



CREATIVE ARTS AND SCHOLARLY ENGAGEMENT 2026

keynote speaker
DR. EVIE SHOCKLEY



APRIL 10 & 11



20th Annual CASE Festival

Creative Arts and Scholarly Engagement

History

A 2005 class trip to the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis generated discussion about a possible conference at Jackson State University. Founder Dr. Janice Neal-Vincent and students in her “Analysis of Communication” class examined artifacts that depicted the historical perspective of the civil rights movement. Upon returning to campus, students were given ten questions to research based on theories of communication. These questions sparked attention from faculty and students across campus, thereby giving rise to the *First Annual Spoken Word Creative Fest/Conference*. Two high schools, Natchez and the Piney Woods School, competed with original orations, poetry, and storytelling. Dr. Charles C. Chiplin, the first artist-in-residence, shared his book *Roads from the Bottom* and original poetry.

In April 2010, the Margaret Walker Center at Jackson State joined Dr. Neal-Vincent in organizing the rebranded Creative Arts Festival. From its inception, the Margaret Walker Center has stood at the forefront of the Black Arts Movement. With its founding, Margaret Walker committed to the arts as a source of inspiration and advancement for her community. She mentored countless young people to use their art and scholarship as tools for uplift and hosted groundbreaking conferences on campus to give those young people opportunities to express themselves and interact with leading scholars and artists. That included events like the 1971 National Evaluative Conference on Black Studies and the 1973 Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival with thirty of the leading Black women writers in the world.

Now approaching its 20th year, the Creative Arts and Scholarly Engagement (CASE) Festival is a tribute to the conferences that Margaret Walker once hosted. CASE has brought musicians, writers, poets, rappers, jazz artists, graphic novelists, photographers, scholars, pop culture critics, and visual artists to Jackson State to interact with and mentor high school, undergraduate, and graduate student participants. Those students are the heart of the CASE Festival, and their presentations in poetry, essay writing, short stories, filmmaking, the visual arts, music, and memoir are the highlights of each Festival.

Since its inception, CASE has grown with national scholars, artists, and activists, including Haki Madhubuti, Jerry Ward, Amiri Baraka, C. Liegh McInnis, Charlie Braxton, Sonia Sanchez, Tonea Stewart, Jesmyn Ward, Leonard Pitts, Chuck D, Nikky Finney, Joan Trumpauer Mulholland, Kiese Laymon, and Natasha Trethewey. The current festival continues a legacy of thoughtful, creative, and inspiring keynotes, specifically providing space for the scholarship of budding scholars and artists, especially concerning the Black experience across the African Diaspora.

In their original writings, research papers, performances, and visual art submissions, our students, scholars, artists, and activists have examined their personal convictions about civil rights, human rights, and the human condition.



This project is supported in part by funding from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a state agency, and in part, from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.



MARGARET WALKER CENTER

April 10, 2026

Dear friends:

On behalf of the Margaret Walker Center, its staff, and the Advisory Board, I am pleased to welcome you to Jackson State University for the 20th Annual CASE Festival.

Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander touched innumerable lives through her work as an outstanding author, prolific researcher, and dedicated professor at JSU, and her impact on the field of Black Studies was transformational when she founded the Institute for the Study of the History, Life, and Culture of Black People in 1968. This year's CASE Festival recognizes the vision of our founder and lifts up young scholars and artists in the same manner as Dr. Alexander did throughout her career.

Now named in her honor, the Margaret Walker Center serves as both a special collections archive and museum committed to the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of African American history and culture. Located in the historic Ayer Hall, currently undergoing renovations, the Center operates Gallery 1, where you can find our newest exhibit on the life and legacy of Margaret Walker, as well as the COFO Civil Rights Education Center at JSU. We offer dozens of free programs to the community throughout the year, including this Festival.

Dr. Alexander hosted regular conferences like this one on the JSU campus. The participants who came simply because she asked included the likes of Ruby Dee, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, Alex Haley, St. Clair Drake, and Ossie Davis. That is the cultural inheritance of the Margaret Walker Center, and this event and your presence reflect our mutual commitment to that artistic, academic, and activist legacy.

Great partners on and off campus like the Mississippi Arts Commission enhance our work. I offer my deep appreciation for them and for our supporters like you. Thank you for all that you do to make Margaret Walker's vision a reality.

With best wishes for a great conference,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads 'Robert Luckett'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R'.

