DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY
Delta Center for Culture & Learning

Crossroads of Culture

A publication of The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University
February 2020

12th
MISSISSIPPI DELTA BLUES FESTIVAL 2019
MARDI GRAS EDITION

Mississippi Delta Blues . . . in Brazil?

THE MOST SOUTHERN PLACE ON EARTH
THE MOST SOUTHERN PLACE ON EARTH

2019 Most Southern Place on Earth Educational Resources

Interpreting an American Soundscape

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings friends,

Happy Valentine's Day and welcome to The Delta Center's new "Crossroads of Culture" newsletter! We have been quite busy over the past year commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area and the 10th anniversary of our National Endowment for the Humanities Most Southern Place on Earth workshop.

As part of these commemorations, we have been strengthening existing partnerships and creating new ones locally, nationally, and even internationally. Among these is our collaboration with the **Mississippi Heritage Trust**, with support from the National Park Service's Lower Mississippi Delta Initiative, to publish an updated version of **"The Mound Bayou Story,"** which is available on The Delta Center's publications web page.

We also look forward to hosting the **Alliance of National Heritage Areas** spring meeting during National Parks Week, April 20-24, 2020. The Alliance represents over 50 National Heritage Areas across the country dedicated to telling nationally important stories that celebrate our nation's diverse heritage through community-based partnerships, local collaboration, education, and tourism.

All of our initiatives and projects -- several of which are highlighted in this issue -- are fulfilling The Delta Center's mission to promote greater understanding of Mississippi Delta culture and history and its significance to the world through education, partnerships, and community engagement.

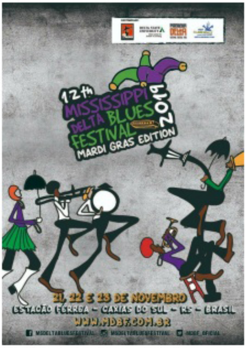
Black History Month 2020 launched with a cultural heritage tourism presentation to the **Historic Black Towns and Settlements Alliance**which includes **Mound Bayou, "The Jewel of the Delta."**

We hope that you love reading "Crossroads of Culture" and invite you to visit us at The Delta Center or, as part of our community engagement work, invite us to come visit you so that we can learn from each other and celebrate the rich culture and history of the Mississippi Delta.

Rolando Herts, Ph.D.
Director, The Delta Center for Culture and Learning
Executive Director, Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area
Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi

International Delta Blues Project

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY | CLEVELAND MS



Mississippi Delta Blues Festival . . . . in Brazil ?

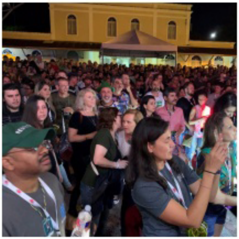
The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and the Office of International Education at Delta State University recently participated in a "Delta Delegation to Brazil." The Delta Delegation included regional cultural heritage development partners that are members of the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association, including Visit Clarksdale, the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center, and the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

The Delta delegation traveled to southeastern Brazil to develop educational and cultural partnerships with the University of Caxias do Sul and the Mississippi Delta Blues Festival Brazil, which attracts more that 15,000 visitors over its four-day run.

Delta State alum Keith Johnson wowed the festival crowds as a headliner during Saturday night's performances.

Read more about the "Delta Delegation to Brazil" here.

FOTO: VALERIE GRANGER VICKSBURG BLUES SOCIETY
12th MISSISSIPPI DELTA BLUES FESTIVAL 2019 MARDI GRAS EDITION
KEITH JOHNSON
THE PRINCE OF THE DELTA BLUES
(MS/USA)

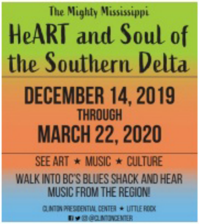


MISSISSIPPI Delta
CLUBE DO BLUES

William J. Clinton Library features Mississippi Delta Blues

The William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum launched an exhibit on December 14, 2019 featuring Mississippi Delta blues artifacts and audio recordings. The Delta Center worked with exhibit curators to plan and contribute content to several portions of the exhibit.

