

# 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

## Hamer Institute Receives Funding for NEH Summer Program

The National Endowment for the Humanities recently funded a grant that will enable the Hamer Institute to present a Landmarks of American History workshop for community college faculty. The one-week workshop, *Landmarks of American Democracy: From Freedom Summer to the Memphis Sanitation Workers’ Strike*, will be presented July 10–16 and repeated July 17–23, 2005. Jackson State University, Rhodes College, and the National Civil Rights Museum join the Hamer Institute in hosting the workshops, which will follow the curriculum used in the highly successful summer 2004 workshop for K–12 schoolteachers.

This is the first time that the NEH has provided funding for workshops designed specifically for community college faculty. “We are excited and honored to be one of the first organizations to host a new NEH initiative. We’re eagerly anticipating working with a new demographic of educators,” notes Dr. Leslie Burl McLemore, co-director of the workshop. “We look forward to helping community college faculty enhance their teaching of southern civil rights history through an expanded understanding of the people, events, and places where the movement occurred.”

Each workshop will include up to 25 participants facilitated by Hamer Institute faculty members, including Dr. McLemore, Dr. Michelle Deardorff, Dr. Thandekile Mvusi, Dr. Jeffrey Kolnick, and Dr. Russell Wigginton. Like all Hamer Institute programs, the workshops will feature guest lectures from noted scholars on the southern Civil Rights Movement. The following individuals have tentatively planned to join us for one or both of the summer workshops: Dr. John Dittmer, author of *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*. Dr. Dittmer will discuss how ordinary citizens like Aaron Henry and Fannie Lou Hamer contributed to the success of Freedom Summer. Dr. Charles Payne, author of *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*, will guide participants in exploring the organization of Freedom Summer

and the creation of Freedom Schools. Dr. Michael Honey, author of *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* will join the workshop in Memphis to examine the impact the Civil Rights Movement had on the Memphis sanitation workers as they struggled to gain equal labor rights in the face of blatant discrimination.

The workshops will also include several oral history panels with first-hand accounts from participants in Freedom Summer activities. Past Hamer Institute program attendees have always commented on how meaningful it is to be exposed to a variety of individuals who contributed to the Civil Rights Movement. Panels for the 2005 workshop have not yet been confirmed, but past panelists include



Haven United Methodist Church in Clarksdale, Mississippi is one of more than 30 civil rights landmarks that will be visited during the workshop’s field trips.



Visiting scholar Charles Payne leads a discussion on the creation of Freedom Schools.



One of the oral history panels featured in the 2004 Landmarks of American Democracy Workshop. From left to right, panelists Vasco Smith, James Lanier, and Maxine Smith.



*The field trip to landmark sites in the Mississippi Delta includes a stop at the grave sites of Fannie Lou and Perry “Pap” Hamer.*

Charlie Cobb, Hollis Watkins, Bob Moses, Dave Dennis, Reverend Rims Barber, Charles McLaurin, Wazir Peacock, Judge Mamie Chinn, Vasco and Maxine Smith, Reverend Ben Hooks, and Reverend Samuel “Billy” Kyles.

The workshop begins on the campus of Jackson State University. While in Jackson, the group will take several field trips to local civil rights landmarks. Midweek, participants and faculty leaders will travel by motor coach to landmark sites in the Mississippi Delta communities of Greenwood, Ruleville, and Clarksdale. Upon the conclusion of this field trip the group will arrive at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. Remaining workshop sessions will be held at the Lorraine Motel, site of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and now the home of the National Civil Rights Museum. While in Memphis, workshop participants will visit several local landmarks, adjourning in the evenings to soak up the blues on Beale Street.

For more information on the 2005 workshop, please contact us via e-mail or visit the Hamer Institute website (our e-mail address and website URL are noted on page 4). The website includes links to application materials, a tentative syllabus, and resources from last year’s Landmarks workshop for schoolteachers. The latter includes a gallery of photos of most of the landmarks visited during the workshop’s field trips. If you have participated in any of the Hamer Institute’s past programs and know any community college faculty members who might be interested in this year’s program, please encourage them to contact us and apply.

### **New Website Features Resources from 2004 Landmarks of American Democracy Workshop**

After several unexpected delays, we are proud to announce the launch of the all-new Hamer Institute website. Dave Deardorff, who joined the Hamer Institute in the summer of 2004 as a grant proposal writer and program coordinator, handled the redesign and updating of the website. “Some of the most requested features—an online gallery of civil rights landmark sites, a bibliography of Civil Rights readings—are now available for everyone who has attended our programs or is thinking about applying,” notes Deardorff. One of the primary goals of the website is that it will become a clearinghouse of information and resources for educators and students. “We want the site’s growth and development to be driven by the people who use it,” says Deardorff. “If there’s a feature you would like to see, please let us know.”

The website currently includes a brief history of the Hamer Institute and biographical information on the founding and core faculty members. A few pages are still under development, but Deardorff anticipates these will be completed by spring.

