



**JACKSON STATE COLLEGE**

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39217

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF HISTORY  
LIFE AND CULTURE OF BLACK PEOPLE

August 9, 1974

Miss Cora Norman  
Staff Administrator  
Mississippi Committee for the Humanities  
Box 335  
University, Mississippi 38677

Dear Mrs. Norman:

We wish to again, express our sincere thanks to you and the Mississippi Humanities Committee for the great financial assistance you gave us in support of our Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival. The \$5,000 grant made it possible for us to produce a documentary film which will be a lasting record of this historic event.

Attached to this letter are three copies of the Chairman's report of the Phillis Wheatley Festival along with pictures and programs of the Festival activities. While we are enclosing an unofficial financial report of expenditures from this office, an official report was forwarded to you some months ago from our Fiscal Affairs Office.

As soon as Dr. John Gregory has completed his work on the documentary film, though I can not say now just how soon this will be, we will forward this information to you. I do hope it won't be much longer before we can close out this project.

Again, many, many thanks for your kind assistance.

Very respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret W. Alexander".

Margaret Walker Alexander, Director

MWA:ac

Enclosures

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY  
Jackson, Mississippi

A STORY-REPORT OF THE PHILLIS WHEATLEY POETRY FESTIVAL

November 4-7, 1973

By Margaret Walker Alexander  
Host-Poet and Chairman

In October 1972, I was invited to a birthday celebration of the Centennial of Paul Laurence Dunbar born in Dayton, Ohio, 1872. The City University of Dayton was the host Institution and Herbert Woodward Martin, the enterprising and energetic organizer and director of the occasion.

Enroute I spent a day between trains in Effingham, Illinois at the Holiday Inn. I busied myself by writing and reading and it was there I first conceived the idea of a Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival to be held late in the Fall of 1973 at Jackson State University. Black people and the National Portrait Gallery had just celebrated the Centennial of James Weldon Johnson in 1971 and we were celebrating Dunbar in '72. Mary McLeod Bethune's Centennial would be in 1975. What was significant in '73? And then I remembered the publication of Phillis Wheatley's Poetry. If one black woman in America was published in 1773, how many black women poets in 1973? I began to count and I realized more than a dozen. Soon I settled on twenty prominent black women writing and publishing poetry. Why not invite them to come and celebrate Phillis Wheatley's Bicentennial? Thus was born the idea.

But the next steps were crucial: Securing the support of Jackson State University; finding money, inviting the participants and organizing the Festival. On my return to Jackson in November, I approached the Administration of Jackson State University and presented my proposed program to them. I asked their consent for me to approach Foundations and Federal Agencies for financial support. They agreed, President and Vice President. In January, I journeyed to Washington for the Library of Congress Conference on the Teaching of Creative Writing and I went in to talk to the fine friends we have made at the National Endowment for the Humanities. They were enthusiastic, especially when they realized the clear connections between Phillis Wheatley and the bicentennial celebrating the nation.

In preparing our proposal we made initial contacts with our women poets who were invited to participate. They were all equally enthusiastic and readily consented to participate. In June we heard from the Endowment granting us a matching grant. We were too overjoyed to recognize the conditions, too stupendous for us to meet. Four months later when we realized our predicament, it was too late to turn back. The Institute was well advanced in three different preparations, (1) Program planning, including an exhibition of documents of Phillis Wheatley's poems and letters with the wonderful cooperation of the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, Mr. Jon Freshour; an undertaking which required much correspondence and tedious work on the part of a very fine committee composed of librarians and artists from the

Art Department. This committee was co-chaired by Mrs. Bernice Bell and Mr. Lawrence A. Jones. In September they had plunged into serious activity for the exhibition. (2) Publicity, which included printing a brochure and sending out three news releases, planning a press conference and utilizing all the media: newspapers, radio and television. This committee was chaired by our Public Relations Director and staff; Mr. Obra Hackett, Miss Ruby Hughes, Mrs. Dorothy Greene, students, et al. (3) Organizing the University in committees to stage the Festival, host the participants, and record the events.

Then in late September we discovered we really had no money, no budget, and a conditional grant with requirements we could not meet. We were suddenly faced with a new and imperative fund raising campaign for \$15,000 which we managed in one week's time. Meanwhile, we re-applied to the National Endowment for an outright gift and about six weeks later we received it. The Festival was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Mississippi Committee for the Humanities, the Mississippi Bicentennial Commission, the Mississippi Art Commission and Jackson State University.

