NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

DIVISION OF **EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Narrative Section of a Successful Proposal

The attached document contains the narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful proposal may be crafted. Every successful proposal is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the program guidelines at http://www.neh.gov/grants/education/landmarks-american-history-and-culture-workshops-school-teachers for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Education Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title:	The Most Southern Place on Earth: Music, History, and Culture of the Mississippi Delta
Institution:	Delta State University
Project Director:	Luther Brown
Grant Program:	Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshops

The Most Southern Place on Earth: Music, History, and Culture of the Mississippi Delta

Introduction

The Most Southern Place on Earth: Music, History, and Culture of the Mississippi Delta was presented with NEH support in June and July of both 2009 and 2010 and will be presented again in the summer of 2012. In each year, between 350 and 400 people requested information about the workshops, and over 260 annually completed their applications for the 80 positions. Participants represented some 40+ US states in each year, with additional American participants coming from Germany and Saipan, and State Department participants coming from Brazil, Bangladesh, Lesotho, and Turkey. All four iterations were successfully completed, and 97.5% (156 out of 160) of the past U.S. participants remain active on the email distribution list that we use to update past participants on new resources. Several participants have brought classes from their own schools to visit the Delta following the workshop, and many have requested the traveling exhibit on the Emmett Till case that we introduce them to during the workshop. Complete information about past Landmarks workshops, including detailed portfolios, is online at www.blueshighway.org/mostsouthernplace.htm.

The Most Southern Place on Earth addresses all four of the goals of the Landmarks program. It informs participants of the important role that the Mississippi Delta has played in American history, a role that is very often ignored or overlooked. Since the Delta is a place of "mean poverty and garish opulence" (according to Will Campbell), intellectual exploration of its heritage requires building a community of civility. Our approach is highly experiential and tells heritage stories at the places where they happened. Finally, our workshop activities are highly public and covered widely by the local press, stimulating interest in the heritage stories themselves and in the community and economic development that can flow from heritage, something that is currently a very hot topic in the Delta.

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Intellectual Rationale

The philosopher Edward S. Casey has written extensively about the ways in which *Place* is represented, particularly in painted landscapes, photographs and maps. Among his arguments is the contention that truly successful representation of *Place* requires that the artist move from simply drawing the physical identity (called topographic representation) to a more sublime "topopoetic" representation, capturing the emotional poetry of the *Place*. The Mississippi Delta is a *Place* of great emotional poetry, with glowing sunrises, misty cypress brakes and oxbow lakes, vast fields of cotton and rice, the River, heat, humidity, and all the emotional conflict, contrast and turmoil that is summed up in *The Blues*. The Delta is where annual flooding by the Mississippi River preserved wilderness until the early 1900's. It is where cotton plantations replaced slavery with share cropping, where small towns boomed with immigrant merchants and then died, where the civil rights movement overthrew apartheid segregation, where the great migration peopled America's cities, and where the Blues of the fields morphed into rock 'n' roll and created America's popular music. It is a *Place* of such significance that the National Park Service has written: "Much of what is profoundly American- what people love about America- has come from the delta, which is often called '**the cradle of American culture.'"** [from Stories of the Delta, The National Park Service Lower Mississippi Delta Symposium, 1996]

The heritage of the Mississippi Delta is best explored in the Mississippi Delta. Here the poetry of *Place* can be heard, felt, smelled, and tasted. The voices of the people and their music can be heard; the River and the gumbo soil can be touched; the cotton can be picked; the soul food can be smelled and tasted. At the same time, exploration of the Delta's heritage provides insight into America's stories, heritage stories that can be integrated into any exploration of American history anywhere in the country as well as many explorations of geography, literature, music, and art.

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Furthermore, the approaches used to explore the Delta's heritage can be used anywhere. Every *Place* has its own topopoetry and its own stories that can engage learners with their own cultural landscape, making the Delta a case study that reveals ways of learning about *Place* that can be applied broadly and benefit teachers and students anywhere.

Content and Design

As in the past, we propose two *Place* -based, experiential workshops, each for forty teachers, in what historian James Cobb has described as "the most Southern place on earth," the Mississippi Delta. Cobb argued that if the South was "America's mirror," a place that allowed America to see its face reflected in all its good, bad and ugly dimensions, then the Delta was the "mirror within the mirror," the "South's South." We will use an interdisciplinary approach as we probe the issues and forces that shaped the Delta and thus our country. These forces involve men struggling with nature and with other men. We will tell stories of the settling of the wilderness, the civil rights movement, immigrants and emigrants, the arts and culture, exploitation, hardship, endurance, and triumph. Each day we will explore one or two threads of Delta heritage, weaving these threads into the tapestry that is the history of the Mississippi Delta. Participants will integrate the stories they explore into one complex narrative, the story of the Delta, the poetry of the *Place*, which they can re-present to their students as they explain America's stories. In the process, participants will also learn how to read place as text and how to weave the threads together until the gestalt emerges. We believe a *Place* -based, interdisciplinary approach can be used virtually anywhere as an effective strategy to understand the American story, and giving teachers the skills to lead their students in this approach will aid them greatly in their classrooms and their own *Places*.

