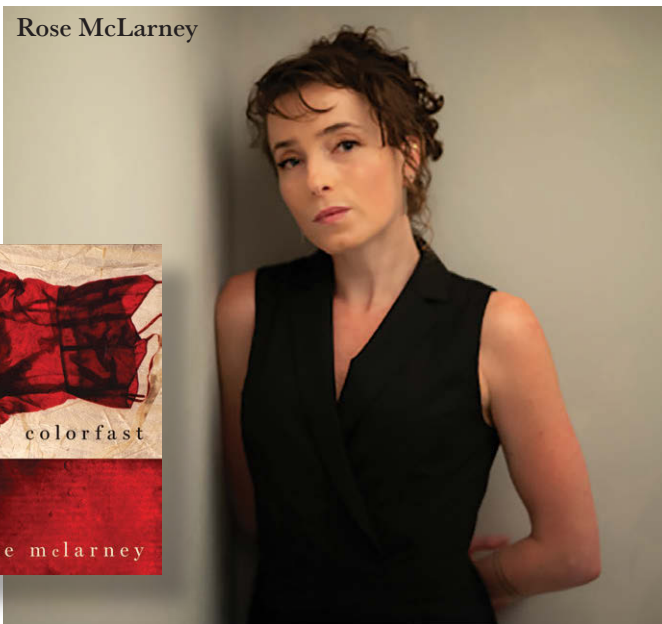
Julia Kolchinsky



KENDRA BRYANT

PARKER J. PFISTER

Rose McLarney



Michael McFee



American country blues singer, guitarist, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist Jontavious Willis.

A highly anticipated panel, “National Book Foundation Presents,” will feature National Book Award–honored authors Hanif Abdurraqib (*There’s Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension*) and Vanessa Angélica Villarreal (*Magical/Realism: Essays on Music, Memory, Fantasy, and Borders*) in conversation with moderator Sheila Sundar (*Habitations*). The session takes place Thursday in the J.D. Williams Library on the UM campus. Preceding the panel is a welcome lunch hosted by the Friends of the UM Library.

That afternoon, a conversation between Natasha Trethewey and W. Ralph Eubanks will take place in the Overby Center auditorium. Trethewey, a Pulitzer Prize–winning poet (2007) and the nineteenth U.S. poet laureate (2012–14), and Eubanks, Faculty Fellow and and Writer-in-Residence at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, will explore a variety of topics. Among them, they will discuss Trethewey’s latest memoir, *House of Being*, published in the Yale University Press’s *Why I Write* series,

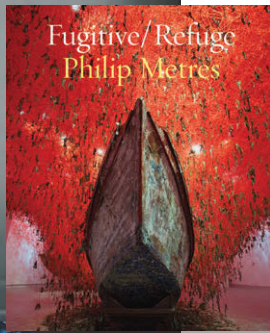
which *The Nation* called “a monologue, a work of biography, an essay on literature and memory, a prose poem full of lyrical dexterity.”

Fans of suspense writing will thrill at the “Gothic and Horror Writing” session, featuring Lilliam Rivera. About her latest book, *Tiny Threads*, *Reader’s Digest* writes, “If you’re in the mood for a hallucinatory, terrifying tale that involves a character’s sanity unraveling, add this one to your TBR pile.” Poetry enthusiasts won’t want to miss the event at Southside Gallery, moderated by University of Mississippi professor, poet, and former Mississippi poet laureate Beth Ann Fennelly. Poets Philip Metres (*Fugitive/Refuge*), Rose McLarney (*Colorfast*), and Julia Kolchinsky (*Parallax*) will read from their latest

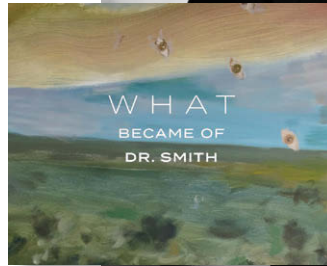
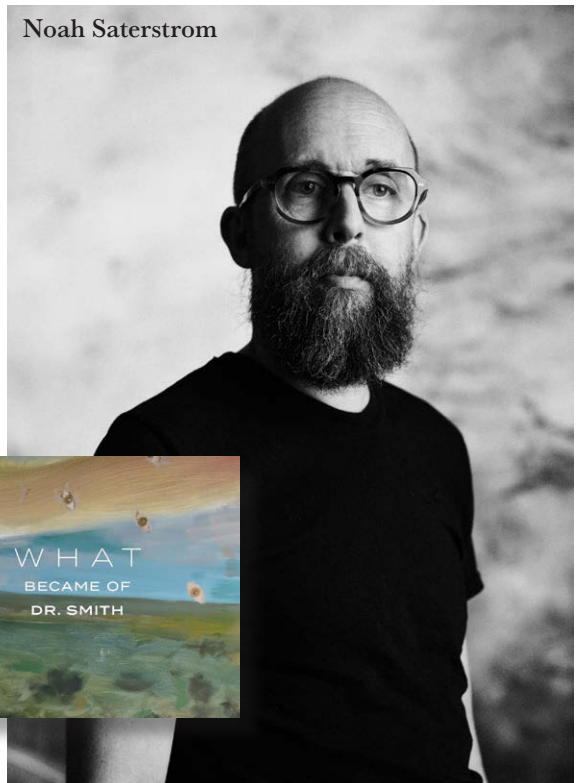
Philip Metres



HEIDI M. ROLF



Noah Saterstrom



work Thursday afternoon, immediately preceding the *Thacker Mountain Radio* show.

Later that evening, Price Walden, Michael Rowlett, and other members of the UM Department of Music will give a special performance in Nutt Auditorium on the UM campus. The program features an original composition by

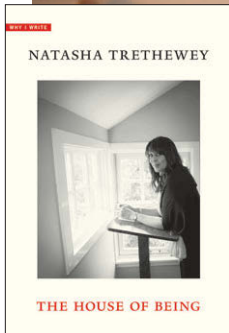
Walden, set to poems by Michael McFee, alongside “Portraits of Langston,” a trio for flute, clarinet, and piano by composer Valerie Coleman. Coleman’s piece includes readings of Langston Hughes’s poetry between movements. Rowlett will perform with his faculty colleagues Philip Snyder and Adrienne Park.

Friday’s events begin at the University of Mississippi Museum with a presentation by painter Noah Saterstrom (*What Became of Dr. Smith*). Through years of research, Saterstrom uncovered the mystery of his great-grandfather, Dr. David Lawson Lemmon Smith, who was hospitalized in 1925 at the Mississippi State Insane Hospital in Jackson, later known as the Old Asylum. He was eventually moved to the Mississippi State Hospital at Whitfield, where he lived until his death in 1965. Smith’s belongings and fragments of stories became material for Saterstrom’s artistic process. Working in his Nashville studio, he transformed them into a panoramic narrative. The result, *What Became of Dr. Smith*, is his largest painting to date, composed of 183 canvases arranged in a grid spanning 122 feet. Saterstrom will discuss both his painting and his book of the same name.

At noon on Friday, the Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library will host the Poetry Talk and Lunch, with poet Philip Metres presenting “Poetry’s Magic.” Following the talk and lunch, the remaining sessions will take place at Off Square Books on the Oxford Square, including two additional sessions, a group book signing, and the ceremony for the 2025 Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing in fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. The Willie Morris Awards will sponsor the closing celebration at Off Square Books following the awards presentations and readings.