The Delta Center will present educational programming at the Clinton Foundation's annual **FUSION Arts+Humanities** program in March 2020.



The Mighty Mississippi

HeART and Soul of the Southern Delta

DECEMBER 14, 2019

THROUGH

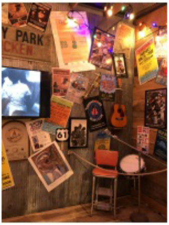
MARCH 22, 2020

SEE ART ★ MUSIC ★ CULTURE

WALK INTO BC'S BLUES SHACK AND HEAR MUSIC FROM THE REGION!

CLINTON PRESIDENTIAL CENTER ★ LITTLE ROCK

@CLINTONCENTER



B.C.'s BLUES SHACK

"I need you and you need me, we're all in this together."
Son Ford Thomas

Zakiya Hooker, daughter of John Lee Hooker, performs at the 2017 conference.

The 6th Annual

International Conference on the Blues 2019

The 2019 conference was an amzing success. From academic presentaitons to a free public concert on the courthouse lawn to Kool and the Gang at the Bologna Performing Arts Center, this was one of our best events yet.

Click anywhere on this image to download the 2019 program.

7th Annual International Conference on the Blues schedule for October 2, 2020

We are excited to host our 7th conference on October 2, 2020. Join us for a throughout day of scholarly consideration centers around the Blues and the dynamics that created it and those that continue to foster it.

Stay up to date by visiting our website here.

Save the Date

Delta State University
International Conference on the Blues

Oct. 2, 2020

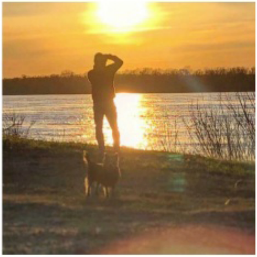
Mississippi Delta
National Heritage Area

10th Anniversary

A note from the Program Manager

I officially started this job six months ago, but I've been enthralled with the Mississippi Delta and its magical, mysterious, inspirational and often complicated stories for all of my life. I am a son of the Delta. Born and raised here, I thought for certain I'd never come back when I left for college at eighteen. But that's what young people do, right? They push back on their upbringing and imagine that just about anywhere in the world must be better than that place they've seen day after day after day.

When I returned to my home after ten years of studies, I brought with me an increased curiosity of a place and people I thought I knew well. I realized that there was more to this land and its history than I'd realized. I also brought back a camera, and I began to carry that camera with me as I embarked on learning more about the Delta, and, ultimately, myself. In 2019 University Press of Mississippi published a collection of photographs and essays I'd created over ten years of documenting Willie Seaberry and his amazing juke joint, Po' Monkey's Lounge.



It is work I am tremendously proud of, but I also recognize that regardless of how much time is put in, these are still photos made from my own perspective. It is a worthwhile perspective, yes, but it is still only a singular perspective of a place, a man, and a community that contained many complex and important relationships. And this is what excites me about my work with the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. My job is not to be THE storyteller of the Delta, it is to help create a chorus of storytellers - one that includes as many voices as possible, for a story can only fully be understood by considering a well rounded perspective of details. No one person possess all the details required for that to happen.

I intend to work diligently to assist in sharing the story of the Mississippi Delta, but I need your help to do so. Will you join me in a pursuit to understand our home? To recognize that there is more left for all of us to know, that at times that knowledge will be exhilarating and at others it will punch us in the gut, but always, ALWAYS, we will be better for the knowing and more capable in our sharing.