Our workshops will begin on a Sunday evening and conclude on the following Saturday. The first will run from **June 16 through June 22** and the second will be from **July 7 through July**

13. Each program day will consist of a fieldtrip, a seminar, time for discussion, and time for consultation with staff who have special knowledge of the topics and curriculum development. Participants will read books prior to the workshop (see Appendix 1) to acquaint themselves with some of the issues that will arise during the week and aid in discussion. Fieldtrips will travel throughout the Delta to places of historical significance so that participants can experience the places where events transpired and read the place as text. Our chartered coach bus will be a traveling classroom with video and audio capabilities, and travel time will be filled with discussion, presentation, video and music relevant to the topics being explored. The seminars will be led by scholars in their field. Discussions will follow the seminars and typically last about an hour. For a partial list of discussion questions see Appendix 2. Several days will conclude with discussion time and curriculum assistance, helping participants reflect on what was learned during the day while they develop their own lesson plans. These discussions will be led by Dr. Mark Bonta, geographer, and coordinator of the Masters of Education in Social Studies. Dr. Bonta will serve as the Master Teacher for this workshop. He will attend all aspects of the workshop and will assist with lesson plan development.

While each day will have its own bibliography (distinct from the general pre-workshop reading), we will also present a song, a short reading, and a food item that will tie into the day's theme and seminar. These items will be *icons* of the Delta in that they distill complex concepts into single images and give a tangible experience to an abstract theme. The significance of each icon is described in Appendix 3. We believe after the participants leave, whenever they hear that song, re-read that text, or eat that food item, they will be reminded of what they learned that day in the Mississippi Delta. Likewise, whenever they think about, for example, the Mississippi River or the Great Migration, they will think about the icons we presented. Indeed, the strongest memories are

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those with many connections, and Delta icons will help the participants' memories of the day's lesson stay with them long after they have left the Delta and returned to their classrooms.

Day 1 – Monday **<u>Created, Sustained and Destroyed by the River: The History of the Delta</u>**

Song: "When the Levee Breaks," by Memphis Minnie. Text: "Down by the Riverside," by Richard Wright. Food : Fried catfish. Seminar Facilitator: Dr. Luther Brown

The morning will begin with an introduction to the workshop and overview of the week. Participants will discuss what they know and what preconceptions they have about the Delta. Dr. Brown will give an overview of the Delta's history and discuss how the Mississippi River has physically shaped the Delta and affected its people. For example, the attempt to tame the River through levees is what made the Delta inhabitable, and the millennia of annual flooding is what made the soil fertile and led to intense cotton production and share-cropping. He will also discuss how the River continues to affect the lives of people today. Participants will learn about and discuss the importance of *Place* and how it can be used when teaching the humanities. Curriculum projects will be discussed and Dr. Mark Bonta will introduce himself and explain his role as Master Teacher. Finally, Drs. Brown and Bonta will facilitate the discussion session.

In the afternoon, we will view the documentary *LaLee's Kin: the Legacy of Cotton* and meet with Reggie Barnes, the now-retired school superintendant who appears prominently in this film. We will then take the bus to the spot where the levee broke in 1927, unleashing the Mississippi River, destroying the Delta, and creating the greatest natural disaster in American history at that date, an early precedent to the destruction of New Orleans in 2005. The path the water took is still visible. On the bus ride, participants will watch *Fatal Flood*, a documentary film about the Great Flood of 1927. We will then continue to the Great River Road State Park in Rosedale. There, participants will be able to view the River from a four-story tall tower and walk

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on the sand bar to the edge of the River. After a fried catfish dinner overlooking the River, we will return to the Delta State campus. Participants will have the option of attending a discussion and curriculum session that evening.

Day 2 – Tuesday <u>Immigrant Stories</u>

Song: "Sail Away," by Randy Newman, sung by Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. Text: Supreme Court decision GONG LUM v. RICE, 275 U.S. 78 (1927) **275 U.S. 78** . Food: Delta Chinese. Seminar Facilitator: Dr. Charles Reagan Wilson

After spending Monday learning how the land was made inhabitable, we will spend Tuesday learning about the people that flooded into the Delta after the River was tamed. Although widely viewed in terms of stark black and white, the Delta is historically a land rich in diversity. Many groups of people have made the Delta home, including Chinese grocers, Lebanese hardware store owners, Russian Jewish shop keepers, and Italian farmers, among others. Many people are surprised to learn that in 1880, fully two thirds of all merchants in the Delta were foreign born. Religion is generally the part of life most resistant to assimilation, so it is the ideal area to look to study the culture of immigrant groups. In the morning we will travel to Greenville to learn about some of the immigrants that made the Delta their home by visiting their churches and cemeteries. The drive will include a showing of the film "Delta Jews," which traces the history of Delta Jewry and also reveals widespread opposition to the civil rights movement. We will learn about the Chinese community in the Delta and tour the Chinese cemetery with Cathy Wong, third generation Delta-Chinese. We will tour the Hebrew Union Temple and its small museum and listen to Benji Nelkin tell the history of his congregation. Participants will also tour the Greenville (i.e., "white") cemetery and the neighboring black and Jewish cemeteries. Finally, we will visit the Catholic

Church where Father Summers will discuss its history. On the drive back, we will taste fortune cookies and Kim's brand pork rinds, cooked in woks by a Delta-Chinese family business.

