

# Delta Studies Center

Arkansas State University

## A Message From the Center Peggy Robinson Wright

Things have been moving fast at the center since our last newsletter. Staff has been working hard to complete the Oral History Project and to look at other opportunities for funding and partnerships.

Several conferences have been attended recently that focus on Tourism and the role that African - Americans play in this effort. These were very helpful as we prepare for the Delta Studies Center African-American & Multicultural Tourism Conference slated for later this year that is funded by ASU-DSC's Ford Foundation Grant.

I served as "a Southern Advisor" for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, Washington, DC to work on the agenda for the Mid-South Regional Training Institute. The committee met in Chicago, Illinois in April to consider critical regional issues and to assist in development of a conference agenda with educational, public policy, and networking opportunities. The Institute will be held October 28-31, 2001 at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee.

As we move into the summer, we said farewell to two friends and colleagues,

Danny Sessums, Director of the ASU Museum who has moved to Houston, Texas to work with the George Ranch and Mrs. Benita Walker, Arkansas Delta Byways Curator, who has relocated to Nashville, Tennessee with her family. Both will be missed but we wish them well.

We also recognize and appreciate the support and assistance as always from our advisory board members.

## Student Internships Awarded

Congratulations to Eric Fort, ASU-DSC student volunteer, who has been awarded a 2001 Presidential Management Internship (PMI).

The PMI program was established in 1977 to attract outstanding individuals to federal service. The interns are drawn from a variety of academic disciplines and

must demonstrate an interest in and commitment to a career in public service.

Both Fort, and fellow student, Stacy McHatton were nominated by the university. They underwent a rigorous interview process before being selected as PMI finalists.

Fort graduated in May with a (MPA) degree

from the Department of Political Science.

"This is a great honor for all of us at ASU and I congratulate both students in their achievements," said Peggy Robinson Wright, Coordinator of the Delta Studies Center.

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### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

**"The world is larger than my local community. I must stay informed and involved because what happens over there affects me here."**

**Robert Fleming**

### Special points of interest:

- Ford Foundation Project to Build the Delta Tourism Industry
- Oral History Traveling Exhibit Update.
- Delta Regional Authority.
- Regional Humanities Update
- Black History Month Wrap Up.
- Increasing Minority Awareness in the Health Professions.
- ASU moves towards diversity.
- W.E.B. Du Bois's Granddaughter speaks on Diversity at ASU.
- Strong-Turner Alumni Chapter
- AHTD Presentation
- Blytheville NPS Progress
- CED Site Visit

# Ford Foundation Project to Build the Delta Tourism Industry

ASU-DSC (Delta Studies Center) has built a strong collaborative network of partners in African-American communities throughout the Lower Mississippi Delta Region as a result of the tourism clearinghouse outreach activities, made possible with funding by the Ford Foundation.

Tourism is clearly established as a viable economic development strategy in the Lower Mississippi Delta Region. The potential for community-controlled, community economic development ventures in the field of tourism is emerging with the initiation of African-American focused tourism projects in communities like Cairo, Illinois, Madison and Helena, AR,

Mound Bayou, Mississippi and many, many others.

It is also clear that the need exists, and the timing is right for a region-wide African-American focused tourism conference in the Delta. African-American heritage and culture is a "demographically undeniable part" of the Lower Mississippi Valley Region-the Delta. African-American churches, are one of many institutional landmarks throughout the delta.

For more information contact:  
Christine Perry  
Conference Registrar at the  
Information Clearinghouse:  
1-877-731-3020



First Baptist Church  
Forrest City, Arkansas  
Listed on the State Register



Old Judd Hill School and  
Mt. Zion Church (1921),  
Trumann, Arkansas [building  
torn down in 1993]

## First Phase of Oral History Project Draws to Conclusion

Agriculture is one of the cornerstones of the Delta's regional history.

The Arkansas Delta Agriculture and Community in Transition, 1920-1980: An Oral History Project has been completed with over 106 interviews taped and transcribed.