A Bronze Bust of Phillis Wheatley was commissioned by the Institute and beautifully created by Elizabeth Catlett, famous Afro-American Sculptor and Painter.

No less than one hundred members of faculty, administrators, staff and students at Jackson State University served on our eleven committees.

Needless to say, the Festival was a great success in every facet.

There were crowds in attendance, beautiful black women poets and a celebration which we shall long remember. A book of the proceedings is in preparation. This issue of the Jackson State University Faculty News, prepared by Dr. Anthony J. Cavell and staff, is another commemorative issue.

The names appearing on the following pages of participants, committee members, friends in the publishing media, administration of Jackson State University, funding agencies and others are only a few to whom we owe our thanks and appreciation.

Administration - Jackson State University

Dr. John A. Peoples, Jr., President  
 Dr. Estus Smith, Vice President for Academic Affairs  
 Dr. Haskell Bingham, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs  
 Dr. Robert Smith, Dean of School of Liberal Studies  
 Dr. Paul W. Purdy, Comptroller  
 Mr. Lee Frison, Assistant to the Comptroller

Institute for the Study of History, Life, and Culture of Black People  
Staff

Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander, Director of Institute and  
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 Mr. Robert Walker, Assistant Professor of History  
 Dr. E C Foster, Professor of History and Political Science  
 Miss Ruth Shirley, Assistant Professor of History  
 Dr. Julius Thompson, Assistant Professor of History  
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 Dr. Leslie Burls McLemore, Associate Professor and Head, Department  
 of Political Science  
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 Dr. Pius Eze, Associate Professor of Political Science  
 Mrs. Katherine Mosley, Assistant Professor of Sociology  
 Dr. Alferdteen B. Harrison, Associate Professor of History  
 Mr. George T. Mitchell, Assistant Professor of Political Science  
 Dr. William Brooks, Professor of Psychology and Director  
 of the Counseling Center  
 Dr. Robert Smith, Dean of School of Liberal Studies, ex officio  
 Miss Shirley Eubanks, Student Assistant  
 Mr. Jerry Corley, Student Assistant  
 Mrs. Alleane M. Currie, Part-time Secretary

PHILLIS WHEATLEY POETRY FESTIVAL

POETS

POETS

1. Marion Alexander - Chicago, Illinois
2. Linda Brown Bragg - Greensboro, North Carolina
3. Carole Gregory Clemmons - New York City
4. Lucille Clifton - Baltimore, Maryland
5. Margaret Danner - Memphis, Tennessee
6. Mari Evans - Bloomington, Indiana
7. Sarah Webster Fabio - Oberlin, Ohio
8. Nikki Giovanni - New York City
9. June Jordan - East Hampton, New York
10. Audre Lorde - Staten Island, New York
11. Naomi Long Madgett - Ypsilanti, Michigan
12. Gloria C. Oden - Baltimore, Maryland
13. Carolyn M. Rodgers - Chicago, Illinois
14. Sonia Sanchez - Amherst, Massachusetts
15. Alice Walker - Jackson, Mississippi
16. Margaret Walker - Jackson, Mississippi
17. Malaika Ayo Wangara - Detroit, Michigan

DRAMATIC PRODUCTION (Phillis Wheatley - Gentle Poet, Child of Africa)

Vinie Burrows, Actress - New York City

Assisted by

Pearl Primus, Dancer

Alphonse Cimber, Drummer

PANEL (The Significance and Critical Reputation of Phillis Wheatley, 1773-1974)

1. Dorothy Burnett Porter, Former Director, Moorland-Spingarn Collection, Howard University, Washington, D. C.
2. Margaret G. Burroughs, Director, DuSable Museum of African-American History, Chicago, Illinois.
3. Paula Giddings, Editor, Howard University Press  
Washington, D. C.
4. Ida Lewis, Editor and Publisher, Encore, New York City

Panel Continued

5. Doris Evans Saunders, Director, Book Division, Johnson  
Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois
6. Etta Moten Barnett, Former Concert Singer, Chicago,  
Illinois
7. Margaret Walker Alexander, Director, Institute for the Study  
of History Life, and Culture of Black People  
Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi  
Host-poet and Chairman of Festival