In the afternoon, Dr. Charles Regan Wilson will speak about the religious heritage of the Delta. He will describe the common Christian and non-Christian sects, discuss the origin of the Church of God in Christ which was founded in the Delta, and explore contrasts between the sacred and secular as illustrated by the pastor and the Bluesman. Dr. Wilson will then lead the discussion session. After time for dinner, the workshop will reconvene for an evening of live Blues, provided by a local Blues entertainer who will discuss and illustrate the evolution of the Blues from field holler to rock.

Day 3 – Wednesday <u>The Blues: American Roots Music and the Culture that Produced It</u>

Song: "Crossroad Blues" by Robert Johnson. Text: "The Weary Blues" by Langston Hughes

Food: Hot tamales. Seminar Facilitator: Dr. David Evans.

The Delta is the birthplace of the Blues, arguably America's first art form. In the morning, we will tour the Delta, exploring where it all began. The harsh social conditions discussed on Monday will be revisited, and participants will see first-hand how *Place* influenced the music produced in the Delta. We will also compare and contrast the immigrant Delta experience with the African-American Delta experience. This exploration will be facilitated by Dr. Brown and Dr. Edgar Smith, an African American who grew up in a juke joint community and ultimately became the Provost of the University of Massachusetts system. Sites visited will include Dockery Farms (www.dockeryfarms.com), the plantation widely viewed as the birthplace of the Blues because Charley Patton, the father of the Delta Blues grew up there. We will also visit the new B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center. Finally, participants will go to Moorhead, to see where the "Southern crosses the Dog," a historic railway crossing that was described in the very first Blues

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lyrics ever transcribed. On the drive home, we will stop at Charley Patton's grave site. Time in transit will be spent listening to a collection of Blues songs that will show how the sound developed and matured over the years, and there will be a discussion as to why.

The afternoon session will include a seminar by Dr. Evans who will describe the origin and evolution of the Blues as the ancestor of Rock, R&B, and other genres. Participants will discuss what exactly the Blues is, why it originated in the Delta, how the *Place* affected it, how it re-presents *Place*, and how the Blues affected the *Place*. Participants will also discuss the cultural milieu of contrasts between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, literate and illiterate that produced the Blues. Dr. Evans will then lead a discussion session and illustrate it through performance. After dinner, we will conclude the day with a discussion/curriculum session led by Dr. Mark Bonta.

Day 4 – Thursday <u>The Emmett Till Story: a Case Study in Oppression, Revolution, and Reconciliation</u>

Song: "The Death of Emmett Till" by Bob Dylan. Text: Confession of J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant in *Look* magazine, "The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi." Food: Kool-Aid pickles. Seminar Facilitators: Dr. Henry Outlaw, Charles McLaurin.

On Wednesday participants learned how the Blues was an outlet to deal with harsh social conditions. Thursday we will use the Emmett Till story as a case study to explore how those same social conditions sometimes led to terror and violence. The morning session will be held on campus in a room displaying our traveling exhibit on the lynching of fourteen year old Emmett Till (http://www.blueshighway.org/EmmettTillsmall.pdf). This exhibit has toured the country for the past four years, and has been requested by many past workshop participants. Dr. Outlaw, who has collected extensive oral histories concerning the Till case, will review the history of the murder and

its aftermath, and compare the Till case with the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Charles McLaurin will speak to the group. Mr. McLaurin is a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement who was an active member of SNCC and close friend of Mrs. Fanny Lou Hamer. He will give a first-hand account of what Mississippi was like at the time of the Till murder, but he will also speak about his role in the Civil Rights Movement, which will be the main focus on Thursday. His role in the Civil Rights Movement is detailed in Townsend Davis's *Weary Feet, Rested Souls.* A discussion session including Dr. Outlaw will follow Mr. McLaurin's talk.

In the afternoon we visit the courthouse in Sumner where the trial of Till's murderers was held in 1955. We will sit in the courtroom and listen to a panel of presenters who have special knowledge of the trial or its aftermath. These are always very emotional meetings. At this writing it is difficult to state exactly who will be present, but in the past, we have always included Senator David Jordan, a long serving African American state Senator who attended the trial as a college student; members of the Emmett Till Commission, including their officers; and members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) who are involved or have been involved in civil rights cold cases. We have routinely had local citizens recount their memories of the Till family, or their involvement in the case. Senator Jordan will also discuss how the Delta has changed since 1955 and what the prospects for economic and community development resulting from the Till case may be. We will then tour the "Emmett Till Trail" with stops at the Till Museum in Glendora and the spot where Emmett Till's body was pulled from the Tallahatchie River. We will end the tour at the ruined Bryant store in Money, where Till allegedly wolf-whistled at 21-year-old Caroline Bryant, precipitating the events leading to his lynching. While on the bus, workshop participants will view and discuss a documentary about the Emmett Till case and listen to music and poetry written about his murder and legacy. After dinner, the day will conclude with an optional trip to Po' Monkey's

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Lounge, the last authentic rural jook house in the Delta (http://www.southernspaces.org/2006/inside-poor-monkeys) , to experience what they call "family night.

