

# HAMER HAPPENINGS

The Newsletter of the  
Fannie Lou Hamer National Institute  
on Citizenship and Democracy

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“Righteousness exalts a nation; hate just makes people miserable.” — Fannie Lou Hamer

## Summer NEH Workshops Explore Civil Rights Landmarks

This summer the Hamer Institute, in cooperation with Jackson State University, Rhodes College, the National Civil Rights Museum, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, hosted two one-week summer workshops for K-12 teachers entitled *Landmarks of American Democracy: From Freedom Summer to the Memphis Sanitation Workers’ Strike*. Eighty teachers from around the country met to explore the relationship between place and history in the freedom struggle. Participants came from 31 states and were joined by many familiar Hamer Institute guests, including David Dennard, Hollis Watkins, L.C. Dorsey, John Dittmer, Jan Hillegas, Rims Barber, Charles McLaurin, and John Dittmer. The workshops were also enhanced through the contributions of new Hamer friends Wazir Peacock, Judge Mamie Chinn, Vasco and Maxine Smith, Reverend Samuel “Billy” Kyles, Russ Wigginton, Willie Brown, James Lanier,

Charles Payne, Luther Ivory, Beverly Bond and Michael Honey.

The two workshops were part of a new initiative by the NEH to help teachers explore important landmarks in American history. The workshops provided extensive background information for group visits to such historic sites as the former homes and the grave of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer in Ruleville; the headquarters of COFO’s Mississippi Summer Project in Jackson and Greenwood; the homes of Medgar Evers and Aaron Henry; the Masonic Temple in Jackson (the birthplace of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party); the Leflore County Courthouse in Greenwood; the Mason Temple in Memphis where Dr. King gave his last speech; and the Lorraine Hotel where he was assassinated in 1968 while working to bring justice to striking sanitation workers. In all, workshop participants visited more than 30 historic sites throughout Mississippi and in Memphis. The walls of the meeting room were lined with photographs of the historic places the group visited during the course of the workshop. Visitors to the Hamer Institute web site soon will be able to view the pictures and landmark descriptions online. Selected lesson plans from this year’s participants will also be featured on the web site, and can be used by teachers at all grade levels. As usual, many workshop participants and Institute faculty danced the night away on Beale Street in Memphis and at Hamp’s in Jackson. Several



Wazir Peacock and workshop participants visit civil rights landmarks on Farish Street in Jackson, Mississippi



Visiting scholar John Dittmer discusses the impact local people had during Freedom Summer



Hollis Watkins and Leslie McLemore with group at Medgar Evers’ home and museum



Lectures and oral history panels helped familiarize workshop participants with the significance of the various landmarks



The week 1 field trip through the Delta included a stop in Clarksdale and a visit to Aaron Henry's former headquarters

raised a toast and shook their moneymakers in honor of that now-closed landmark of the blues, the Subway on Pearl Street in Jackson.

The Hamer Institute's new partners in Memphis added considerably to the breadth and depth of the workshop experiences. The National Civil Rights Museum served as a special meeting place to discuss the history of black Memphis and the sanitation workers' strike—it was impossible to attend class each morning in Memphis without feeling the gravity of that sacred space. The hospitality, commitment, and intellectual energy of Russ Wigginton and his colleagues at Rhodes College portends an expansion of the Hamer Institute into the upper reaches of the Mississippi Delta.

During the first week of the workshops, National Public Radio

correspondent Debbie Elliot traveled with us from Jackson to Memphis and filed a report on her observations that you can listen to by pointing your web browser to:

<http://www.npr.org/features/feature.php?wfid=3821251>



Week 2 workshop participants in front of the Tri-State Defender newspaper office in Memphis

This web archive contains not only the story by Elliot but also useful links to oral history by Wazir Peacock and Charles McLaurin. You will also be treated to selections of the Hamer Institute participants in full voice belting out Freedom Songs with considerable spirit (if not perfect harmony). The website also contains other useful links to learn more about the Civil Rights Movement. Catch the spirit and listen to part of this year's program.



Left: Russ Wigginton moderates a Memphis oral history panel featuring Vasco Smith, Jim Lanier, and Maxine Smith



Above: Teacher Jeff Pollard joins Terry "Big T" Williams for a taste of the blues in Clarksdale  
Left: Hollis Watkins leads week 2 workshop participants in a freedom song



## PROGRAM SCHEDULE

**Thursday, October 14**

- 8:30 Registration and Coffee
- 10:00 **Opening Session:**  
Framing the Issues
- 11:30 Lunch on your own
- 1:00 **Plenary Session**  
"Reconciling Active Citizenship and Standardized Testing"
- 2:30 **Breakout Session:**  
"Teaching Social Movements: Local People, Community History, and State Standards"
- 4:00 Dinner on your own
- 6:00 **Evening Session:**  
"Preparing Students & Teachers for a New Testing Environment"