A traveling exhibit will be unveiled on Sunday, August 26, 2001 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. in the ASU Museum. Invitations are being sent to all of our interviewees, funders and friends from across the region to attend. The exhibit will be on display at the ASU Museum from August 26 through October 21, 2001.

This project is the first phase of

efforts to record and document the stories in looking at the history of the delta. Support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service-USDA, East Arkansas Resource Conservation Service and Arkansas State University made this project possible but without the interviewees and interviewers, Pat Snodgrass, Rasheda Hamilton, Vaneta Harvey, Natasha Washington and Lynne Zollner it would not have been as successful as it was. Archiving of tapes, transcriptions and other documents is being undertaken by Dr. Brady Banta, Archivist at ASU and co-manager of the project.

An article has also been written on the project by Drs. Larry Ball and Calvin Smith in the Arkansas Review, A Journal of Delta Studies, Volume 32, April 2001, Number 1.

entitled, " Oral History in the Arkansas Delta."

We are excited about the reception and look forward to sharing the exhibit with our many friends across the region.



Ready to pick  
cotton found on  
interviewee Mr.  
O.W. Sparks'  
farm in Rondo,  
Lee County,  
Arkansas.



Interviewee Mr.  
John Revel's  
vacant cotton gin  
found in Au-  
gusta, Woodruff  
County, Arkansas

# Delta Regional Authority

The Delta Regional Authority passed Congress and was created in December, 2000 and \$20 million was appropriated. A map delineating the designated region shows the eight states and 236 counties/parishes that are included. It is a federal-state effort to transform the Mississippi Delta region into a place of prosperity for all. The initiative will administer millions of dollars in funding to poor Delta counties, much as the Appalachian Regional Commission has done since 1965.

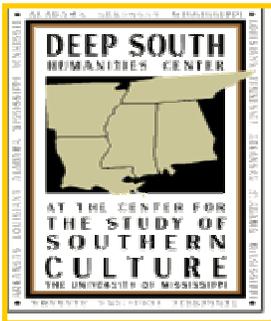
A Wednesday, May 16, 2001 news release identified a Mississippi Attorney, Patrick "Pete" Johnson Jr., as President Bush's choice to lead

the Delta Regional Authority.

Meetings have been held since the passing of the DRA across the state by Senator Blanche Lincoln and Congressman Marion Berry to gather input from their constituencies on actual spending of the funds and the work that needs to be done.

Congressional committee meetings on appropriations are to begin this summer and it is important that we stay on top of safeguarding the first \$20 million and look at ensuring funding for the next fiscal year.

# Regional Humanities Initiative Update



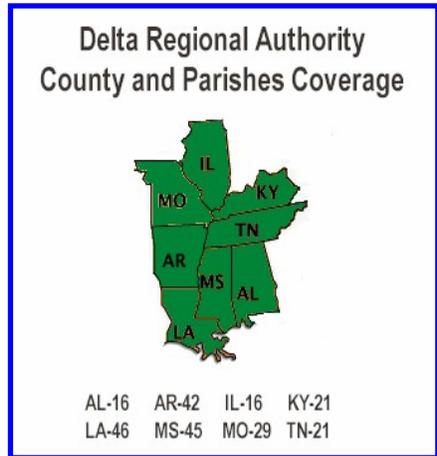
Source:  
[www.olemiss.edu/depts/south/register/six.htm](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/south/register/six.htm)

The planning sessions for the Deep South Humanities Initiative are complete as of the concluding of regional meetings in February. According to the ASU-DSC Coordinator and University of Mississippi "Deep South" Advisory Committee member Peggy R. Wright, Dr. Charles Reagan Wilson and his staff over the last few months have held successful planning sessions. They included sessions at the Delta Cultural Center, Helena, AR, Pine

Hills Culture Center, Hattiesburg, MS, Selma-Dallas County Public Library, Selma, AL, The Ozark Folk Center, Mountain View, AR, Vanderbilt's Robert Penn Warren Center, Nashville, TN, Southern University at New Orleans, New Orleans, LA, and Vermilionville Folk Village in Lafayette, LA.