Day 5 – Friday **<u>The Civil Rights Movement and the Music it Produced</u>**

Song: "Fried Green Tomatoes" by Booker T and the MG's. Text: 1963 letter from the Reverend James Bevel "to the white citizens of Cleveland, Mississippi". Food: "Soul" food. Seminar Facilitators: Museum directors

The Emmett Till case is widely seen as one of the catalysts of the Civil Rights Movement; indeed, only 100 days after the murder of Till and the sham trial, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in Montgomery, and said that she did so because she remembered Emmett Till. Thus, we will explore the Delta's role in the Civil Rights Movement on Friday. One of our focus areas will be the music that fueled the Movement, which is significantly Delta-influenced. To do this, we will travel to Memphis to take advantage of the museums that city offers. In transit, we will watch portions of *Eyes on the Prize,* a film about the Delta and Civil Rights, recruiting propaganda films produced by SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, in the Delta, and a documentary called "Goin' to Chicago" which will set up the next day's conversation about migration. Facilitators will also frame the day, explaining in detail the Delta's role in the Civil Rights Movement and how the music of that era was influenced by the Movement and also its roots – Blues. Once in Memphis, we will tour the Cotton Museum and the Stax Museum of American Soul Music. The Stax Museum does an excellent job of setting the stage for the National Civil Rights Museum, where we will see how the fight for equality in the Delta played out alongside the national struggle. Exhibits emphasizing the Delta and the Poor People's Campaign and Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike will be given special attention. Museum directors at the three institutions will speak to our group.

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The day will be broken up by lunch at the historic Four Way Grill, operated by a Delta native who migrated to Memphis decades ago. Dr. King and many other famous African Americans ate at this restaurant. Dr. Bonta will facilitate a discussion/curriculum session after we return to campus.

Day 6 – Saturday <u>The Delta in Diaspora</u>

Song: "Sweet Home Chicago" by Robert Johnson. Text: Articles from, and letters to, the *Chicago Defender*. Food: Fried chicken and pound cake. Seminar Facilitators – Dr. John Strait

In the morning participants will learn about the Delta in Diaspora. We will start by talking about the Great Migration, the largest peace time movement of people in American history. As millions of African-Americans (and other ethnicities) from all across the South moved north, they took with them their music, literature, family structure, customs, and food. In this session, participants will learn how the Great Migration became the vehicle that has spread the Delta's influence across the country, creating the Delta Diaspora that we have today. For example, as African-Americans traveled north on Highway 61 or on the Illinois Central, they carried their Blues with them, but as they moved, the music itself changed, giving rise to jazz, soul, and rock and roll. Similarly, migrants carried their foodways and lifestyles, which also changed during the migration. In the process, migrants transformed parts of Chicago, Gary, Ypsilanti, Detroit, Oakland, and New York City, among other places. The focus of the day will be dispersal of people and culture, but this topic will also provide an opportunity to review issues of music, food, civil rights, religion and other aspects of cultural heritage, making it an ideal topic to end the week and drawing all of our themes together into a compressive story. The afternoon seminar will provide an opportunity to compare and contrast the heritage of the Delta with that of the *Places* from which participants have come. Discussion will be facilitated by Dr. Strait and will focus attention on how participants' own *places* tell stories and how those stories can be used to engage learners.

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We will end the workshop with an exercise we call "Make your own mojo." Dr. Brown will describe the use of mojos as power objects, tracing their West African origins into the Delta and using Blues songs and references. He will explain that participants will make mojos that give them power over their own memory, and reveal that we have been (unbeknownst to participants) collecting small objects at each stop on our trip, and from each presentation during the week. These objects include things like bits of brick from the Money store, sand from sandbags used in the great flood, cotton seeds, Mississippi River water, and bits of a cut up voter registration form from 1960. Participants place these in a small pouch (the mojo) and then write the contents on a label so that when asked what they have by family or a colleague, they can relate all the heritage stories they have learned during the week. After relating them several times, they will have mastered the memory of this *Place* called the Mississippi Delta.

Participants will turn in their lesson plans or other deliverables at the end of the workshop. All products will be posted as pdf files on the workshop page of the Delta Center's web site at www.blueshighway.org/mostsouthernplace.htm. This site now has almost 200 such lesson plans. Detailed portfolios for each workshop, including descriptions of all activities and summaries of our internal evaluations will also be posted on this page, as will links to social networking sites that will contain hundreds of photographs from each workshop.