**Friday, October 15**

- 9:00 **Concurrent Workshop 1:**  
Option 1—  
"Technology as Servant: Using Multimedia to Meet Curricular and Pedagogical Goals"  
Option 2—  
"Parents, Mentors, & the 'Village' in Holistic Education"
- 10:00 **Concurrent Workshop 2:**  
Option 1—  
"Assessing 'No Child Left Behind'"  
Option 2—  
"Challenges for Diverse Learners in the Face of Standardized Testing"
- 11:00 **Concurrent Workshop 3:**  
Option 1—  
"Parents, Mentors, & the 'Village' in Holistic Education"  
Option 2—  
"Assessing 'No Child Left Behind'"
- Noon Luncheon (reservations required)

**Hamer Lecture Series Announced for Fall 2004**

The Hamer Institute and the Jackson State University Department of Political Science will sponsor the annual Fannie Lou Hamer Hamer Symposium Lecture Series October 14 and 15, 2004. This year's program focuses on the impact of standardized testing requirements on the teaching of the humanities. The conference, entitled "Civic Engagement in a Testing Culture: Creating Active Citizens in a Multiple-Choice World," will explore how teachers and administrators can strengthen the teaching of active citizenship, community history, and social change movements within educational structures that are increasingly driven by state testing objectives.

The primary goals of the lecture series are to 1) discover the impact that state testing objectives are having on the teaching of humanities content in history and the social sciences; 2) explore ways of successfully incorporating humanistic content into an educational environment driven by the knowledge-acquisition mandates of "No Child Left Behind"; and 3) equip teachers with strategies they can use to teach diverse learners about active citizenship and community/regional history, all within curricula that are being restructured in response to prescribed examination requirements.

Primary and secondary school teachers with demonstrated expertise in the teaching of literature, history, English, and the social sciences have been invited to serve on a range of panels addressing the primary objectives of the conference. Panels will address the challenges teachers now face in teaching students about active citizenship—social movements, the roles that local people play in bringing about societal change, and the function of community in the holistic education of children. Panelists will be encouraged to share their struggles and successes in fostering the teaching of humanities content in the test-driven educational and curricular environment.

The lecture series will also include keynote presentations from education administrators who are helping teachers and students face the challenges of curriculum reform. The insights gained from the panel presentations and the keynote speakers will help program participants gain a better understanding of methodologies that work in the classroom and on "the test," as well as the pedagogical challenges that still must be overcome.

The general public is invited to all of the sessions. For additional information, please call 601-979-2136 or e-mail: [hamer.institute@jsums.edu](mailto:hamer.institute@jsums.edu).

*The 2004 Hamer Lecture Series is financially assisted by the National Endowment for the Humanities through the Mississippi Humanities Council.*

**Proposal Submitted for 2005 Landmarks Program**

The Hamer Institute has recently submitted a grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities to conduct another Landmark Institute in the summer of 2005. This application is part of a special project designed for community college faculty. The two one-week summer workshops tentatively are scheduled for July 10-16 and July 24-30, 2005.

The workshops will follow the basic outline of the 2004 Landmark program for high school teachers, but will be tailored to community college faculty and enhanced through improvements based upon this year's participant feedback. Institute faculty have clarified the connections between the Mississippi Summer Project and the Memphis Sanitation Workers'



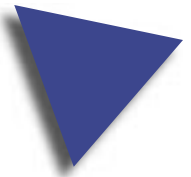
*The Hamer Institute core faculty announce 2004 lecture series and tentative programming for summer 2005*





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Strike, added more time for processing information at the close of the workshop, and altered the readings to reflect the new audience.

Since this will mark the Hamer Institute's first time working with community college faculty, and since this is a new, relatively unknown NEH program, we are asking Hamer Institute alumni to assist in spreading the news to friends and colleagues within the community college system.

Please note that this new initiative in no way marks a retreat from the Hamer Institute's primary commitment to working with K-12 teachers and students. In that spirit, time and funding permitting, we are planning a one-week institute for Jackson-area students for early June or late May that will feature an overview of the Freedom Struggle, biographies of civil rights and labor leaders, oral history panels, discussion sections, and a tour of Jackson area historic sights. Watch for more information in 2005!

### NEH WORKSHOP: LANDMARKS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

The following historical sites are explored in the one-week workshops:

#### In Jackson:

- Masonic Temple
- COFO Building
- Pratt Memorial United Methodist Church
- Offices at 507½ N. Farish St.
- Medgar Evers' Home
- Central United Methodist Church
- Farish Street Baptist Church
- Alamo Theater

#### In Ruleville:

- Marlow Plantation
- Fannie Lou Hamer's 1st Home
- Williams Chapel Missionary Baptist Church
- Fannie Lou Hamer's 2nd Home
- Fannie Lou Hamer's Gravesite

#### In Greenwood:

- Elks Hall

- First Christian Church
- Wesley Chapel Methodist Church
- Friendship Baptist Church
- Jennings Temple
- Leflore County Courthouse
- SNCC Headquarters

#### In Clarksdale:

- Fourth Street Drugstore Site
- Haven United Methodist Church
- Aaron Henry's Campaign HQ and NAACP Office
- Chapel Hill Church
- Aaron Henry's Home

#### In Memphis:

- National Civil Rights Museum
- Mason Temple
- Zion Christian Cemetery
- Clayborn Temple
- Office of the *Tri-State Defender*
- Ernest Withers' Photo Studio