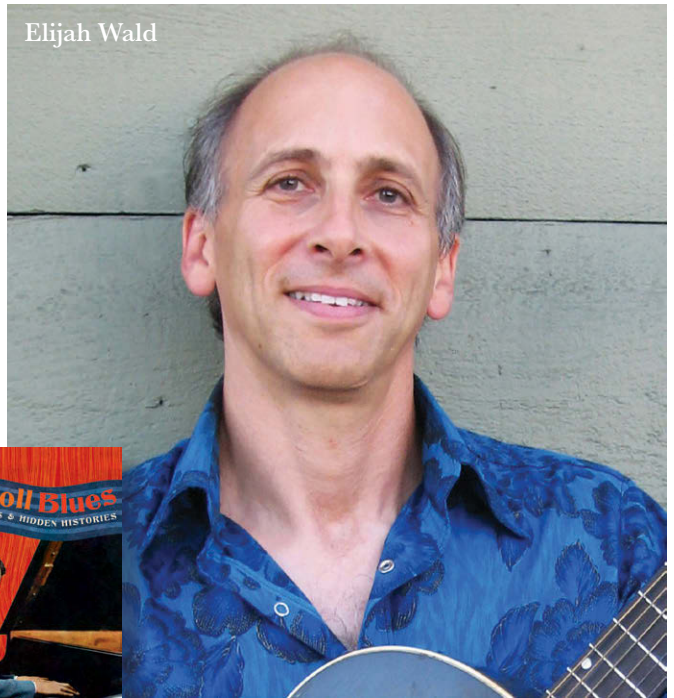
JILL NORTON



Natasha Trethewey



Vanessa Angélica Villarreal



Elijah Wald

SANDRINE SHEON

Works by all conference authors will be available for purchase at Square Books. Discounted hotel rooms for those traveling to Oxford are available at the Inn at Ole Miss.

The Thirty-First Oxford Conference for the Book is sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Department of Writing and Rhetoric, the Friends of the UM Library, the University Museums and Historic Houses, the Lafayette County Literacy Council, the Junior Auxiliary of Oxford, Square Books, Southside Gallery, *Thacker Mountain*

Radio, the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing, the National Book Foundation, the R&B Feder Charitable Foundation for the Beaux Arts, Visit Oxford, and the Mississippi Humanities Council.

With additional authors added to the lineup daily, you'll want to check for updates on the conference's website oxfordconferenceforthebook.com and Instagram [@oxfordconferenceforthebook](https://www.instagram.com/oxfordconferenceforthebook). For questions, please contact conference director Jimmy Thomas at jgthomas@olemiss.edu.



Cecil Price Walden

For the past three years, the Oxford Conference for the Book's ongoing partnership with the National Book Foundation has culminated in opportunities to attend the National Book Awards banquet at Cipriani in New York. This past November, OCB director Jimmy Thomas had the pleasure of congratulating Percival Everett—pictured here (*left*)—just moments after he was awarded the National Book Award for Fiction for his novel *James*.



PHOTO BY JEN WALLER

Finding Creative Outlets Everywhere

Southern Studies MFA Graduate Looks to the Past in Looking Toward the Future

When Jonathan Smith was a high school student in New Albany, Mississippi, he didn't have high hopes for his post-graduation job prospects. His creative side took him on an unexpected journey, and his interests in photography and documentary work eventually led him to graduating from the Center's MFA in Documentary Expression program in 2019.

"I grew up in a tiny town, so I never really got the chance to work in a dark room or anything. My school didn't even have an art program, so the idea that you could do anything other than working in a factory as a career didn't exist in my mind at all," Smith said. "I never even knew documentary arts was something you could do." Today, he is the film equipment manager for the University of Mississippi's Department of Theatre and Film.

Before arriving at the University of Mississippi, Smith earned his master's degree in anthropology from East Carolina University and worked as a field archaeologist and project manager for a cultural resource management company. He also did recovery work after Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill. He later was assistant network manager at the Center for Manufacturing Excellence.

While working at a cable access station in New Albany, Smith learned about video editing and production and discovered a love of telling stories visually. When he heard about the MFA program in 2017, he thought his background in the social sciences would be a good fit. "My area of interest archaeologically was the historic period of the South, so I had a background in the study of the South already," he said.

Smith said the interdisciplinary MFA program taught him a great deal. "Being in the MFA program was a chance to learn professional skills from other people and refine what I already knew in a way that incorporated my interest in history and the history of the South," he said. "I gained the technical skills I was lacking and got a chance to work with people who were professionals in the field. That experience really jump-started my resume."

Smith's office is in the labyrinth of offices in the South

Campus Center. "I take care of the equipment, handle purchasing the equipment, run the cage—which is the term for where the film equipment is stored—and I teach students to use the equipment and how to care for it," said Smith, who was hired in the fall of 2019 and spent the first year in a very small space managing the equipment and five student workers.

The Department of Theatre and Film offers a few undergraduate degrees: a BFA in theatre arts, a BA in theatre arts, and a minor in theatre arts to support the College of Liberal Arts' interdisciplinary cinema minor.

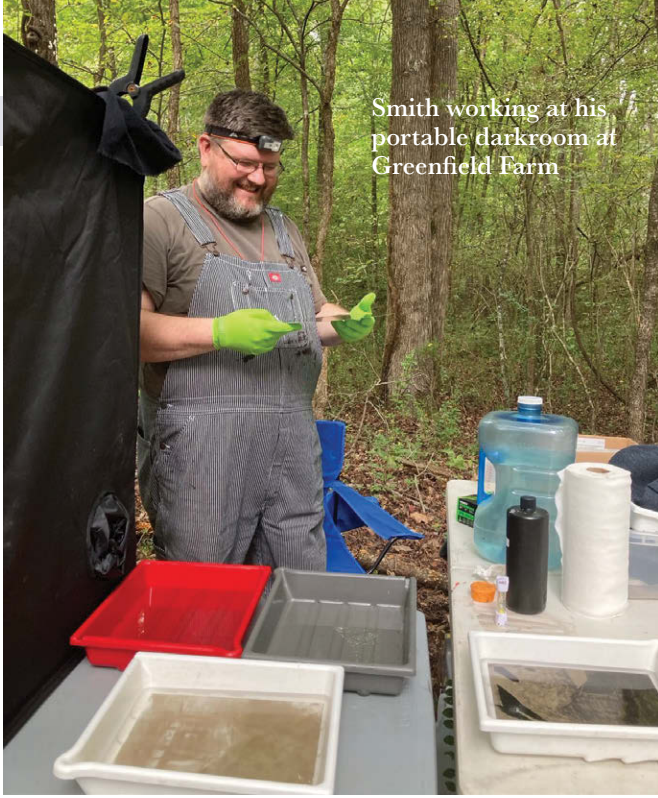
"We are the only film program in Mississippi in a theater



Jonathan Smith

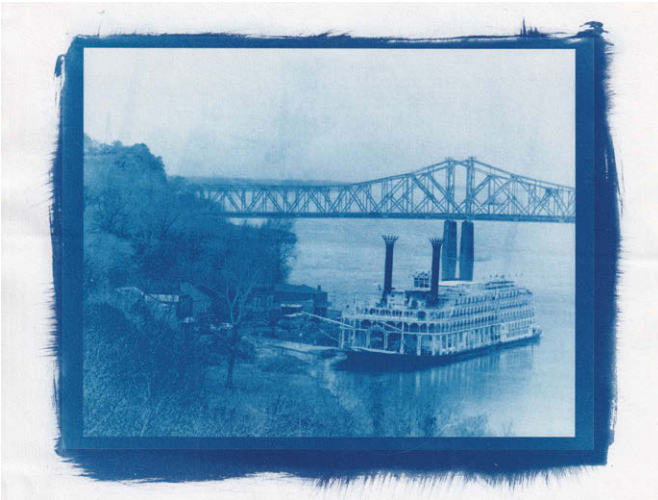
PHOTO COURTESY JONATHAN SMITH

PHOTO COURTESY JONATHAN SMITH



Smith working at his portable darkroom at Greenfield Farm

PHOTO COURTESY JONATHAN SMITH



department,” Smith said. “One thing that makes my job fun and interesting is that the students have cameras in their hand basically from week one and are producing and working on sets. In a lot of other programs in the Southeast, you don’t get to touch a camera until you’re a junior. Our students are making films and getting more experience in their first weeks, which means we have a lot more equipment.”