Project Staff

Luther P. Brown, PhD (Project Director): Founder and Director of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning and Associate Dean for Delta Regional Development at Delta State University; Mississippi Humanities Educator of the Year, 2003; Board member, Mississippi Humanities Council, Mississippi Blues Foundation; Mississippi Historical Society; founding member of the Mississippi Blues Commission; author of numerous articles on the Mississippi Delta; possesses

three decades of experience developing experiential learning programs that take an integrated approach to learning. Dr. Brown was also the project director of the 2007 teacher workshop, *Live From the Birthplace of the Blues* and past Most Southern Place workshops. He will attend all activities.

Lee Aylward, MA: Program Associate for Education and Community Outreach in the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, Delta State University; responsible for logistics, arrangements and scheduling for the Delta Center. She will play a similar role during the workshop, and will attend all activities.

Graduate Assistant: One student enrolled in Delta State University's Graduate program will be hired to work during the camps. The graduate assistant will ensure that the logistics of running the workshops are implemented, copies are made, etc.

Robertson Scholars: Robertson Scholars are privileged students at either Duke or the University of North Carolina. At the end of their freshman year, they engage in service projects, and each summer, two Scholars work in the Delta Center. They will participate fully in all workshop activities, and act as documentarians, photographing all activities and interviewing participants about their learning experiences. They will prepare detailed portfolios for each workshop and publish photos on a social networking site like picasa or flickr.

Master Teacher/Geographer

Mark Bonta, PhD. DSU faculty member Dr. Bonta will serve as the Master Teacher. He is a trained geographer who has recently written a book on the natural history of the Mississippi Delta (in press, University Press of Mississippi). He directs the university's teacher certification and M. Ed. Programs in social studies. He has worked in the Delta Center on several occasions, and has been the principal faculty member in the workshop called *The Three R's of the Mississippi Delta*.

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He also offers his own experiential classes and tours of the Delta. He will attend all aspects of the workshop and lead discussion/curriculum sessions in the evening.

Project Faculty

David Evans, PhD: Professor of Music, The University of Memphis; author of several books including The NPR Curious Listener's Guide to the Blues, Big Road Blues, "The Coon in the Box": A Global Folktale in African-American Tradition; over 90 published articles concerned with African-American folk music and folklore; numerous films and recordings; performed vocal and guitar at numerous blues and folk festivals and concerts throughout the world; consultant for publishers, museums, court cases, films, festivals (local, national, international), and government agencies (local, state, national).

Henry Outlaw, PhD: former Program Associate in the Delta Center for Culture and Learning; retired chair of the Physical Science Department at Delta State University; currently an adjunct professor in the School of Theology, University of the South, and Development Office for the Delta State University Alumni Foundation; recipient of the Chair's Award, Mississippi Humanities Council, 2006, and of council grants in support of his work on the Emmett Till murder and trial.

John B. Strait, PhD: Professor of Geography at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, TX; major academic interests in race/ethnicity, migrations, residential segregation and poverty; author of numerous publications. Dr. Strait has brought several classes through the Delta and has presented in this workshop since 2009.

Charles Reagan Wilson, PhD: currently the Kelly Gene Cook Sr., Chair of History and Professor of Southern Studies, the University of Mississippi has written and presented extensively on the South and Southern culture; editor of The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture. He has presented to this workshop since 2009.

Edgar Smith, PhD. Dr. Smith grew up in the "Blue Front" district of Hollandale, Mississippi, the juke joint district of this tiny black town in the heart of the Delta. He says the "Blues lulled him to sleep at night." He became a distinguished biochemist and ultimately the Provost of the University of Massachusetts system, and he has always remembered the Blues. He is a member of the Mississippi Blues Commission, and a Board member of the B. B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center. He speaks passionately about heritage as a community development tool.

Charles McLaurin. McLaurin was inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King to join the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1961. He was intimately involved in the effort to register Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer to vote. He was her campaign manager during her congressional bid in 1963. He was a delegate for the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party at the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City in 1964, and the COFO (Congress of Federated Organizations) director of Freedom Summer operations in Sunflower County, Mississippi. McLaurin was arrested 30 times for his efforts to register black voters in Sunflower County.

Reggie Barnes. The documentary film Lalee's Kin: the Legacy of Cotton depicts the struggles caused by poverty in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi. Reggie Barnes appears in his role as Superintendant of the West Tallahatchie School District. He subsequently became the Superintendant of the Bolivar County schools, and today manages his own school administration consulting business.

