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VOICES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IS THEME OF 2014 NLCC

“60 Years and Counting: Voices of the Civil Rights Movement” is the theme of the 25th annual Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration, an award-winning humanities-based conference in Natchez, Miss. The event takes place Feb. 20-23, 2014.

“The 2014 NLCC will take place 60 years after a United States Supreme Court decision called Brown v. Board of Education declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional,” said Carolyn Vance Smith, NLCC founder and co-chairman representing Copiah-Lincoln Community College in Natchez.

“The NLCC will also take place 50 years after the United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination in public places,” Smith said. “These decisions caused sweeping changes which continue to permeate our country’s daily life.”

Lectures, films, concerts, tours, book signings and panel discussions will explore the conference theme from the aspects of history, literature, music, film, journalism and church ministries, Smith said.

Registration is not required for the mostly free conference. Headquarters will be the Natchez Convention Center in downtown Natchez.

The keynote address, “Fulfilling the Dream,” will be by David G. Sansing, Professor of History Emeritus at The University of Mississippi and author of a new history textbook, “A Place Called Mississippi.”

Other topics and speakers are:

- “The Development of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum: The Story Will Be Told” by Jacqueline Dace, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson
- “Duncan M. Gray Jr. at Ole Miss, 1962” by Araminta Stone Johnston, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, author of “And One Was a Priest: The Life and Times of Duncan M. Gray Jr.,” with remarks by Duncan M. Gray Jr., retired Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Mississippi, and Duncan M. Gray III, current Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Mississippi
- “The Importance of the Humanities” by Thad Cochran (U.S. Senate, R-Miss.) and the presentation of the Thad Cochran Humanities Achievement Award to Barbara Carpenter, Executive Director Emeritus, Mississippi Humanities Council
• “Mississippi Rebels: Elvis Presley, Fannie Lou Hamer and the South’s Culture of Religious Music” by Charles Reagan Wilson, The University of Mississippi, co-editor of “The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture”
• “Overcoming: The Role of Tougaloo (Miss.) College during the Civil Rights Movement” by Ed King, Jackson, Miss., Chaplain, Tougaloo College

Enhancing the lecture series are free events, including:
• A premiere screening of a documentary film about the life and career of William F. Winter, former Governor of Mississippi, Jackson, focusing on racial reconciliation and education, produced by The Southern Documentary Project, The University of Mississippi
• A screening of “The Help,” a film written and produced by Tate Taylor, Church Hill, Miss., based on a novel by the same name by Kathryn Stockett, Atlanta, Ga.
• Presentation of the Richard Wright Literary Excellence Award to James Meredith, Jackson, Miss., author of “A Mission from God: A Memoir and Challenge for America” and to Kathryn Stockett, author of “The Help”
• Presentation of the Horton Foote Award for Special Achievement in Screenwriting to Tate Taylor, screenwriter of “The Help”
• A tour of four historically Black downtown churches, Rose Hill Baptist Church, Beulah Baptist Church, Holy Family Catholic Church and Zion Chapel A.M.E. Church, with remarks about each church’s role during the Civil Rights Movement
• A festive, public reception saluting the NLCC’s Silver Anniversary, hosted by the Natchez Visitor & Reception Center
• Refreshments between lectures and films at the Convention Center
• Book sales and signings honoring speakers

Several events are ticketed, including:
• A reception at the Natchez Museum of African-American History and Culture ($10 at the door)
• A luncheon at the Carriage House at Stanton Hall with music of the Civil Rights era ($25)
• A benefit reception and dinner at Dunleith mansion ($135, with $100 tax-deductible)
• A concert of Civil Rights-era music by Tougaloo (Miss.) College Choir ($10)

The Celebration is sponsored by its founding agency, Copiah-Lincoln Community College, and Mississippi Department of Archives and History, with assistance from the Natchez National Historical Park. Co-chairman with Smith is Jim Barnett of MDAH.
Serving as program advisors for 2014 are Joyce Arceneaux-Mathis of Natchez, Mayor Pro Tempore, City of Natchez; Valencia Hall of Natchez, member of the Board of Trustees, Mississippi Department of Archives and History; Kathleen Jenkins of Natchez, Superintendent, Natchez National Historical Park; and David G. Sansing of Oxford, Professor of History Emeritus, The University of Mississippi.

Partial funding comes from the sponsoring agencies, the Mississippi Humanities Council, a National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant, the Adams County Board of Supervisors and the City of Natchez.

Continuing Education Units for teachers are available by emailing Brendan.Chella@colin.edu or by calling 601-446-1103.

A complete conference agenda, information and tickets may be obtained by visiting www.colin.edu/nlcc, by emailing NLCC@colin.edu or by calling toll-free 866-296-NLCC or 601-446-1289.

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Cutline for the art to accompany the article:
Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement used various devices to impart information. The microphone, used in churches and public places, was joined by the typewriter, pen and ink, film, and music. Will Smith Jr. of New Orleans and Natchez captures these devices in pen-and-ink and watercolor.