In addition to these meetings, Mr. Henry Hardy, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Southern University at New Orleans hosted a meeting for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) on February 14. This is in keeping with the Center's efforts to work closely with HBCUs in designing projects that will highlight and assist their humanities offerings.

With the help of the libraries,



**"The Delta Regional Authority is a federal-state effort to transform the Mississippi Delta region into a place of prosperity for all."**

museums, state arts and humanities councils, historical societies, education institutions, and others, the Center will now incorporate all of the valuable suggestions and proposals in its application to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for designation as the Deep South Humanities Center. The completed application will be submitted by August 1, 2001.

For more information or suggestions concerning the Deep South Humanities Initiative, please contact:

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Planning Grant Coordinator  
The University of Mississippi  
PO Box 1848  
University, MS 38677-1848.  
Phone: (662) 915-5993  
Email: [acharper@olemiss.edu](mailto:acharper@olemiss.edu)

# Wrap up of Black History Month

By: Parice Tyler-Porter

Throughout the month of February, Arkansas State University observed Black History Month 2001. This year's theme was "Celebrating Black History: Learn It! Live It! Love It!" A group of students, administrators, and faculty members formed a planning committee in late October to discuss ideas for the upcoming celebration. A major goal of the committee was to get the campus community involved and aware of contributions made by African Americans.

To kick-off the month, students distributed literature dealing with significant facts throughout black history and about the founder of black history month, Carter G.

Woodson. The reception was held in the Carl R. Reng Center. Other events included:

R & B Concert featuring Bonny 'Sir Mack' Rice, a program entitled "African American Experiences At ASU", Black History Month Marade, All-Greek Founder's Day Program, Brown Bag Lunch: African American Health Issues, and the Miss Essence Pageant 2001 to name a few of the events.

Congressman Marion Berry, State Representative Claude Cash, Lawrence Ross Jr., were guest speakers during the month. "Overall, this year's programming gave students the opportunity to experience and see how far we've come as individuals and how far we can go as citizens. It is up to us (administrators and faculty members) to demonstrate the importance of diversity to unify our campus," stated Parice Tyler Porter, Coordinator of Minority Affairs/Black History Month Chairperson.

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# Increasing Minority Awareness of the Health Professions: Health Camp for Junior High Students By: Jacqueline Gilbert

The Delta C.L.A.S.S. HPPI project had approximately 120 students from Earle, Forrest City, Osceola, Marianna, and Turrell School districts participate in the annual Health Camp held on March 2 and March 9, 2001 at the College of Nursing and Health Professions. This year students volunteered from nursing and each of the health professions programs within the College to act as guides and to exhibit their respective majors. This spring we also sponsored a continuing education program at Osceola Public Schools for the math and science teachers. Dr.

Patricia Glascock presented a problem solving inventory program. This particular program incorpo-

rates social problems solving strategies for teachers to utilize within their curriculum.



Radiologic Sciences demonstrates the use of X-Rays .



Speech and Language Pathology students demonstrate evaluate criteria of persons with stuttering problems



Asst. Prof. William Payne, Medical technologies demonstrates the application of chemistry & the Diagnosis of Diseases



Physical Therapy Students demonstrate Ultrasound and Mechanical Traction in Physical Agents Laboratory

## ASU Moves Towards Diversity

As a part of Arkansas State University's Student Affairs Office's desire to become more diverse, Dr. Thomas A Parham, psychologist and director of counseling center at the University of California-Irvine came to discuss, with ASU employees on how to improve diversity.

Dr. Parham's said during his speech that "True diversity at colleges and universities begins when institutions embrace diversity instead of accepting it." He went on to suggest that institutions do not achieve levels of diversity by only hiring blacks or women. Diversity is achieved when schools change their policies and attitudes about diverse people. The university should not strive to reach a "diversity plateau," where it gets to a certain level and becomes content.

"Diversity is not simply demographics or a percentage of people we have. Diversity asks a question: Do the policies and practices of the institution change as a function of the changes in the demographics?"