Selection of Participants

All NEH guidelines for eligibility and selection criteria will be followed. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated by a selection committee consisting of Dr. Luther Brown, Project Director; Dr. Mark Bonta, master teacher; and Lee Aylward, project assistant, each of whom will read and score all applications independently. In 2009, we assigned points to applications using this

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formula: a maximum of two points for the resume, with more points given to those with evidence of extra activities or awards; a maximum of two points given for the current position, with more points given to those teaching over 100 children in the past year and/or teaching classes that might directly benefit from this workshop; a maximum of four points given for the letter, with more points given based on the reviewer's evaluation of what the applicant would bring to the workshop, how they would use what they took away from the workshop, and the appropriateness of their own teaching responsibilities. A final two points were awarded to the reference letter, with virtually all receiving two points since all references are typically very positive. The sum of the scores of three reviewers plus the two points for the reference letter gives a maximum possible score of twenty-six. These cumulative scores were entered into a spreadsheet along with the number of previous workshops attended. Highest scoring applicants were then assigned workshop positions with the exception of those who had attended six or more previous workshops. Since applicants often chose other workshops (Landmarks or otherwise), considerable effort was put into placements, and many participants with multiple past workshops were ultimately included. The system worked well, and all slots were eventually filled, so we will use a similar approach in 2013.

To meet our goal of recruiting a diverse group of teachers, we will implement an extensive, national publicity campaign. We will send information about the workshop to state Humanities Councils and national teacher and school administrator organizations, including but not limited to the National Council for the Social Studies, the National Association for Humanities Education, the Urban Superintendents Association of America, the American Association of School Administrators, and the National Education Association. Information will also be sent to state departments of education. Finally, information about the workshop will be available on the Delta Center website (www.blueshighway.org), at file sharing pages like

http://picasaweb.google.com/102300576689534249665/NEHMostSouthernPlaceJulyWorkshop?feat=directlink# and http://www.flickr.com/photos/nehmsp/ , and will be sent to all past participants in any of our workshops via email, and our Face Book page. We currently receive at least one or two email requests for workshops every week, so we expect these to draw many applicants.

Professional Development

Upon completion of the workshop, participants will all be awarded certificates of completion that specify the number of contact hours. Delta State University will award five graduate credit hours without charge (other than a $30 application fee) to those who enroll in the University in an expedited admissions process. In the past, about 75% of all participants have elected to receive the graduate credit hours and transcript. Alternatively, Continuing Education Units (CEU's) will be available for a small fee. Participants can request official transcripts from the DSU Office of the Registrar for $7.50.

Institutional Context

Delta State University (DSU) is one of eight public institutions of higher learning in Mississippi, and was founded in 1925. With a full-time enrollment of about 4,000 students, the school is a regional university in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, and with black and white enrollment each at almost 50%, DSU is the most integrated University in the Mississippi system. The campus is compact and all facilities are within walking distance of each other. Participants will receive Delta State identification cards which will allow them full access to campus facilities, including the library and recreational venues. Seminars and curriculum sessions for *The Most Southern Place on Earth: Music, History, and Culture of the Mississippi Delta* will be held on-campus in Ewing Hall, which houses the Delta Center for Culture and Learning and the College of Education and in the nearby Archives and Museum. There is also a computer lab in Ewing Hall that participants will be

able to use. Beginning in 2010, DSU began hosting Teach For America (TFA) summer institutes. Some 1200 TFA recruits and staff will be present on campus during the workshops, giving DSU a unique sense of mission and animation that only TFA creates. Unfortunately, this means that dormitory housing may not be an option, which may be just as well given that our dorms are extremely Spartan. At this writing (February, 2012), the university cannot commit dorm rooms for 2013, although they did leave the option open for 2012. If available, DSU dorms are very inexpensive ($20 per night) but spare and strictly functional. Other campus facilities, including the food court in the Student Union, the campus coffee house, the cafeteria, a fitness facility, and the library will all be available. The food court offers Chick-Fil-A, the "burger studio", and a coffee shop. The cafeteria offers an array of food prepared by Aramark. The fitness facility houses a 5,000 square foot fitness center with weights and cardio equipment, basketball and racquet ball courts, and an Olympic-sized pool. The Delta State Library is home to over 360,000 bound volumes and the Instructional Resource Center (IRC), which contains curriculum materials and other teacher resources. In the IRC, participants will have access to over 2,000 teacher activity books, an array of textbooks, juvenile fiction, and teacher journals, and even Ellison die cut machines. All facilities are handicapped accessible and parking is available free of charge.

There are several national chain hotels located within 1-3 miles of Delta State, including Holiday Inn Express, Econo Lodge, Comfort Inn, and Hampton Inn. Price ranges between $65 and $110 per night, and we expect to negotiate a reduced rate for participants. Cleveland also has a diverse range of dining options. Traditional southern food, Italian, Mexican, and bistro restaurants are all available, in addition to national fast food chains. The Chamber of Commerce lists 27 non-chain restaurants on its website, and we can also direct participants to a few of our favorite eateries that are not Chamber members.