## PHILLIS WHEATLEY POETRY FESTIVAL

### COMMITTEES

#### STEERING COMMITTEE

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4. Dr. Harry Lee Faggett, Department of English
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7. Mr. William I. Townsend, Media Center
8. Mr. Obra Hackett, Public Relations
9. Mrs. Bernice Bell, Library
10. Mr. Harold Bowser, Business Office
11. Dr. Paul Purdy, Business Office
12. Mr. A. D. Jones, Purchasing Department
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8. Dr. Judith Karen Krabbe
9. Mrs. Alleane M. Currie
10. Miss Shirley Eubanks, Student

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7. Miss Lynn Rankin, Student
8. Mr. Timothy Williams, Student
9. Mrs. Alleane M. Currie

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3. Mr. Bruce Payne, WOKJ Radio
4. Mr. Richard Gerald, Jackson Public Schools
5. Mr. Howard Lett, Television, Channel 16 and WJDX, Radio
6. Miss Evelia Jones, Student (Radio)
7. Dr. E C Foster
8. Mrs. Ada Wilson
9. Mr. Newton Handy, Photographer
10. Mr. Frank Hains, Clarion Ledger - Jackson Daily News
11. Mrs. Dorothy Washington
12. Mr. Thaddeus Land, Student
13. Mr. Larry Broadus, Student
14. Dr. John R. Gregory,  
Documentary Film

## USE OF COLLEGE FACILITIES, BEAUTIFICATION AND IN-KIND SERVICES

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3. Mr. Peter C. Lane, Beautification
4. Mr. Calvin Williams, Food Service
5. Mr. Fred Cunningham, Transportation
6. Mr. Robert Cooper, Jacob L. Reddix Campus Union
7. Mr. Harold Bowser, Federal Grants Officer
8. Mr. A. D. Jones, Purchasing Agent
9. Lieutenant M. R. Stringer, Campus Security
10. Mr. Hiram Cooper, Stage and Auditorium
11. Miss Murlene Terry

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16. Miss Gwendolyn Green, Student
17. Miss Myrtle Ratliff, Student

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7. Mr. Walter Hurns
8. Colonel William Cooley, School of Business, JSU
9. Mr. Herman Pride, State Mutual Savings and Loans  
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10. Mr. Edward Bishop, Jr., Representative, Graduate Supply  
House; Jackson, Mississippi
11. Mr. Hermel Johnson, Attorney at Law - Jackson, Mississippi
12. Mr. Hilliard Lackey
13. Mr. Walter Stewart, Peoples Funeral Home

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10. Mr. F. O. Woodard

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3. Mrs. Malena Dow
4. Mrs. Princess Jones
5. Mrs. Mae Eva Rainey Brown
6. Mrs. Gwendolyn Chambliss
7. Mrs. Rose Portis
8. Mrs. Gladys Johnson
9. Miss Sheryl Dearmon
10. Dr. Lena Myers
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12. Dr. Iely Burkhead Mohamed
13. Dr. Dilla Buckner
14. Mrs. Osie Davenport
15. Miss Bobbie Nell Oatis
16. Mrs. Dora Washington
17. Miss Charlotte Nelson
18. Dr. Annie Cistrunk

## USHERS

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
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| 3. Mary Evans                 | 14. Rubye Delores Smith  |
| 4. Marvin Myles               | 15. Jaureen Hardy        |
| 5. Saundra Mattix             | 16. Roberta Larry        |
| 6. Zina Mozee                 | 17. Evelyn D. Mims       |
| 7. Emma Melson                | 18. Dorothy H. Peters    |
| 8. Angelita Currie            | 19. Fannie Ware          |
| 9. Michael Sanders            | 20. Barbara Sellers      |
| 10. Rosezetta Griffith        | 21. Judy McNair          |
| 11. James Herod               | 22. Corense Hayes        |

## Ushers Continued

23. Loretta Simpson
24. Virginia Williamson
25. Brenda Anderson
26. Catherine D. McGruder
27. Linda Nason
28. Mary Hardy
29. Michael Williams
30. Gwen McCullum
31. Mawanda Gilbert
32. Bobby Ray Cotten
33. William Thumon
34. Carolyn Russell

