



Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Charlayne Hunter-Gault, civil rights activist and award-winning journalist, to keynote the 2014 MLK Convocation at JSU and to receive *For My People* Award along with the African American Military History Museum and David and Patricia Crosby of Mississippi Cultural Crossroads.

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Jackson, MS—The Margaret Walker Center for the Study of the African-American Experience at Jackson State University is pleased to announce that Charlayne Hunter-Gault will be the keynote speaker for the 45th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Convocation at 10 a.m. on Friday, January 17, in the Rose E. McCoy Auditorium on the JSU campus.

With more than 40 years in the journalism industry, Hunter-Gault has worked with all forms of media. She joined NPR in 1997 after 20 years with PBS, where she had worked as a national correspondent for *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. She began her journalism career as a reporter for *The New Yorker*, to which she still contributes, then worked as a local news anchor for WRC-TV in Washington, DC, and as the Harlem bureau chief for *The New York Times*.

She joined CNN in April 1999 as the network's chief correspondent in Africa and was awarded a Peabody in 1998 for her coverage of the continent. In 2005, she returned to NPR as a special correspondent. She has also served as Africa bureau chief for *Essence* magazine.

Over the years, Hunter-Gault has received numerous awards and citations including two Emmy Awards and three Peabody Awards, the first for her work on *Apartheid's People*, a *NewsHour* series about South African life during apartheid. In August 2005, she was inducted in the National Association of Black Journalists' Hall of Fame and holds some three dozen honorary degrees. She is on the board of the Carter Center, the Peabody Awards, and the Committee to Protect Journalists and is co-chair of the African Media Initiative, a project aimed at promoting the highest ethical standards and business practices as well as quality journalism on the African continent. She is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Immediately following MLK Convocation, the Margaret Walker Center will honor Hunter-Gault as well as the African American Military History Museum and Dr. David and Mrs. Patricia

Crosby of Mississippi Cultural Crossroads with *For My People* Awards for their contributions to the public preservation of African-American history and culture. The luncheon will begin at 11:45 a.m. in the JSU Student Center Ballroom

This annual award is named after Margaret Walker's classic poem, *For My People*, and past recipients have included James Meredith, Unita Blackwell, Robert Clark, Lerone Bennett, Andrew Young, Jesse Mosley, Reena Evers-Everette, and others.

In large part the vision of Mrs. Iola Williams, the African American Military History Museum aims to educate the public about African-American contributions to the United States military. Opened in 1942, in the segregated army of World War II, the USO Club in Hattiesburg served as a home away from home for African-American soldiers stationed at Camp Shelby. This building is the only remaining USO constructed especially for African-American soldiers in public use in the United States. It is now listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and is a Mississippi Landmark. Beginning with the Buffalo Soldiers of the post-Civil War era through the modern-day conflicts of Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the museum bears witness to the service and sacrifice of the African-American soldier.

David and Patty Crosby were pivotal players in the formation of Mississippi Cultural Crossroads, a unique and award-winning center that has been recognized as a national model for quilt-related documentation, interpretation, education, marketing, economic development, and community-building in Port Gibson, Mississippi. In 1978 Patty secured a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to plan an enrichment program for area students, titled "Mississippi: Cultural Crossroads." The cluster of activities associated with the grant led to the formation of the Mississippi Cultural Crossroads, now one of the most respected community-based arts organizations in the nation. Among the highlights of the organization's activities are the formation of Crossroads Quilters, Peanut Butter and Jelly Theater, and the annual quilt show, Pieces and Strings.

While MLK Convocation is free and open to the public, tickets for this year's *For My People* Awards luncheon can be purchased through the Margaret Walker Center for \$10 starting on January 6, 2014.

For more information, visit the Center's website at www.jsums.edu/margaretwalkercenter or contact the Center's staff at 601-979-2055 or mwa@jsums.edu.