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The Delta Center for Culture and Learning, an interdisciplinary Center for Excellence that focuses on the humanities as they relate to the Mississippi Delta, will plan and implement *The Most Southern Place on Earth: Music, History, and Culture of the Mississippi Delta*. Our mission is to promote the understanding of the history and culture of the Mississippi Delta and its significance to the rest of the world. The Delta Center was awarded the Mississippi Humanities Council 2007 Public Humanities Achievement Award. While based in the University, the Delta Center works throughout the region with local Chambers of Commerce, K-12 school districts, Community Development Organizations, and visiting college groups. The Delta Center also has a long history of providing summer workshops for teachers. In 2006, the Delta Center presented a two-week long geography workshop, *The Three R's of the Delta: Rivers, Rails, and Roadways*, to 20 K-12 teachers, funded by the National Geographic Society. In 2007, the Delta Center presented, *From the Birthplace of America's Music: The Music and Musicians of Mississippi*. The weeklong workshop was funded through the Mississippi Humanities Council by NEH and served 20 K-12 teachers from Mississippi. In the summer of 2008 the Delta Center again presented *The Three R's*, but this time to 25 K-12 teachers, and in 2009, we presented another version to 40 participants. Funding was provided by The Mississippi Geographic Alliance. We have also presented six previous iterations of The Most Southern Place with NEH support.

Evaluation and Follow-up

The program will be evaluated in several ways. On the last day of the workshop, participants will be asked to complete a survey evaluating the usefulness of readings, lectures, site visits, tours, meals, facilities, faculty, and assignments. The results of past evaluations of this type are available in the workshop portfolios that are linked to http://www.blueshighway.org/mostsouthernplace.htm . Participants will also be instructed to complete the on-line NEH evaluation, and they will be

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reminded of this responsibility at least twice after the close of the workshop. In the past, all participants have asked to be included on an email distribution list. We use this list to distribute monthly updates, including material sent to the Delta Center by participants. These updates often involve web based materials related to the topics we discuss, but sometimes involve book reviews, performances, grant opportunities, or other items of interest to the group. This has proven to be very popular, and as of this writing, 156 of 160 past participants are still receiving email from the list. We also maintain a Face Book page for the workshop that has been used by some participants. Given the rapid rise of Face Book and other social networking tools, we expect to rely more on this form of communication in the future. Finally, several past participants have returned to the Delta with groups of their own, often from their schools. We look forward to working with such groups to make their trip rewarding.

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Appendix 1. Participant reading.

Prior to the Workshop, each participant should read:

First, read the twelve short essays available online.

Then read:

At least ONE of the following TWO books-

Barry, John M. 1988. Rising Tide: *The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America.* New York: Touchstone.

Daniel, Pete. 1997. *Deep'n As It Come: The 1927 Mississippi River Flood*. Oxford University Press.

At least ONE of the following THREE books-

Cobb, James. 1992. *The Most Southern Place on Earth: the Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Willis, John C. 2000. *Forgotten Time: The Yazoo-Mississippi Delta after the Civil War.* Virginia: The University of Virginia Press.

Saikku, Mikko. 2005. *This Delta, This Land*. University of Georgia Press.

ONE of these FOUR books-

Crowe, Chris. 2003. *Getting Away With Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case.* Dial Books.

Curry, Constance. 1995. *Silver Rights*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company.

Asch, Chris Myers. 2008. *The Senator and the Sharecropper: The Freedom Struggles of James O. Eastland and Fannie Lou Hamer*. New Press.

Wilkerson, Isabella. *The Warmth of Other Suns: the Epic Story of America's Great Migration.* Random House.

AND we also RECOMMEND these for anyone who is especially interested in the Mississippi Delta-

Faulkner, John. 1942 *Dollar Cotton*. A Hill Street Classics Book.

Ferris, William. 1978. *Blues from the Delta*. New York: Da Capo Press

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Taulbert, Clifton. 1995. *When We Were Colored*. New York: Penguin Group.

And it you are really interested in the Delta, why not read ALL of the above books? They are all excellent and make pretty exciting reading. For a lengthy bibliography on the Delta, click here.

Our hope is that the choice you are allowed among the books will result in greater discussion. At least some of the forty participants will choose each book, meaning that each of you will bring a different background to our meetings. Please be ready to talk about the books you read.

Appendix 2. Daily Discussion Questions.

Monday: Taming the River: The History of the Delta

The quiz that follows will be used to initiate the discussion following the seminar on Monday. All the answers are the same – The Mississippi Delta.

Where in America?

1. What Southern region was still 90 percent swampy wilderness in 1860?

2. In what Southern region were two-thirds of the members of the 1880 merchant class born outside the United States?

3. What Southern region is called "home" by many citizens in Gary, Detroit, Ypsilanti, Flint, Chicago, Oakland, New York, and other major US cities?

4. In what area did African Americans own two-thirds of the farms 1900?

5. What Southern region is widely known as *The Birthplace of the Blues* (and also gave birth to Rock 'n' Roll)?

6. What southern region had more lynching than any other in the years between 1870 and 1930 [but in the short period between 1888 and 1901, whites in this part of the South lived in greater risk of lynching than did blacks]?

7. In what region did 90 percent of the acreage lie within 5 miles of railroad tracks by 1906?

8. In what southern region did Chinese immigrants own most of the grocery stores during the 20th century?

7. What region has been called by the National Park Service *"The Cradle of American Culture"* and by James Cobb *"The Most Southern Place on Earth?"*

How does knowing the history of a place affect other areas of the humanities? How would that affect your teaching?