## PHILLIS WHEATLEY POETRY FESTIVAL

## PUBLICITY

Publications (Newspapers, Magazines and Journals with a circulation reaching millions of peoples)

Encore Magazine	New York City
New York Times	New York City
Atlanta Journal	Atlanta, Georgia
Atlanta Inquirer	Atlanta, Georgia
Mibile Register	Mobile, Alabama
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, Louisiana
Journal and Guide	Norfolk, Virginia
Peninsula Bulletin	Palo Alto, California
New Courier	Miami, Florida
Afro-American	Baltimore, Maryland
Afro-American	Norfolk, Virginia
Jet - Johnson Publication	Chicago, Illinois
Commercial Appeal	Memphis, Tennessee
Clarion-Ledger	Jackson, Mississippi
Jackson Daily News	Jackson, Mississippi
Gulfport Herald	Gulfport, Mississippi
Ebony Magazine - Johnson Publication	Chicago, Illinois
Meridian Star	Meridian, Mississippi
Daily Journal	Tupelo, Mississippi
Hattiesburg American	Hattiesburg, Mississippi
Clarion-Ledger/Jackson Daily News (Sunday)	Jackson, Mississippi
Laurel Leader-Call	Laurel, Mississippi
Delta Democrat	Greenville, Mississippi
Mississippi Enterprise	Jackson, Mississippi
Jackson Advocate	Jackson, Mississippi
Daily Corinthian	Corinth, Mississippi
Grenada Lake Herald	Grenada, Mississippi
Enterprise Journal	McComb, Mississippi
Northside Reporter	Jackson, Mississippi
Center Light	Greenwood, Mississippi
Sentinel Star	Grenada, Mississippi
The Mississippian - Campus Publication	University of Mississippi
Scope - Jackson State University Publication	Jackson, Mississippi
Black World Magazine - Johnson Publication	Chicago, Illinois
The Spokesman - Student Publication - Morgan	State College
	Baltimore, Maryland

Reporters (Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival)

Charlayne Hunter  
New York Times  
New York City

Marilyn Duncan  
Memphis Commercial Appeal  
Memphis, Tennessee

Carole A. Parks, Associate Editor  
Black World  
Johnson Publishing Company  
Chicago, Illinois

Luci Horton, Assistant Editor  
Ebony  
Johnson Publishing Company  
Chicago, Illinois

Bill Pardue  
Jackson Daily News  
Jackson, Mississippi

Miriam May  
Clarion-Ledger  
Jackson, Mississippi

Paddy Michaels - Reporter-Photographer  
The Reporter  
Jackson, Mississippi

Belinda M. Wallace and Vesta West - Student Reporters and  
Photographers  
The Spokesman - Student Publication  
Morgan State College  
Baltimore, Maryland

Special Features:

O.C. McDavid - Phillis Wheatly Documentary Exhibit  
Clarion-Ledger and Jackson Daily News Sunday Edition  
Jackson, Mississippi

Frank Hains - Clarion-Ledger - Jackson, Mississippi

Photographers (Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival)

Ozier Muhammad  
Johnson Publications - Johnson Publishing Company  
Chicago, Illinois

Jim Bonney  
New York Times  
New York City

Roy Lewis  
Washington, D. C.

Newton Handy  
Jackson State University  
Jackson, Mississippi

Chester Higgins  
New York Times/Essence  
New York City

Television (Local Stations - Jackson, Mississippi)

WLBT - Channel 3 - Coffee With Judy (Live) NBC  
WAPT - Channel 16- Lynn's Notebook (Live) ABC  
WJTV - Channel 12- Dot Lambert Show (Live) CBS  
WMAA - Channel 29- Educational Television, Festival Special  
(Taped)

Festival participants were also interviewed by Wydette Hawkins  
and Edward Bishop on WJTV, Channel 12

Radio

WOKJ/WJMI      WKXI      WSLI      WJDX (Local Stations)

WREC - Memphis, Tennessee

Printer

Franklin Printers, Incorporated  
Jackson, Mississippi

Funding Agencies

National Endowment for the Humanities, the Mississippi  
Committee for the Humanities, the Mississippi Bicentennial Commission,  
the Mississippi Art Commission and Jackson State College.