Robert Luckett, PhD
Director

Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander 1915-1998



1973 Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival
Roy Lewis, Photographer

As Professor of English at Jackson State in 1968, Margaret Walker Alexander founded the Institute for the Study of the History, Life, and Culture of Black People. Already an accomplished author, Walker stood at the forefront of a nascent Black Studies movement, but the Institute also reflected her immersion in 20th Century African American history and culture. During her lifetime, she had the unique opportunity both to be mentored by the likes of W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright and to be a mentor to writers such as James Baldwin, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, on July 7, 1915, Walker was reading and writing by the time she was five. When her family settled in New Orleans in 1925, her writing flourished after meeting Langston Hughes, who encouraged her to leave the South to complete her education. Graduating from Northwestern University, her parents' alma mater, in 1935, Walker stayed in Chicago to work with the Federal Writers' Project. There, she developed a close friendship with Richard Wright and joined his South Side Writers Group.

In 1937, Walker wrote her seminal poem, *For My People*, for which she became the first Black woman to receive the Yale University Younger Poets Award. By 1949, Walker and her husband, Firmist Alexander, had moved their family to Mississippi, so she could join the English Department at Jackson State. Through the University of Iowa, where she had completed her MA, Margaret Walker Alexander finished her doctoral dissertation, a neo-slave narrative inspired by the memories of her maternal grandmother, Elvira Ware Dozier. Published under her maiden name of Margaret Walker in 1966, *Jubilee* represented thirty years of research and reflection and has never since been out of print.

Dr. Alexander's lasting achievement at JSU was the Institute for the Study of the History, Life, and Culture of Black People. As director of the Institute, she organized several conferences that were the first of their kind, including the 1971 National Evaluative Conference on Black Studies and the 1973 Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival.

After thirty years of teaching, Margaret Walker Alexander retired as Professor Emerita and donated her literary and administrative papers to the Institute that she founded and that was subsequently named in her honor. The Margaret Walker Papers at JSU constitute one of the single largest collections of a modern Black, female writer anywhere in the world. The Margaret Walker Center houses more than 40 significant manuscript and artifact collections and an oral history repository that includes close to 1,000 interviews.

2026 CASE Festival

Plenary Sessions and Keynote Conversation

A Life in Bloom: Dollye M.E. Robinson

Lowell Hollinger, Roderick Little, Phyllis Lewis-Hale, Lisa Beckley-Roberts (moderator)

Musical tribute by Mylan Gaston, Junior Trumpet Performance Major, Jackson State University

Opening Plenary – JSU College of Liberal Arts, room 166/266

3:00 p.m., Friday, April 10



Dollye's Garden mural by Reshonda Perryman
JSU College of Liberal Arts

A Jackson native, Dr. Dollye M.E. Robinson was born in 1927, attended Jackson public schools and won a scholarship to Jackson State. A professional trumpet player, Robinson graduated from Jackson State before it even had a band of its own. In 1952, she began her JSU career as the assistant band director and instructor of music. Over her distinguished career at the University before retiring in 2012, Robinson served in leadership positions including head of the Department of Music, Chair of the Division of Fine Arts, Associate Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. Her passion for music led Robinson to

organize a music center and a band, today the Sonic Boom of the South, at Jackson State.

A Life in Bloom will explore her life, career, and legacy with JSU faculty and staff members whom Dr. Robinson mentored and touched in innumerable ways, and it will include a special musical tribute.

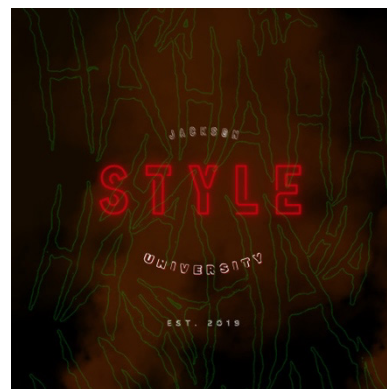
The Rage: Runway Show and Fashion Showcase

JStyleU Modeling and Fashion Collective

Luncheon – JSU Student Center Ballroom A

12:00 p.m., Saturday, April 11

The JStyleU Collective uses fashion and modeling as a powerful visual storytelling tool to highlight the legacy, resilience, and impact of the Black Panther movement. Through intentional choreography, styling, and staging, its models represent the strength, unity, and empowerment that the Black Panthers symbolized within Black communities. The models do not simply walk the runway. They embody the story. Their movements, formations, and expressions communicate the journey from struggle to empowerment. The use of strong, confident walks and symbolic moments of solidarity emphasize the idea of overcoming adversity together. The overall theme centers on resilience and the power of community. While acknowledging the hardships faced by Black communities, the presentation focuses on triumph, pride, and progress. By the end of the piece, the audience sees a visual representation of overcoming obstacles and standing in strength and unity. Through fashion, movement, and storytelling, JStyleU honors the spirit of the Black Panthers while reminding audiences that the fight for empowerment, equality, and community uplift continues today.