While Smith works closely with students, the department also supports his own drive to create. “It’s nice to be working in a film department, because they’re as supportive as they can be of my documentary and photography work,” Smith said. He was a participant in the five-day UM Staff Creative Residency Program in 2023, during which time he taught himself cyanotype printing, which is a historic monochrome photographic printing process making a cyan-blue print. That work caught the attention of others, and he was invited to the second Plein Air Invitational this past September, when the art and literary communities converged for what was called a “celebration of

PHOTO COURTESY JONATHAN SMITH



Smith’s winning tintype at the Plein Air Invitational at Greenfield Farm this past September

(left) *Natchez*, a cyanotype print Smith made in Natchez while an MFA student

artistic talent and the natural beauty of the Mississippi landscape.” Judges chose Smith’s tintype photograph as the winning photograph, which came with a \$1,000 prize.

His southern blues photographs were also on display at City Grocery in Oxford last January. He took that work and used samples to apply for a grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission last fall, which paid for travel to West Virginia to learn the wet plate process from Guggenheim Fellow photographer Lisa Elmaleh. “What I enjoy about [the wet-plate] process is that it is handmade photography, and I really wanted to get back into that kind of artistic expression.”

Smith continues to create photographs and to use what he learned in the MFA program. “I don’t think I can do anything that’s not documentary in nature,” Smith said. “I hope people can see the most difficult part of the task I set for myself is to avoid stereotypes good and bad. Ultimately, the hope is that people will look at the work and maybe be a little challenged.”

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Are you an alum who would like to be featured in In the Courtyard? Contact Rebecca Lauck Cleary at rebeccac@olemiss.edu.

The Southern Latinx Artist Archive

Oral History, Community Engagement, and Visual Storytelling

By Simone Delerme

In July 2024 I had the opportunity to participate in a community-engaged collaboration with anthropologist Michael Perez, an associate professor at the University of Memphis, and the founders of the Mississippi Latinx Art Association (MLAA), Jacqueline Gonzalez Wooton, Hector Boldo, and Tom Boldo. With support from a Mississippi Humanities Council grant, we began an oral history collection, the Southern Latinx Artist Archive, which is available on eGrove, the institutional repository of the University of Mississippi. Additionally, four folkloric art workshops were held at the Nuestro Arte Gallery in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, between July and September of 2024.

One of the only Latino arts organizations in Mississippi, the MLAA is committed to promoting the diverse culture



Jaqueline Gonzalez Wooton

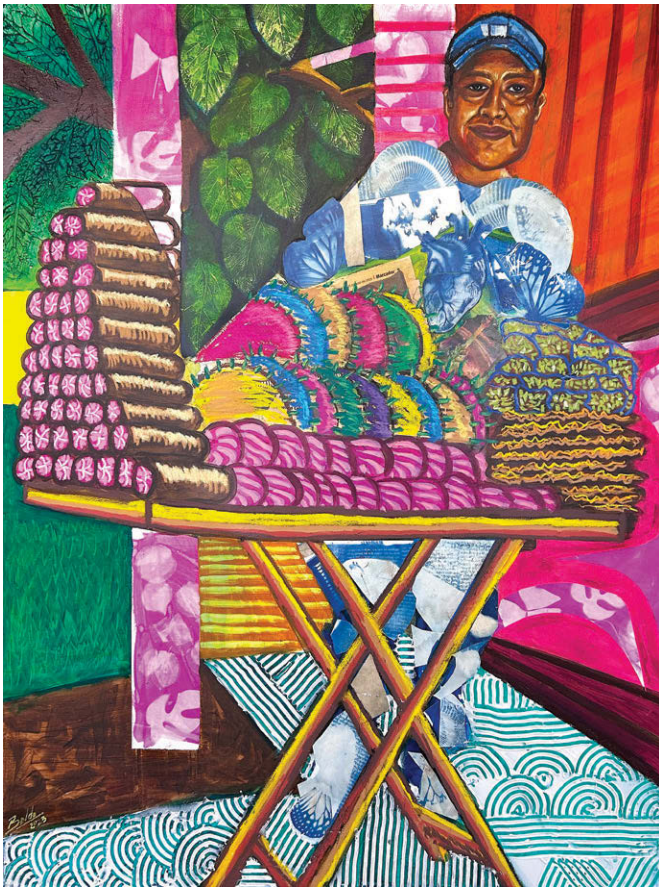
PHOTO COURTESY JAQUELINE GONZALEZ WOOTON



The Key to my Mysteries by Jaqueline Gonzalez Wooton

and arts of the Latino community of Mississippi through educational programming and community-building activities. The recent establishment of the Nuestro Arte Gallery was a key accomplishment in their effort and represented a unique opportunity for developing community partnerships between faculty at the University of Mississippi, the University of Memphis, and MLAA's founding artists.

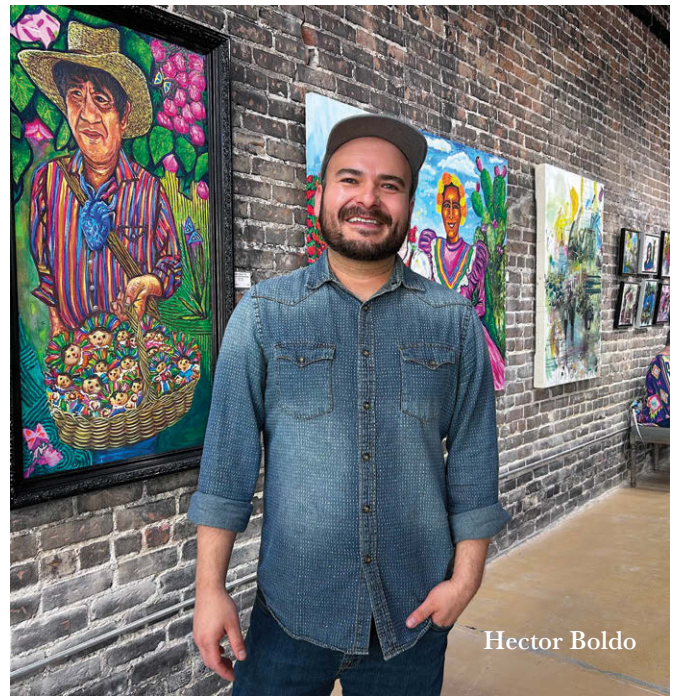
The oral history collection focuses on Latino artists in Mississippi and Tennessee who specialize in the performing arts, including dance, music, theater, musical theater, and opera; the visual arts, including drawing, painting, photography, and sculpture; or the traditional and folk arts, including music, craft, storytelling, and dance. Dr. Perez and I, along with a team of undergraduate and graduate students, conducted and filmed oral history interviews with the MLAA founders and other Latinx artists to document their stories both as Latinos and as artists. These interviews



Art Person, by Hector Boldo

are also being used in documentary profiles of the artists and the organizations they represent.

Jaqueline Gonzalez Wooton and Hector Boldo, who led the folkloric art workshops in Hattiesburg, are two of the featured artists in the oral history collection. Jacqueline was born in Puerto Rico, raised in New Orleans, and currently resides in Mississippi. She creates immersive and thought-provoking experiences through her work with mixed media and encaustics, where she incorporates found objects, vintage items, and ephemera she finds during her extensive travels around the world. Hector Boldo was born and raised in Mexico City, where the vibrant fusion of Indigenous and Spanish traditions inspired his artistic journey. Regular visits to local museums sparked his desire to create art, leading him to start painting lessons at the age of sixteen. Despite the challenges of moving to the US, learning English, and supporting his family through various jobs, Hector's passion for painting never waned. In 2014 he found a supportive community in Hattiesburg, where he has flourished as an artist, showcasing his work in galleries, winning awards, and painting murals. From capturing the essence of Mexican folkloric dancers to exploring the lives of immigrants and celebrating the vibrant world of drag queens, Hector's artwork tells a story of cultural heritage and adaptation. His artistic journey is marked by evolution, fueled by curiosity, and a dedication to fostering the Latinx art community in Mississippi.



