

“The Obama Presidency: Reflections on the First 262 Days”

October 8-9, 2009

Jackson State University

26th Annual Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial Symposium Lecture Series
Room 266 in the Dollye M.E. Robinson Liberal Arts Building

FANNIE LOU HAMER, 1917-1977

Born Fannie Lou Townsend on October 6, 1917, she was the youngest of 20 children. This woman of the soil dared to dream and emerged as a doer and a visionary of the highest order. Her parents were sharecroppers who lived on a plantation in rural Montgomery County, Mississippi. Blessed with a sharp analytical mind, Fannie Lou Hamer was able to use her limited formal education in a positive manner. It is very clear that she was a leader on the various plantations before she was introduced to the Civil Rights Movement. She was already resisting the status quo prior to 1962 when she attempted to register to vote and was evicted from the W.D. Marlow Plantation.

Only two years later, Mrs. Hamer's heroics at the 1964 Democratic National Convention shook the consciences of white Americans. Her testimony before the Credentials Committee started a movement that was to have a profound impact upon America.

Her impassioned description of the attack on her in Winona, Mississippi, struck a responsive chord in that committee and in the television audience across America. Her testimony was so effective that President Lyndon B. Johnson called a press conference to divert the nation's attention. The gambit, however, did not work; the damage had been done. Mrs. Hamer's testimony was so powerful that the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's claim of being the legitimate delegation from the state was given renewed credence. The recital of her sadistic beating by police tore at the veil that concealed the brutality of life in the South. This was many Americans' first appalling confrontation with the calculated savagery of white supremacy. Calls and telegrams poured into the convention, and the delegates were prompted to an historic decision. Two members of the MFDP were invited to be seated at-large for the first time in history. The Democratic Party pledged that future conventions would not honor any delegation that had not been democratically chosen.

After the convention, Fannie Lou Hamer challenged the Mississippi Congressional delegation, traveled to Africa, ran for State Senate, and established several self-help projects in Sunflower County and the surrounding area. Mrs. Hamer made a difference in the lives of countless Americans, and today we stand on her shoulders. Her light yet shines!

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10:00 Welcome

10:15-11:30

Panel I

**“We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For’:
Organizing Principles from the Civil Rights Movements”**

Moderator: Dr. Leslie Burl McLemore, Founding Director of the
Hamer Institute, Jackson State University

Mr. Charles McLaurin, Civil Rights Activist

Mr. Hollis Watkins, Southern Echo

Dr. Emilye Crosby, SUNY Geneseo

Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Assistant Professor of History, Ohio State University

11:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-2:45 Keynote

Angela Kupenda, Esq., Professor, Mississippi College School of Law

3:00-4:45

Panel II

“The Obama Presidency in a Historical Perspective”

Moderator: Dr. Daphne Chamberlain, University of Mississippi

Dr. Pete Daniel, Curator, Museum of American History

Dr. Jeff Kolnick, Associate Professor of History, Southwest Minnesota State
University Founding Faculty, The Hamer Institute

Dr. Kristen Oertel, Associate Professor of History, Millsaps College

Dr. Robert Luckett, Jr., Director of the Margaret Walker Alexander
Research Center and Assistant Professor of History,
Jackson State University

Dr. Rico Chapman, Assistant Professor of History, Jackson State University

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9:00-10:15

Panel I

**“Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment
Act (Stimulus Plan)—Jackson and Mississippi”**

Moderator: Dr. Michelle D. Deardorff, Professor of Political Science,
Jackson State University

Mayor Harvey Johnson, Mayor of Jackson, Mississippi

Mr. Clark Holmes, Director of CMPDD

Ms. Martha Bergmark, Director, MS Center for Justice

10:30-11:45

Panel II

“Education and the Future of No Child Left Behind”

Moderator: Dr. Mary D. Coleman, Associate Dean, College of
Liberal Arts, Jackson State University

Chauncey Spears, Social Studies Specialist, MS Dept. of Education

Mr. Whit Grace, Jackson Public Schools

Dr. Barbara Patrick, Professor of Political Science, MS State University Dr.

Earl Watkins, Former Superintendent, Jackson Public Schools

Dr. Mary D. Coleman, Associate Dean, College of

Liberal Arts, Jackson State University

11:45-1:30

Lunch

1:30-2:45

Panel III

“Domestic Policy—Priorities and Plans”

Moderator: Dr. Rickey Hill, Dean of Graduate Studies, Mississippi
Valley State University

Dr. D’Andra Orey, Chair, Department of Political Science, Jackson State
University

TBA - Dr. Richard Forgette, Chair, Department of Political Science,
University of Mississippi

Dr. Rickey Hill, Dean of Graduate Studies, Mississippi Valley State
University

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