Featuring Jackson State students: Greg Underwood, MyKylia Williams, Rayne Powell, Camryn Wimberly, Morie Campbell, Tori Williams, Cherish Thurman, Chody Patton, Cori Clark, Dylan Robinson, Dom Rattinger, Jaylen Woolridge, Johnathan Baker, Ciryah Stroud, LiDarrius Brooks, Briah Walton, Maya Peadbody.

Evie Shockley, Zora Neale Hurston Distinguished Professor

Keynote Conversation with Dr. Kelly Ellis – JSU Student Center Theater

3:00 p.m., Saturday, April 11



Born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee, poet Evie Shockley earned a BA at Northwestern University, a JD at the University of Michigan, and a PhD in English literature at Duke University. The Zora Neale Hurston Distinguished Professor of English at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Shockley is the author of *Renegade Poetics: Black Aesthetics and Formal Innovation in African American Poetry* and six collections of poetry, including *suddenly we*, *semiautomatic*, and *the new black*.

A Cave Canem Fellow, Shockley has received the 2023 Shelley Memorial Award, the 2024 Academy of American Poets Fellowship, and the Holmes National Poetry Prize. Her poetry has also been supported by fellowships and residencies from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study,

MacDowell, and Hedgebrook. Two of her poems were displayed in the Biko 30/30 exhibit, a commemoration of the life and work of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko. The exhibit toured South Africa in 2007. For her poetry, Shockley has received an NAACP Image Award and two Hurston/Wright Legacy Awards, and she was a finalist for the LA Times Book Review Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, and the National Book Award.

Shockley is editor of the Norton Library edition of Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Her critical essays appear in *The Black Scholar*, *New Literary History*, *Callaloo*, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Poetry*, *The New Emily Dickinson Studies*, and elsewhere. Additional honors include the Shelley Memorial Award, the Lannan Literary Award for Poetry, and the Stephen Henderson Award, and support from ACLS and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Shockley serves as an Editor at *Contemporary Literature* and is at work on a critical project tentatively titled *Black Graphics: Colorblindness and the Survival of Black Being*.



20th Annual CASE Festival

Schedule of Events

Friday, April 10

- 3:00 p.m. to 4:20 p.m. *A Life in Bloom: Dollye M.E. Robinson*
Lowell Hollinger, Roderick Little, Phyllis Lewis-Hale, Lisa Beckley-Roberts (moderator)
Musical tribute by Mylan Gaston, Junior Trumpet Performance Major, JSU
College of Liberal Arts Room 166/266
- 4:30 p.m. Opening Reception
College of Liberal Arts Lobby

Saturday, April 11

- 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Registration and Q&A: Continental Breakfast
JSU Student Center 1st Floor Front Desk
- 9:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. Concurrent Session I
JSU Student Center Room 3210 and Johnson Hall Art Gallery
- 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Concurrent Session II
JSU Student Center Theater and Rooms 3210, 3241, 3250
- 12:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. *The Rage: JStyleU Modeling and Fashion Collective*
Luncheon
JSU Student Center Ballroom A
- 1:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. Concurrent Session III
JSU Student Center Rooms 3210 and 3241
- 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Evie Shockley, Zora Neale Hurston Distinguished Professor of English
Closing Conversation and Awards Ceremony
JSU Student Center Theater



**CREATIVE ARTS AND
SCHOLARLY ENGAGEMENT**



**Please complete this
brief survey for each
session attended!**

Concurrent Sessions

Saturday, April 11, 2026

9:00-10:15 a.m.

Panel 1: Written

JSU Student Center room 3210

*Women of Color as Agents of Change:
Liberal Arts, Leadership, and Legacy at Jackson State University*

Dr. Dollye M. E. Robinson: At the Helm of the College of Culture
Saniya Willis, Jackson State University

Dr. Margaret Walker: A Frontrunner in the Movement for Her People
Gena Rose Wiley, Jackson State University

Doris E. Saunders: A Hidden Figure in the Success of Ebony Magazine and Pioneer at JSU
Jasmine Ballentine, Jackson State University

Dr. Maria Luisa Harvey: A Nurturer of Creativity and Intellectual Curiosity
Grace McKay, Jackson State University

Reshonda Perryman: Artist, Designer, and Muralist for Mississippi
Alyssa Harris, Jackson State University

Moderator: LaWanda Dickens, Jackson State University

9:00-10:15 a.m.

Panel 2: Visual Arts

Johnson Hall Art Gallery

Self-Portrait
Amani Evans, Jackson State University

Holding Ground
Brian Hunter, Jackson State University

For the Women of Ruleville
Olandrea Morton, Jackson State University

Life in the BLACK SOUTH
Myron Harrison, Jackson State University

Moderator: Brittany Myburgh, Jackson State University



10:30-11:45 a.m.