Hector Boldo

PHOTO COURTESY HECTOR BOLDO

The folkloric workshops began with a presentation by Dr. Delorme and Dr. Perez and was followed by an interactive experience where audience members had an opportunity to learn about and create unique pieces of Latin American and Caribbean folk art. During each workshop, participants were encouraged to reflect on different themes—rituals and celebrations, symbols and traditions, religion and spirituality, and holidays and remembrance—as the instructors, Jaqueline and Hector, combined storytelling with art instruction. While reflecting on these themes, audience members created coconut masks, celebrated *Día de Muertos* (Day of the Dead) by decorating sugar skulls, constructed spirit dolls, and participated in the decoration of hearts, crosses, and hands during the *Milagros* (Miracles) workshop. The workshops aimed to foster a sense of community, as participants shared their stories and interpretations through the art they created, offering both a glimpse into Mexican traditions and the opportunity to craft meaningful, personalized artwork.

We hope that the oral history collection and series of educational workshops reveal how Latino artists are being incorporated into social, cultural, and economic life in Mississippi while still preserving the unique elements of Latin American and Caribbean culture. The anthropologists and the Mississippi Latinx Art Association embarked on this collaborative effort to promote the arts among the Latino community and other interested Mississippians and to develop an effective network for maintaining community connections and engagement while teaching about diverse cultures and experiences in the region.

Simone Delorme is an associate professor of anthropology and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. She specializes in migration to the US South, with interests in race relations, integration and incorporation, community development, and social class inequalities.

A road named after Annie Louise Mellon Cornelius-Fortner, the author's great-grandmother, in Bolton, Mississippi.



Fortner Had It Going On

The Legacy of a Family-Owned Grocery Store

By Keon Burns

For as long as I can remember, I've known that my great-grandparents, and later my grandparents, owned and operated a store called Fortner Grocery in the Live Oak community near the small town of Bolton, Mississippi. Listening to my relatives recount family stories, I understood from a young age that my family's store nourished its customers in myriad ways. But it would be years before I realized that it belonged to a wider tradition of Black-owned grocery stores in the Jim Crow South. These Black grocery stores were vital to not only the physical health of their communities, but they also served as organizing spaces critical to our civil rights struggle. My family's store was one of them.

My great-grandparents Annie Louise Mellon Cornelius-Fortner and Robert "Bob" Lee Fortner founded Fortner

Grocery in the 1940s. At that time, it was the only Black-owned grocery store in the area, some twenty miles west of Jackson. Live Oak was tucked away from downtown Bolton, down a road where live oaks form a canopy, almost a tunnel, overhead. For decades, the store was the commercial and social center for Live Oak's Black residents. It functioned as a grocery store, café, gas station, and social club, complete with a jukebox and a pool table. While my family doesn't know, and I haven't been able to turn up formal evidence that this store was an organizing spot for local civil rights efforts, what I do know is that having spaces outside of churches that were deemed safe was essential to Black survival during segregation. I also know that Black business owners such as my great-grandmother, who managed some measure of economic freedom and created a space of agency for their

“Black-owned grocery stores were vital to the health of their communities and served as organizing spaces. My family’s store was one of them.”

COURTESY KEON BURNS



Annie Louise Mellon Cornelius-Fortner, Keon Burns’s great-grandmother, co-owner of Fortner Grocery in Bolton, Mississippi

neighbors, commonly drew the suspicion of white supremacist groups such as the White Citizens Council and the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission. And in this way, feeding and providing space for a community was its own act of resistance.

“Mama Annie,” as her grandchildren called her, was the brains behind the operation. She carefully calculated each decision for the grocery store. She optimized every facet of business, down to the plating of food in the café to maximize profits and customer satisfaction. She ensured the store stayed afloat even as white supremacist groups surveilled her actions. Fortner Grocery was only one of her many vocations and ventures. She owned rental properties and farmland and taught English, too.

If my great-grandmother was the brains of the grocery store, my great-grandfather Bob Fortner was its soul. Relatives and neighbors recall that he could often be seen sitting on a wooden bench outside the store, trading stories with the regulars. Inside, the building was divided in half, with the grocery store on the left and the café on the right. Bob managed the café side, where nightlife blossomed on weekends and holidays. During the evening hours, adults crowded into the small space to let loose—laughing, smiling, and dancing. Hip-to-hip, they drank and sang along to their favorite songs. They danced until they couldn’t catch their breath. Behind the store, the thud of the jukebox was drowned out as men yelled and carried on over the sharp clicky-clack of dice against cardboard.

People came from throughout the greater Jackson area to eat and have a good time at Fortner Grocery. Most days, if customers were fortunate, they were greeted by the mouth-watering aroma coming from the kitchen. Collard greens, chitlins, smoked sausage, pork chop sandwiches, pig ear sandwiches, red rose sandwiches, rag bologna sandwiches, hamburgers, and fried bigmouth buffalo fish were among the café’s bestsellers. If people smelled fried catfish, they knew Albertha Floyd or my great-grandmother Wookiee was cooking. The scent of chitlins was associated with my great-grandfather Bob, who was famous for the dish. According to Anita Watson, a family friend who worked in the store when she was a child, “His secret ingredient was orange soda, and he didn’t clean his chitlins, either. And people would be tearing them up not knowing they wasn’t clean.”

I never got the opportunity to talk with my great-grandparents about the store, and I never had a chance to walk the aisles. But as I grew up, I was surrounded by memories and reminders—old pictures, passed-down stories. Whenever I visited my auntie Tonya, she would take my cousins and me down a dusty dirt road. At the end of the road was a path leading to concrete slab weathered by rain and scorching Mississippi summers. While we played, my auntie would repeat that familiar phrase, “Your grandad used to own a grocery store, and this is where it once stood.”

All that remains of Fortner Grocery today is a weed-choked concrete slab. The building was destroyed by a fire in the late 1970s or 1980s, but I’ve never been able to find out exactly what happened. Fortner Grocery once served as a nurturing force for a thriving and self-sustaining community. Over the years, most of the families who once lived in Live Oak moved away. Today, the nearest store is a Dollar General about five miles away, and the closest supermarket is thirteen miles away. People can buy their groceries at a big-box chain, dance at a nightclub in Jackson, and engage in political activism online. Places like Fortner Grocery are gone, but I don’t want them to be forgotten. Learning about the impact of my family’s grocery store instilled pride in me. I’ve grown to understand why the story of Fortner Grocery has been passed down over four generations, and I look forward to one day when I will be able to tell my children or my nieces and nephews, “Your ancestors used to own a grocery store, and it was the heart of the Live Oak community.”

Keon Burns is a 2021 graduate of the Southern Studies MA Program. His essay was first published on October 8, 2024, in “Crazy: Blue Plate Special” Southern Foodways Alliance Digest.

A Vision for the C. C. & Emogene Bryant Freedom House

Although I was born in Connecticut, my identity is deeply rooted in Mississippi. I am the first-born grandchild of C. C. (Curtis) and Emogene Bryant of McComb, Mississippi. From six weeks old to two years of age, I spent my early life in their Mississippi home. I took my first steps in their

front yard, ate my first chicken leg at their dining room table, and played in their kitchen with my first pet, a kitten I called Kat. When grade school in Connecticut was out for the summer, my younger brother and I were on our way to spend the next two months with our

maternal grandparents. My grandmother showered all seven of her grandchildren with lots of love.