Parham also believes the way to a more diverse university is "to understand the context of culture through awareness." Too many times, Parham noted, blacks are portrayed in the American mainstream as being poor and urban. He coined most Americans' perception of blacks as "Ghetto-centric."

Additionally, he challenged ASU's senior administration to address diversity through mission statements and public stances against discrimination.

Though Parham generally focused on diversity in relation to race, he stressed that diversity should be attained on many different levels. He said the primary dimensions of diversity, or those characteristics that

**"...blacks are portrayed in the American mainstream as being poor and urban. He coined most Americans' perception of blacks as "Ghetto-centric."**

are immutable, are race, age, physical ability, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

He defined secondary dimensions of diversity as things which are acquired in life that make people different, and listed those factors as marital status, religious beliefs, work experience, education, geographic location and socio-economic status.

In closing, Dr. Rick Stripling, ASU's interim vice president of student affairs stated that Parham presented "some good suggestions and good ideas" about how ASU can improve diversity. He said he plans to evaluate his employees and ask them how they can diversify as a staff.

"We will develop a diversity plan over the next few years that will help us gain an appreciation for cultural diversity," Stripling added.

*Quotes in this article came from the article "Diversity is goal of luncheon," written by Aaron Sadler, Jonesboro Sun Staff Writer. Wed., May 2, 2001.*

## W.E.B. Du Bois Granddaughter Speaks on Diversity at ASU

The granddaughter of W.E.B. Du Bois was the keynote speaker at ASU's 2001 Paul Couch Lecture Series.

Dr. Y. Du Bois Williams, a psychologist raised by her grandfather, W.E.B. Du Bois—the first black to obtain a Ph.D. from Harvard—told a group of educators at ASU that education would lead to success in diversity.

Her focus was on education's role in creating a more diverse society. Where she stated that "We care about our children. Educating our children is something we must do to have equity in the world and to have

peace in the world."

Education should teach children other languages and expose them to other cultures. Showing the children that "People want the same things all over the world," she said "With all the different customs, they still want to be loved and to be accepted. These things are universal. We all want the same things." We all want to be "accepted just as human beings. No better, no

**"We all want to be accepted just as human beings. No better, no worse, just as humans."**

worse, just as humans."

Dr. Williams is currently assistant professor at Xavier University of Louisiana, where she teaches courses in black psychology and is the co-founder of the Wellness Program.

The lecture series is named in honor of Dr. Paul Ellsworth Couch, who was the first chairman of the Department of Education and the first dean of the ASU Graduate School. He was the founding member and first chapter advisor of the ASU chapter of Phi

*Quotes in this article came from the article "Education can be used as a tool for rights," written by Aaron Sadler, Jonesboro Sun*

## Strong-Turner Alumni Chapter Welcomes Florine Tousant Bingham to ASU Board



Florine Tousant Bingham  
ASU Board of Trustees

The Strong-Turner Alumni Chapter, under the leadership of Mrs. Ruby Henderson, hosted a welcoming reception at the home of President and Mrs. Wyatt for Ms. Florine Tousant Bingham, newest appointee to the ASU Board of Trustees on May 10, 2001.

Ms. Bingham is the Employees Relations Manager at Boar's

Head Provision in Forrest City, Arkansas and has served as Corporate Total Quality Management and Training Director. She is retired from the Forrest City School District where she was the Director of Total Quality Management and District Supervisor of Counselors.

Her list of accomplishments include :

- Past president of the St. Francis County Area Chamber of Commerce
- Vice-Chair of the Arkansas State Workforce Investment Board

A native of Forrest City, AR, she holds a Bachelor of Science in

Chemistry and Math from Lane College in Jackson, TN, a Master of Science in Education in Guidance and Counseling and certification in Secondary Administration from Arkansas State University-Jonesboro. Her term expires January ,2006.

“As a member of Strong-Turner and as a classmate and neighbor of Ms. Bingham, it is a pleasure to welcome her to the ASU family,” said Peggy Robinson Wright.