Tuesday: Immigrant Stories

What motivated people in each of these ethnic groups to move to the Delta (or away from it in the case of the Choctaw?): Choctaw, poor whites, wealthy whites, African Americans, Chinese, Italians, Syrians, Jews, and Mexicans.

How can the immigrant stories of your own place be used to engage students?

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Wednesday: The Blues: American Root Music and the Culture that Produced It

Can a white man sing the Blues?

What really is the Blues? Is it relevant today?

How do you think the social conditions in the early part of the 20th century in Delta affect the development of the Blues?

How can learning about the Blues engage students in who might not think they care about it?

How can it engage students in history, writing, poetry, geography, literature?

How can it help teach research skills?

Thursday: The Emmett Till Story: a Case Study in Oppression, Revolution, and Reconciliation

Why should we care about the murder of this one person in today's' world of genocide and mass

murder?

Is this story relevant 50 years after the fact? If so, how?

How can studying the murder of this boy lead to future racial reconciliation, possibly in your own school settings?

How can it lead to better engagement of your students in history?

What are the advantages of using a case study to study place and history? What are the disadvantages?

Friday: The Civil Rights Movement and the Music it Produced

What important civil rights stories developed in your own communities? How are they different or similar to those of the Delta?

How did the commitment to non-violence shape the movement in the 1960's? Where did that commitment come from and what would happen if it had not been there?

How can civil rights stories be used to learn about personal qualities like leadership and commitment?

How about oratory and use of the voice?

How do we deal with the stories of the opposition, those who wanted to protect white privilege?

How do we teach about people like Senator James Eastland or explain the White Citizen's Councils?

Saturday: The Delta in Diaspora

What aspects of the Delta's culture do you see in your own communities? What aspects do you see at the national level in our country?

How can the stories of the Delta be used to better teach geography?

How did new places change emigrants from the Delta? How did Delta emigrants change the places they went?

Are there ways to make history relevant to today's youth by looking into the stories of things they embrace, like hip-hop music or soul food, for example?

Are there ways to make literature more relevant to today's youth by using the writings of Delta authors like Clifton Taulbert or Richard Wright?

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Appendix 3. An Explanation of Icons.

"We remember and know what is imprinted *as long as the image lasts*."-Plato

Icons are images that represent complex processes and programs, concepts, or beliefs. We hope to facilitate the memory of experiences and discussions during our workshop by linking these events with "icons" in the form of text, music and food. The significance of each icon will become clear to participants during the workshop, and is briefly explained here.

The River and the Land: Geography and Culture

• Song – "When the Levee Breaks," by Memphis Minnie tells the story of the great flood of 1927 and links Delta Blues with more recent popular music.

• Text – "Down by the Riverside," by Richard Wright gives a brutal perspective to the flood and shows its racial consequences.

• Food – Fried catfish is self explanatory.

Immigrant Stories

• Song –"Sail Away," by Randy Newman, sung by Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee tells the story of the optimistic immigrant (as told by the slave trader…..).

• Text – Supreme Court decision GONG LUM v. RICE, 275 U.S. 78 (1927) **275 U.S. 78** makes it legal to segregate the non-white races from the white.

• Food – Delta Chinese, representing one of the largest ethnic groups to immigrate to the Delta. The two snacks will be classic fortune cookies (saving the fortunes for the mojos project, and Kim's pork rinds, made in woks by a Delta Chinese family and now shipped to 11 states.

The Blues: American Root Music and the Culture that Produced It

• Song – "Crossroad Blues" by Robert Johnson is probably the most widely recognized Blues song.

• Text – "The Weary Blues" by Langston Hughes explains the poetry of the Blues.

• Food – Hot tamales are standard "Blues food" in the Delta.

The Emmett Till Story: a Case Study in Oppression, Revolution, and Reconciliation

• Song – "The Death of Emmett Till" by Bob Dylan tells the story of Till's lynching.

• Text – Confession of J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant in *Look* magazine "The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi" is self explanatory.

• Food – Kool-Aid pickles are the newest and most popular treat for school aged kids in the Delta. Till was buying a stick of bubble gum when he whistled at Caroline Bryant, precipitating his murder. Today, he would have bought a pickle.

The Civil Rights Movement and the Music It Produced

• Song – "Fried Green Tomatoes" by Booker T and the MG's is one of Stax Records greatest hits.

• Text – 1963 letter from the Reverend James Bevel "to the white citizens of Cleveland, Mississippi" is a dramatic primary document that makes the whole civil rights struggle clear.

• Food – "Soul" food is everyday African-American cuisine, carried to the North by migrants, changing the diet of Americans everywhere.

The Great Migration

• Song – "Sweet Home Chicago" by Robert Johnson reflects the whole "Goin' to Chicago theme.

• Text – Articles from, and letters to, the *Chicago Defender* reflect the hopes and dreams of the migrants.

• Food – Fried chicken and pound cake were common "road foods" for African Americans in the days when they would not be served in most restaurants.

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