By Judith Roberts



The C. C. & Emogene Bryant
Freedom House

As a child, I was unaware of the significance of the history of civil rights and the role of their home. My grandmother's house was her showplace. For her, civil rights organizing was not the center of the home's identity. It was the place where she raised her two children, cared for her family, and watched her seven grandchildren play under the hot summer sun. I was, however, aware of my grandfather's importance to the community. I saw it in the respect people showed him wherever we went. On Sundays, Society Hill Missionary Baptist Church members would listen to his announcements on political matters to keep the congregation engaged on issues that impacted them directly. Watching my grandfather in action, I saw him as a local celebrity.

My grandparents were crazy about their grandchildren and gave us the love and security of family. My grandfather served as the Pike County chapter president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) from 1954 to 1984. He was elected as chapter president because no one else would accept the position. The risk was high even to be a card-carrying NAACP member in Mississippi. By day he worked as an Illinois Central Railroad crane operator and was the local union president for his division. He was also active in his church community as a deacon and Sunday school teacher. My grandmother was active in the choir, as a church mother, and as a member and president of the missionary board. We experienced strong family connections, a comfortable middle-class lifestyle, and the importance of hard work, education, and ingenuity.

My grandparents were people of discipline and deep faith who connected to their community. Although my grandparents did not attend college, they believed in being lifelong learners. My grandfather studied and prepared for his weekly Sunday school lessons. My grandmother dreamed of being a teacher before she was married. She never missed an opportunity to focus on reading, writing, and arithmetic with her own children and grandchildren.

C. C. and Emogene Bryant

PHOTO COURTESY MARC REGIS



They wanted more opportunities for their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and Black Americans. They believed Mississippi and this country could do better for Black Americans.

My grandmother loved to decorate her home, and she also loved to look her best. She wore beautiful clothes, fashionable hats, and fancy heels. She styled her hair and took great pride in being a fashion plate—especially on the second Sunday of the month church services. Cooking, cleaning, decorating her home, and caring for her family were part of her personality and self-expression. She wanted the same for her husband, children, and grandchildren. An excellent cook, dinner was always on the stove with many fresh vegetables, tender meats, and homemade cakes and pies. According to my younger brother, to this day “no one fried chicken like our grandmother.”

My grandfather's legacy is one of striving for racial equality. Attending church and participating in NAACP events with him shaped my understanding of his commitment to justice. His home was a regular hub of activity—filled with people dropping by to seek his advice and wisdom. The list included Black and white coworkers from Illinois Central Railroad, political figures seeking election, scholars,

journalists, and students researching history. On one occasion, I even had the pleasure of meeting his dear friend Bob Moses. Whenever Dr. Moses was in Mississippi, he stayed in my grandparents' home, even after many of the advancements of the civil rights movement were won. My grandfather's faith and steadfast commitment to equity, fairness, peace, and unity inspired me to build upon his legacy—a call that has led me to work professionally, nationally, and internationally on racial justice education, advocacy, activism, and policy initiatives.

The NAACP's foundational mission was to advocate for racially just policies to ensure all citizens have political representation, voice, and participation. C. C. Bryant fervently believed in exercising the right to vote and participating in local, state, and national politics. His efforts, alongside his contemporaries, such as NAACP state president Aaron Henry, NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) field secretary Bob Moses, the Freedom Riders, the Congress of Federated Organizations (COFO), and many local people, played a pivotal role in challenging the Jim Crow discriminatory practices and laws of Mississippi. Through voter education and registration efforts, access to the

PHOTO COURTESY THE MISSISSIPPI HERITAGE TRUST

ballot box challenged racial segregation and discrimination in education, healthcare, transportation, and employment. Civil rights workers toiled relentlessly to improve the conditions and opportunities for fellow Black Mississippians. Their efforts were not confined to Mississippi. The inter-generational movement of cooperation and organizing strategies implemented during Freedom Summer of 1964 in Mississippi rippled across this country—inspiring Black Americans to push for equal protection and fair representation as afforded under the US Constitution. Their courage as citizens under the threats of violence, intimidation, and murder was a loyal commitment to justice that left an indelible imprint on Mississippi and the nation.

The entire site of the Bryant homestead is central to the McComb struggle for civil rights. The Bryant home has the potential to become a place that holds history and vision and inspires future leaders to follow in my grandfather's footsteps. Their home was a safe haven for all who found refuge behind its four walls. My grandmother created an atmosphere of peace, love, beauty, and comfort. Through delicious homecooked meals, her hospitality provided nourishing food for the soul, and her oversized four-poster bed and pressed white linens offered peaceful rest for the body and mind.

Despite being a safe haven and place of refuge, their house and their church were targeted by violence, especially during the Freedom Summer movement of 1964. In addition to their primary residence, my grandfather operated a small barbershop on his property on weekends. When he wasn't working during the week for the Illinois Central Railroad, he supplemented his income as a licensed barber. The shop was an additional space to organize and exchange information about NAACP activities. The barbershop also doubled as a community library filled with history books, political pamphlets, and education resources. Black publications like the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, *Ebony*

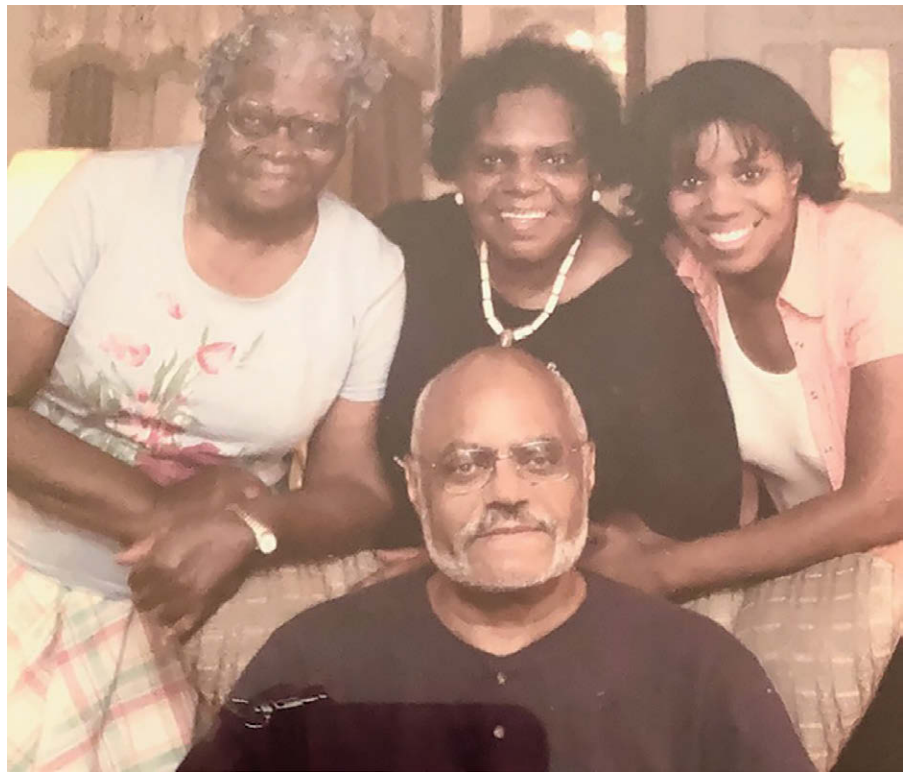


PHOTO COURTESY MARG REGIS

Emogene Bryant, Gladys Jackson, daughter of C. C. and Emogene Bryant; and Judith Roberts, granddaughter of C. C. and Emogene Bryant; with Dr. Bob Moses in the Bryant home.

and *Jet* magazines, and *The Pittsburgh Courier* and *The Chicago Defender* newspapers were readily available to share Black Americans' talents, triumphs, and plight. During Freedom Summer of 1964, a firebomb damaged the barbershop and leveled Society Hill Missionary Baptist Church.