Panel 3: Poetry

JSU Student Center Theater

I am southern and I am black
I hate my Afro
underneath the ground
Cherish Burton, Murrah High School

Kool-Aid with enough sugar to kill
In this old house
Kemarrion Galmore, Mississippi School of the Arts

Song of Solomon: Guitar's Dramatic Monologue
Paxton McLin, St. Andrew's Episcopal School

Moderator: Anita DeRouen, Murrah High School

Ten Little Roses
What Is a Home?
Feed My People
My Country Is a Garden
I Believe
Where I Come From
Oh Sweet Mississippi
Hannah Lance, Greenville High School

10:30-11:45 a.m.

Panel 4: Poetry and Creative Writing

JSU Student Center room 3210

My Last Minute Proposals
Scottie Stewart, Jr., Jackson State University

The Life
Daijah Means, Jackson State University

Moderator: helen crump, Jackson State University

Hymns at the Repass
Dirty Brown Soles
Sunday Dinner Don't Taste the Same
Nadia Wright, North Carolina A&T State University

10:30-11:45 a.m.

Panel 5: Written

JSU Student Center room 3241

Intergenerational, Storytelling, Mississippi: A Literary Figure, Genre, and Period Analysis of Mississippi's Historic Black Writing Legacy
Jonathan Dacus, Mississippi College

Groova's Inception
Sage Martin, Millsaps College

Glyphs Beneath the Red Clay: Magical Realism and the Black Experience in the American South
Shomari A. Johnson, Jackson State University

Moderator: Craig Meyer, Jackson State University

10:30-11:45 a.m.

Panel 6: Written

JSU Student Center room 3250

Humanity, Identity, & Underrepresented Voices: Giving Voice to the Unheard (Session 1)

The Impact of Social Structures on Self-Perception: A Sociological Perspective on Identity Formation

Caden Barnett, Jackson State University

Behind the Screen: Media Representations and the Construction of Black Masculine Mental Health

Jartez Franks, Jackson State University

Hidden Battles: The Unseen Realities and Impact of Invisible Disabilities

Jade Wilkins, Jackson State University

Moderator: LaWanda Dickens, Jackson State University

1:30-2:45 p.m.

Panel 7: Written

JSU Student Center room 3210

Leadership and Fiscal Reform in Mississippi: Analyzing the Elimination of the State Income Tax

George Welch, Jackson State University

Land of the Free and Home of the Brave?

Karanja Matory, Jackson State University

*A Black Woman's Revolution: Josephine Baker's Daring
and Risky Contributions to the Second World War*

Rose Caston, Millsaps College

Moderator: S. Jessé Edwards, Jackson State University

1:30-2:45 p.m.

Panel 8: Written

JSU Student Center room 3241

Humanity, Identity, & Underrepresented Voices: Giving Voice to the Unheard (Session 2)

Breaking the Script: Portrayal of Black Queerness in Popular Media

Grace McKay, Jackson State University

Invisible Pain: Medical Racism, Gender Bias, and the Dismissal of Black Women's Pain

Ger'Nee Randolph, Jackson State University

Silenced Classrooms: The Educational Experiences of Undocumented Students in the United States

Tomika Reed, Jackson State University

Moderator: LaWanda Dickens, Jackson State University

Margaret Walker Center

www.jsums.edu/margaretwalkercenter

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Follow the Margaret Walker Center on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Substack!

Mission, Vision and Goals

The Margaret Walker Center is an archive, museum, and Black Studies institute, dedicated to the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of African American history and culture for a local and global community of students, scholars, and supporters. Founded by Margaret Walker in 1968, the Center seeks to honor her academic, artistic, and activist legacy by expanding and promoting its manuscript holdings and oral history collections, interpreting African American history and culture through its museum and exhibits, coordinating public programs on campus and throughout the community, preserving historic structures central to the African American experience, and advocating for a degree-granting Black Studies program at Jackson State University.

Margaret Walker Center Advisory Board

The mission of the Advisory Board of the Margaret Walker Center is to provide guidance for the development of the Center and advice to the Center Director and the University administration on ways to enhance the Center. Its goals are to provide for the substantial development and promotion of the Center; to heighten the prominence of Margaret Walker on the local, state, regional, national, and international levels; to promote the mission of the Center; and to develop the Center's permanent endowment.

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MSA

FESTIVAL 2027

JOIN US NEXT YEAR!
Two Mississippi Museums
Fri & Sat, April 23-24

**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

DENYCE GRAVES

**WORLD-RENOWNED MEZZO-SOPRANO
OPERA STAR & FOUNDER OF THE
DENYCE GRAVES FOUNDATION**



www.jsums.edu/margaretwalkercenter