[Strong-Turner Alumni Chapter is a division of the ASU Alumni Association named for the first two African-American graduates, Walter B. Strong and Fredrick Turner, in 1958/59. The purpose is the recruitment and retention of African-American students. For more information, stac@astate.edu]

## ASU-DSC makes AHTD Presentation Fayetteville



Peggy R. Wright, Coordinator of the Delta Studies Center, with assistance from ASU-DSC Research Assistant, Christine Perry, gave a presentation on the Crowley's Ridge Parkway Student Internship and Service Learning Project funded by DOT/AHTD at the 72nd Transportation Research Committee Group Meeting held at the University of Fayetteville on Friday, May 25, 2001.

with a very impressive group of presenters that included representatives from the University of Arkansas faculty and the Arkansas Highway Transportation Department on other projects currently funded by AHTD.

As stated to the group, the Delta Studies Center 's Project is more of a non-traditional funded type project of AHTD. The Hiking and Biking Trail Project and the African-American Heritage Tourism Project utilize both faculty and student resources. Dr. H.B. Stroud, Geography Professor, working with geography students has completed the feasibility study on the Hiking and Biking Trail Project and is finalizing it for submission to the Crowley's Ridge Trail Commission and AHTD.

It was an excellent opportunity to give an update on the projects and the collaborative/partnerships with AHTD that has proved to be very successful. DSC looks forward to working with the Arkansas Highway Transportation Department on other student type projects.



[L] Gary Bennett, Civil Engineer III and [R] Jim Marshall, Administrative Officer, Arkansas Highway Department, DSC Project Partners.

## NPS Designation for Blytheville



Mary Gay Shipley and husband accepting 2000 AR Delta Byways Award for her work in Blytheville.

Mary Gay Shipley's leadership of the effort to obtain NPS Park designation for the "Old" Eaker Air Force Base Native American Archaeological sites has been successful.

Mrs. Shipley, a Delta Studies Center Advisory Board Member and recent Arkansas Delta Byways award recipient, has worked with the Blytheville Chamber of Commerce for a number of years

promoting turning the old base into a national park.

The National Park Service has recently completed a feasibility study recommending that the former Eaker Air Force Base in Blytheville, Arkansas be designated as a national park.

This announcement comes after many years of untiring efforts by the Blytheville Area Chamber of Commerce Archeological/Heritage Committee with the support of our Congressional Representatives.

This designation will enhance tourism in the delta. In a recent article in the Jonesboro Sun, Sunday, April 29, 2001, Tom

Green, Director of the Arkansas Archaeological Survey discussed a study conducted which concluded that the development of archeological parks in Northeast Arkansas could increase tourism by the hundreds of thousands and bring millions more dollars into the state each year.

Congratulations to Mary Gay and all of the hard working committee members in their successful efforts.

For more information, contact the Blytheville Area Chamber of Commerce at (870) 762-2012.

**"This designation will enhance tourism in the delta."**

## Wright Visits Internationally Acclaimed Ph.D CED Education Site

I visited the Community Economic Development Program in New Hampshire earlier this year after hearing about it at a conference on the Community Outreach Partnership Program (COPC) funded by the Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Community Economic Development (CED) Program housed at Southern University of New Hampshire (formerly known as New Hampshire College) located in Manchester, New Hampshire, is at the forefront of the field. It is the nation's first and only accredited academic program conferring an M.S. and Ph.D degree in commu-

nity economic development. It educates community leaders from North America and around the world with the capacity to make the most difference in the economic and social well-being of their communities.



Dr. Michael Swack, Ph.D, Columbia University and M.S., Harvard University, is Director of the Community Economic

Development Program. As stated by Dr. Swack, " he believes that they have developed an outstanding educational program, one that provides practitioners and researchers with the necessary skills to make projects successful." Courses are taught by instructors who excel in their field of expertise and have extensive experience both in the field and in the classroom.

It is a great program and one worth the visit. For more information on the program, email:

ced@minerva.nhc.edu.

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