My grandparents are no longer living, and their house has been vacant for several years. Major storms damaged the roof and compromised the structural stability. Recent grant funding from the Mellon Foundation through the Mississippi Heritage Trust Foundation included a new roof and the replacement of an exterior wall. However, the property needs additional repairs before it can become habitable. I am in the visioning phase of the future C. C. & Emogene Bryant Freedom House design and look forward to bringing concrete plans to share with my family. Restoring the home to its original condition is part of the next phase. Recreating the kitchen, living room, and bedrooms back to the style and furnishings of the 1960s is one

element of preserving history. The other includes an interpretive space that highlights the movement's work and the leaders of McComb. The home has the potential to become a retreat center for all who enter through its doors: activists, artists, students, scholars, family, friends, and visitors who want to be immersed in history and desire time for renewal and self-care.

The opening of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and the Mississippi Freedom Trail have made tremendous strides in capturing the state's importance and marking significant historical sites. Yet, there is much work to be done. Connecting and preserving Mississippi's Freedom Houses will protect these important places and stories of the people who bent the arc of freedom and justice toward a more perfect democracy in this country.

Judith Roberts is a 2013 graduate of the Southern Studies MA Program. This essay was first published in the Summer 2024 issue of Elevation: The Journal of the Mississippi Heritage Trust.



A group exercise at the Gustav Stresemann Institute in Bad Bevensen, Germany. Jodi Skipper is on the right.

Neglected Stories

A Multicultural Exploration of Contested Histories

By Jodi Skipper

This summer, I participated in *Neglected Stories*, a transatlantic exchange program, co-organized by the Alluvial Collective, out of Jackson, Mississippi, and the Gustav Stresemann Institute (GSI), located in Bad Bevensen, Germany. From late May to early June and from early to mid-September, participants from both the US and Germany collectively navigated conversations about contested histories and their relationships to contemporary social issues. That goal aligns with much of my work as a public scholar, yet this experience enhanced my understanding of these

issues by daily engagement with the perspectives of those in other parts of this country and from other parts of the world.

The Germany program was facilitated by Dr. Castel Sweet, representing the Alluvial Collective, and Martin Kaiser, Miriam Moch, and Canê Çağlar with the Gustav Stresemann Institute. The program, consisting of twenty participants, began with getting-acquainted exercises, progressed through methods of narrative storytelling, and then to community and civic education programs, with guest speakers sharing their

personal stories. From Bad Bevensen, we traveled to Hamburg for a postcolonial walking tour of sites representing neglected histories in the city and for conversations with those advocating for the civil rights of underrepresented groups there. Topics included the realities of racism in Germany, refugee advocacy, and what it means to build commemorative archival institutions. The facilitators incorporated reflection activities and group dialog, as critical to each activity. We also traveled to Berlin, beginning our time there with a walking tour that emphasized the experiences of more recent Syrian

refugees to the country and a tour of Turkish immigrants' historic neighborhoods. We also visited a Romani and Sinti activist organization, as well as the German Islam Academy.

So much of our time in Germany introduced us to the diversity of Germans' experiences, complicating our understanding of what it means to be German. Those encounters were made more real through our personal interactions with other participants, who were either Afghan, Bosnian, Ukrainian, or Turkish immigrants or their descendants and Afro-Germans or mixed-race families who, at various levels, struggle to belong and to embody what it really means to be German. We heard about and witnessed the forms of racism that they and their family members have experienced, and they told us about their struggles to fully integrate into German society, even when born there. Germanness is complex, as is US Americanness, and, although different, their struggles are reminiscent of those that many nonwhite Americans face in the US, regardless of when their families arrived. Germanness often

equates to whiteness, rooted historically in German nationalism, as it similarly relates to Americanness in US nativist movements. Although not explicit, it seems that the program organizers wanted participants to observe and compare these dynamics, something that we continued as part of our journey in the US from Jackson to Philadelphia, Mississippi, and on to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We reconvened our program in September, with the German participants traveling to the US.

Our ten-day trip in the US began with a debriefing of the Germany trip, along with exercises to reorient and recenter the group with the Alluvial Collective's conversation protocol. For the early part of this trip, we focused on the power of storytelling, personal and collective, and then visited several sites in Jackson as representations of collective storytelling: the Two Mississippi Museums and the Mississippi Museum of Art. The former included conversations with museum staff, as well as presentations from those in our cohort who tell neglected stories of Black communities

in the Mississippi Delta. At the Civil Rights Museum, we also heard from civil rights pioneer Hezekiah Watkins, who was arrested and sent to Parchman Prison at thirteen years old. For the latter, we engaged in an art-and-storytelling workshop and toured Nuestrro Mississippi, a photography and oral history exhibit documenting Mississippi's fast-growing Latin American communities. We were guided by representatives from the Immigrant Alliance for Justice and Equity (IAJE) who partnered with the Mississippi Humanities Council on the exhibit. Our tour of Philadelphia was guided by Leroy Clemmons, who cofounded the Philadelphia Coalition, which commemorates the 1964 murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. Although not explicitly stated, our Mississippi hosts, which now included Jacqueline B. Martin as a facilitator, seemed to place emphasis on the personal narratives of civil rights movement history makers, as well as those fully integrated into contemporary social justice issues.

We continued our visit to Neshoba



A group photo at a mural in Jackson after visiting the Two Mississippi Museums

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GSI AND THE ALLUVIAL COLLECTIVE



A group photo at the Welcoming Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

County, with a guided tour of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' reservation, and a presentation on their culture and heritage at the Chahta Immi Cultural Center, and then returned to Jackson for a visit to Briarwood Arts Center, Jackson native Stephen "5th Child" Brown's brain-child and community, art, and education center.

Our transatlantic exchange concluded with a visit to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where our hosts, also members of our cohort, introduced us to the work of the city's Office of Immigrant Affairs, designed to ensure immigrant communities' access to city services. We witnessed

that success through the work of the African Cultural Alliance of North America (ACANA), based in Southwest Philadelphia and developed to serve African and Caribbean immigrants by providing access to social, legal, health, cultural, and community-development services. We also visited the Al-Aqsa Islamic Society, which is located in the Kensington neighborhood and was established to support the Islamic community. There, we learned about the Arab-American Development Corporation, an Arabic culture and language preservation institution which, like ACANA, promotes community and economic development, and combats racial, ethnic, and religious

discrimination. For activists, these issues are always timely yet seemed even more urgent against the backdrop of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the then unknown outcome of the US presidential election. Both colored our experience as a cohort, which included German and American Muslims, and other representatives of groups most vulnerable to the potential outcome of the election.

We concluded our time in Philadelphia by hearing about the work of the Welcoming Center, another Philadelphia nonprofit designed to facilitate immigrant community integration. During my time in Philadelphia, I felt privileged to be in a space systemically welcome to immigrant communities and to witness the work of those on the ground who fostered the city of Philadelphia's redevelopment through immigrant settlement. I was also captivated by how welcomed our German guests felt by their hosts in Mississippi and how quickly they recognized southern hospitality. I couldn't help but notice the irony of them feeling welcome in a place systemically inhospitable to more recent immigrant communities. I think about the work of the people in Mississippi, like those with the Immigrant Alliance for Justice and Equity who help others to feel like they belong despite systemic barriers, and those in Philly, who pride themselves on being a "welcoming city" for the sake of the city's survival. I wonder what a combination of individual and systemic sense of belonging would look like for most people living in all the places that we visited, and thank both the Alluvial Collective and GSI for, at the least, giving me the temporary opportunity to imagine.