See the box at right to learn how you can contribute to the site, and feel free to contact us with ideas for enhancing or improving the content.

#### **WANTED: LESSON PLANS & HYPERLINKS**

A key component of most Hamer Institute programs is the development of new or revised lesson plans that incorporate knowledge and insights gained from workshops and seminars. If you have a lesson plan you would like to share, please forward it to us in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format.

Additionally, if you can recommend other websites that you have found helpful in teaching or understanding the Civil Rights Movement, please e-mail us the links and we will add them to the site.

Send lesson plans and links to:  
[hamer.institute@jsums.edu](mailto:hamer.institute@jsums.edu)

## HAMER LECTURE SERIES REPORT: “Civic Engagement in a Testing Culture: Creating Active Citizens in a Multiple-Choice World”

The 2004 Fannie Hamer Lecture Series was held October 14 and 15, 2004, hosted by the Hamer Institute and the Jackson State University Department of Political Science. The program focused on the impact of standardized testing requirements on the teaching of the humanities and explored 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 lecture series kicked off with a keynote address from Dr. Earl Watkins, Superintendent of the Jackson, Mississippi public schools. Dr. Watkins’ presentation on “Preparing Students and Teachers for a New Testing Environment” encouraged teachers to consider the positive aspects of the “No Child Left Behind” Act, specifically considering testing as a means to identify opportunities for correction and improvement rather than an “endgame” in itself. Accountability is important for everyone—teachers, students, and administrators—and for the tests themselves. As Dr. Watkins noted, “You must *inspect* what you *expect*.” Ultimately, the focus of education and measurement efforts should be subjugated to the usefulness of that education to the child.

Breakout sessions included panel discussions on a number of topics related to the theme of the lecture series:

- “Reconciling Active Citizenship and Standardized Testing”
- “Teaching Social Movements: Local People, Community History, and State Standards”
- “Technology as Servant: Using Multimedia to Meet Curricular and Pedagogical Goals”
- “Parents, Mentors, and the ‘Village’ in the Holistic Education of Children”
- “Three Years Later: Assessing No Child Left Behind”
- “Challenges for Diverse Learners in the Face of Standardized Testing”

Dr. Jeanne Middleton-Hairston, Director of the Freedom School Program of the Children’s Defense Fund, presented the second keynote address of the lecture series on “Civic Engagement in a Testing Culture: Creating Active Citizens in a Multiple-Choice World.” Her impassioned presentation emphasized the importance of civic engagement and accountability. Of particular concern for minority students (and their parents, teachers, and communities) is the importance of reading comprehension and vocabulary. Dr. Middleton-Hairston noted that state prison boards have found such a strong correlation between reading comprehension test scores and a child’s likelihood of ending up in prison that they are using test scores to predict future prison housing requirements.

For many attendees, the lecture series was a welcome opportunity to discuss issues that had been touched upon in previous Hamer Institute programs, but not explored at length due to time constraints. As many participants commented, the lecture series enabled them to gain greater insight into the topic and a broader perspective on the challenges faced by administrators, teachers, families, and students themselves.



*Dr. Michelle Deardorff moderates a panel on “Reconciling Active Citizenship and Standardized Testing.” Panelists included teachers Michelle Taylor (Duncan, Oklahoma) and Anne Johnson (Jackson, Mississippi).*



*Dr. Thandi Mvusi looks on during Dr. Jeanne Middleton-Hairston’s discussion of the importance of civic engagement as a means of keeping policy makers accountable for educational mandates.*

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**Hamer Institute to Sponsor Symposium on Black Intellectuals**

On February 22, 2005, the Hamer Institute, the Department of Political Science at Jackson State University, and the JSU chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha will present a symposium on “The Role of Black Intellectuals in Today’s Society.” Dr. Rickey Hill, Professor of Political Science and Dean of the Graduate School at Mississippi Valley State University, will be the guest speaker. Dr. Hill will critique the public intellectualism of Henry Louis Gates, Jr.; Stanley Crouch; Shelby Steele; and Cornel West. His presentation will examine how the prescriptions and policy ideas of these Black public intellectuals are reduced to “social pathological enunciations.” Dr. Hill argues that today’s Black intellectuals embrace cultural politics because they are incapable of thinking through the seemingly intractable problems of Black everyday life.

Respondents to Dr. Hill’s presentation will include Dr. Mfanya Tryman, Professor of Political Science and Public Administration at Mississippi State University, Dr. Alfonso Crump, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Jackson State University, and Ms. Joslyn Anthony, a Senior Political Science Major at JSU.

The symposium will be preceded by an opening reception from 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. The reception will be held on the fourth floor of the Dollye M.E. Robinson Liberal Arts Building on the Jackson State University campus. The symposium will be held from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. in Room 266 of the Liberal Arts Building. The event is free and open to the public.



For more information, contact the Department of Political Science at (601) 979-2136.