Jodi Skipper is associate professor of anthropology and Southern Studies. Her specialties include historic archaeology and other forms of cultural resource management, African Diaspora anthropology, museum and heritage studies, and the politics of cultural representations. Zaire Love, Pihakis Foodways Documentary Filmmaker for the Southern Foodways Alliance, accompanied Jodi Skipper on this trip.



In Hamburg after visiting Lampedusa, a group that advocates for the rights of refugees and migrants.

Spring 2025 Southern Studies Course Offerings

This spring, Southern Studies classes focus, as usual, on a wide variety of topics—from southern foodways to the ways in which adverse social conditions in the early modern South are represented and contested in blues texts. For a full list of all spring 2025 Southern Studies courses, as well as courses in other departments that satisfy Southern Studies major/minor requirements, visit the Center’s website.

SST 105: The South and Food

Instructor: Annemarie Anderson

SST 105 explores southern culture, history, identity, and placemaking through the lens of foodways (that is, what people eat, how and where and with whom they eat, and what all of that means). Because the study of foodways is highly interdisciplinary, students will read and consider works spanning several disciplines and methodological approaches.

SST 106: Introduction to Southern Documentary

Instructor: Shiraz Ahmed

SST 106 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 109: Rights and Southern Activism

Instructor: Ralph Eubanks

SST 109 explores the historical, cultural, and political forces that led to the struggles for civil rights and human rights in the American South and examines the nature of power dynamics in the region that were part

of that struggle. The history of protest at the University of Mississippi is a central part of this class, yet the course also explores connections between the university’s history of protest and other southern movements, as well as how the civil rights movement lives on in Southern memory.

SST 401.1: Southern Studies Seminar: Appalachian South(s)

Instructor: Matt O’Neal

According to the Appalachian Regional Commission, “Appalachia” encompasses 423 counties across thirteen states, including twenty-four counties in Mississippi. But where does “the South” end and “Appalachia” begin? With Appalachian Mississippi as our starting point, this course will tackle questions like: What/where is “Appalachia”? What/where is “the South”? Who gets to decide? And where does Mississippi land in all of this?

SST 401.2: Southern Studies Seminar: Myths, Legends, and Folklore in the South

Instructor: Xavier Sivals

If you are from the South, you’ve probably heard a story or two about woods where people go missing, swamp creatures, or an old haunted house, right? But where did the stories come from? What is their significance, and why do they keep popping up? This folklore can tell us a lot about the people, places, and times they come out of. But what is “folklore” anyway? This seminar investigates the influence, interpretation, and meaning of folklore in the South and beyond the region.

SST 401.3: Southern Studies Seminar: Root to Stem

Instructor: Annemarie Anderson

This SST 401 class will explore southern foodways through oral history methodology. Along the way, we’ll learn how to do oral history to investigate what people in the South eat and why. Students will have the opportunity to engage with oral history through readings, primary source documents, and audio documentaries and podcasts.

SST 598: Southern Currents

Instructor: Eric Solomon

In SST 598, we will read primary texts that place various bodies of water as central to their meaning and their construction of both geographic and imagined “souths.” Our work will be to challenge accepted and received narratives of southern literary culture through thinking outside the lines and against the current to determine what the “South” is today as we explore how southern culture has always been a porous ebb and flow of influences.

SST 599: Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites

Instructor: Jodi Skipper

This course is designed with a particular emphasis on interpreting the history of slavery at William Faulkner’s Rowan Oak, the former homesite of the antebellum Sheegog Estate and the enslaved people who lived and worked there. This course uses historical and social science approaches to teach students how to inclusively and responsibly represent the lives of enslaved people by reflecting on the ethics of storytelling in museums and understanding how to build sustainable relationships with local communities.

The online Mississippi Encyclopedia has recently added new entries on William Faulkner's Greenfield Farm, civil rights-era freedom libraries, Red and Malva Heffner, and the new Mississippi state flag. Here's another recent addition, an abridged entry on the baseball player and hometown hero Don Blasingame. You can find the complete entry and other work about Mississippi's past and present by going to www.mississippiencyclopedia.org.



Welcome to the
**MISSISSIPPI
ENCYCLOPEDIA**

The award-winning encyclopedia, now online.

Don Blasingame

Professional baseball player

Born in Corinth on 16 March 1932, Don “Blazer” Blasingame was a hometown sensation. The fourth child of Chester Henry “Doc” and Ottie May Blasingame, Don was a superb baseball player. Standing at 5 feet 10 inches and weighing 160 pounds, Blasingame took to baseball at a young age, bringing home a state championship to Corinth High School in 1949 while also representing Corinth’s American Legion Post 6 on the baseball diamond.

In 1951, Blasingame was given a tryout by the Houston Buffaloes, a farm team of the St. Louis Cardinals, but opted to join the United States Army instead. He served for two years during the Korean War, and upon his return to the US in 1953 he signed to play for the Winston-Salem Cardinals, a farm team for the St. Louis Cardinals. Blasingame attended David Lipscomb College (present-day Lipscomb University) in Nashville in the off seasons between 1952 and 1953 and between 1953 and 1954. In Blasingame’s first minor league season, manager Dixie Walker said that “he wears the dirtiest uniform in the club. That’s the highest tribute I can pay him.”

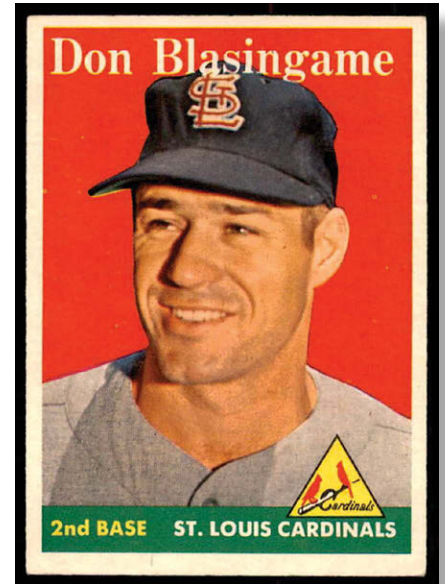
From an early age, Blasingame drew comparisons to baseball great Jackie Robinson. Batting left-handed and throwing right-handed, Blasingame reached the majors in 1955 at the young age of twenty-three. Playing second base and hitting in the leadoff spot, he singled in his first at-bat with the Cardinals. Two years later, Blasingame would lead the National League in at-bats, while leading all

National League second basemen in assists and double plays. This excellent season from the Corinth native would land him in twelfth place in league MVP voting. In 1958, Blasingame would be selected for his only All-Star Game appearance.

The Cardinals traded Blasingame to the San Francisco Giants after the 1959 season. He struggled in San Francisco before being shipped to the Cincinnati Reds midway through the 1961 season. Soon after Blasingame’s arrival in Ohio, the Reds went on a nine-game winning streak to ascend from the bottom of the league standings. Blasingame appeared in the 1961 World Series with the Reds, but the club ultimately fell to the New York Yankees. Blasingame stuck with the Reds until 1963, when he lost the second base job to the eventual MLB hit king, Pete Rose.

Blasingame was once again traded, this time to the Washington Senators, with whom he had a bit of an offensive resurgence in 1963 and 1964. Blasingame’s production took a step back in 1965 and 1966, causing the Senators to sell his contract to the Kansas City Athletics, who played him sparingly. Blasingame’s final MLB appearance came in 1966, as he finished his career with a .258 batting average and 1,366 hits in 1,444 games.

In 1967, Blasingame joined the Nankai Hawks to continue his playing career in Japan, where he was addressed by his nickname, “Blazer.” Blasingame played in Japan for three years and coached there for another twelve. He served as a coach in the



Phillies organization upon his return to the United States, and moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, after he retired from coaching.

Blasingame died on April 13, 2005, in Fountain Hills, Arizona, at the age of seventy-three.

In the 1970s the youth baseball league at Corinth’s Sportsplex was named after Blasingame. He was inducted into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame in 1980. The city of Corinth also named Blasingame Street in his honor. Blasingame remains the lone professional baseball player to hail from Corinth, where he is still fondly remembered. During Blasingame’s playing career, a group of supporters from his hometown created a fan club for him.

McCartney Smith
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.

Join the Coalition for the Study of Race and Racism for the Fourth Annual Faculty and Graduate Student Forum on Race & Ethnicity

February 24, 2025

10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Triplett Alumni Center-Butler Auditorium

The Coalition for the Study of Race and Racism invites University of Mississippi faculty and graduate students to take part in a cross-disciplinary conversation about research and other projects related to the study of race and ethnicity, broadly stated, in the United States and abroad. Faculty and students from all levels of study and from all campuses and schools at the University of Mississippi are welcome.

Summer Research Program “Interdisciplinary Study of the Politics of Place”

Applications are now open for “Interdisciplinary Study of the Politics of Place,” the 2025 summer Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program at the University of Mississippi.

Codirected by Dr. James M. Thomas (JT) and Dr. Simone Delerme, this ten-week summer residential program provides undergraduate students with hands-on training in conceptualizing, operationalizing, and studying the relationship between race, place, and power within the context of the American South. Funded by the National Science Foundation, this program is the only REU of its kind in the entire country. Students receive one-on-one mentoring, professional development opportunities, direct research experience, and even opportunities to publish with faculty mentors. Students admitted into the program also receive room and board, a generous stipend, and travel assistance getting to and from Oxford, Mississippi. For more information and the application, please email Dr. Thomas at jmthoma4@olemiss.edu or Dr. Delerme at sdelerme@olemiss.edu.

The Coalition for the Study of Race and Racism’s mission is to provide a centralized home for scholars at the University of Mississippi and elsewhere whose research interests include describing, analyzing, understanding, and explaining the historical and contemporary significance of race and racism in the United States and abroad.

STUDY *the* SOUTH

A CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOUTHERN CULTURE PUBLICATION

—Call for Proposals— Guest Editors for Thematic Essay Clusters

Study the South (www.studythesouth.org) is soliciting guest editors to propose topics for special essay clusters for publication in the online journal.

Guest editors will propose topics in their field of study, craft a call for papers that *Study the South* will assist in circulating, and then select three or four short essays (~3,000–5,000 words each) that speak to that theme. Guest editors are welcome to solicit essays from scholars working on the topic of the collection. The guest editor would then work with the authors to shape the essays and write a brief introduction to the collection. Each guest editor will receive a modest honorarium for their work.

Study the South embraces its interdisciplinary possibilities, and we are open to publishing combinations of scholarly work, including academic papers, documentary photography, mapping projects, film projects, scholarly interviews, and oral history projects. Clusters of work aligned with a conference are welcome.

Proposals should include the following:

- A suggested title for the collection
- Proposed aims and scope, giving an overview of the collection's intended focus and a list of possible topics (limit: one page)
- A proposed timeline and schedule

All proposals are subject to review by the journal's editorial board. If approved, a call for papers for the special collection will be issued. Guest editors will suggest peer reviewers.

Those interested should contact journal editor James G. Thomas, Jr. (jgthomas@olemiss.edu) to submit proposals or for more information.

The journal, founded in 2014, exists to encourage interdisciplinary academic thought and discourse on the culture of the American South, particularly in the fields of literature, history, anthropology, sociology, music, documentary studies, gender studies, religion, geography, media studies, race studies, ethnicity, folklife, and art.

—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.

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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.



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Living Blues News

I first experienced fife and drum music in the late 1980s behind Buford's Store in Gravel Springs, Mississippi, with Napolian Strickland on fife. It is still one of the most remarkable musical experiences of my life. The fife and drum tradition is a magical subgenre of the blues. It is about as deep as it gets. Some readers may have been lucky enough to see Otha Turner in his later years when he performed at a number of blues festivals or at one of his goat picnics at his home outside Como, Mississippi. The young girl who once played drum or fife on some of those shows is now the subject of this issue's cover story—Otha Turner's granddaughter Sharde Thomas-Mallory. Sharde literally grew up inside the tradition and is now the undisputed master of the form. Now age thirty-four and recently married, Sharde and her husband, Chris Mallory, *are* the evolution of fife and drum music. Sharde talks to us about her special relationship with her grandfather, her deep connections to all of the generations of the Tate and Marshall County blues families, and how she and her husband are writing the future of fife and drum music.

Texas bluesman Steve Washington is the son of songwriter Fats Washington, who is best known for writing “Pledging My Love.” Steve talks about the struggles his father had with early label owners and discusses his own path in the music industry and his years with Lucky Peterson.

Robert Johnson has always been an enigma—a mysterious character shrouded in legend and myth. For decades blues scholars have tried to separate fact from fiction, yet many myths about the man persist. Robert Johnson scholar Bruce Conforth sets out here to correct some of these misheld beliefs.

Blind Lemon Jefferson was one of the most popular bluesmen of the 1920s. His idiosyncratic guitar style and booming voice influenced generations of artists. This issue's Let It Roll column focuses on Jefferson's March 1927 recording session for OKeh records in Atlanta. The session yielded two of Jefferson's most memorable hits, “Black Snake Moan” and his best-known song, “Match Box Blues.”

Our thoughts and prayers go out to all of those affected



by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Our writer Bill Kopp lives in Asheville, North Carolina. He was spared major damage to his home from Helene but says the town was devastated. Just two weeks later we worried as a second storm headed straight toward Tampa where eighty-five-year-old Latimore and his wife live. He chose to stay put and joked he didn't want to see Latimore run out of his house by Milton! Luckily, they survived unscathed.

A big happy birthday shoutout to Detroit bluesman Little Sonny who turned ninety-two on October 6. Sonny's first record was released in 1958. He was on the cover of *LB* #207 back in 2010. And on a sad note, Mississippi bluesman Sam Mosley passed away on September 20 at age seventy-eight. Sam was on the cover of *LB* #274 in 2021. An obituary will follow.

I also wanted to let everyone know *LB* founding editor Jim O'Neal, who has been battling cancer for a decade, recently went through an experimental T-cell treatment and is now back on his feet and starting back to work.

Money is still tight at *Living Blues*. We are doing everything we can to keep things going. We have changed printers and bulk shipping methods to cut costs. I believe what we do is important. It is a five-decades-long oral history of the blues. No one else will do this work if we don't. As we enter our fifty-fifth year of publication, won't you please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Friends of *Living Blues* Foundation? Simply go to unfoundation.givingfuel.com/livingblues to make a one-time donation or a recurring donation to help us continue to document the blues.

Brett J. Bonner



In Memoriam

Dorothy Lynn Crosby Gammill
September 13, 1936–December 6, 2024



CONTRIBUTORS

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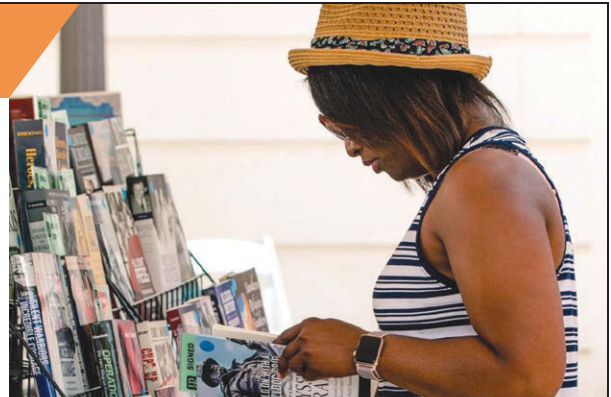
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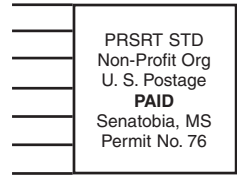
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