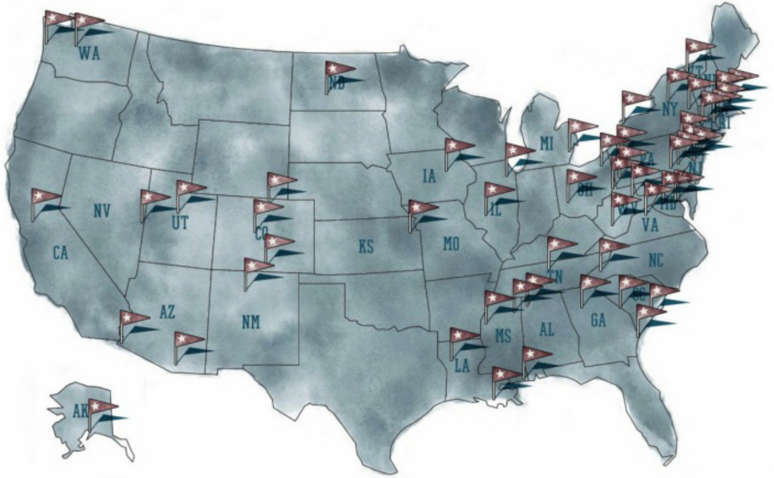
Keep an eye out for more stories of and by your neighbors. We will be creating more and more ways for this sharing to happen. And, of course, if you've got a story to tell, please reach out. I'd love to hear it, and help you find a way to share it.

Will H Jacks
Program Manager
Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area

ANHA Spring Meeting to be Hosted in the Mississippi Delta

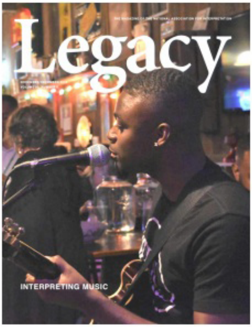
ANHA
Alliance *of* National Heritage Areas

Representatives from the fifty-five congressionally appointed National Heritage Areas will gather in April for a week-long training and planning session in the Mississippi Delta. We are excited to share our home with folks from around the country and develop opportunities to assist members of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas in their pursuits to build effective means for cultural interpretation around the country.



Learn more about the ANHA here.

MDNHA, DCCL featured in Legacy Magazine



Dr. Rolando Herts, Director of The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and Executive Director of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area was recently asked to pen an article about the importance of interpreting American music, specifically blues music in the Mississippi Delta. Delta State alumnus and blues musician Keith Johnson is featured on the cover.

Here is an excerpt from the article:

Music heritage in Mississippi carries a legendary mystique that is well suited to interpretive storytelling. In-the-know locals are proud to share how Mississippi has earned its claim to fame as "The Birthplace of America's Music." Invoking their Southern storytelling authority, they will tell you that no other state has produced such a high percentage of internationally known, world- class musicians. They will tell you that Mississippi has produced more Grammy Award-winning artists than any state in the country. They will go on to say that this is why the first Grammy Museum outside of Los Angeles was built at Delta State University in Cleveland, the heart of the Mississippi Delta region, which is known worldwide as the "Birthplace of the Blues."

While this music heritage interpretation may be crafted with a hint of healthy creative license, the stories point to the importance of pride of place and economic opportunity. This is especially so in the Mississippi Delta, proudly known as the "Birthplace of the Blues" and problematically labelled as the poorest region in the poorest state in the United States.

Interpreting an American Soundscape

Download a copy of the full article here.

NPR's Radio Diaries Leads Group of Princeton Students to Mound Bayou and Mississippi Delta Stories

The Princeton group poses with Mississippi Today reporters Aallyah Wright and Kelsey Davis Betz.

In October 2019, Joe Richman, executive producer and founder of **Radio Diaries**, NPR's longest running documentary series, led a group of students from Princeton University to the Mississippi Delta. The goal was to create a podcast centered around Mound Bayou and its importance not only to the Mississippi Delta, but to America as well. We were proud to assist Joe and his students by providing insight into the region, connecting them to community members with compelling stories to share, and giving them tips on great places to visit.

Take a look at the blog they created chronicling their southern journey.

radio
NPR
Diaries

JRN 450: Audio Journalism Fall Break Trip
Watch later
Share

WANT TO HEAR THE STORIES?

CLICK HERE TO LISTEN

MDNHA Grant Program Updates

VISIT CLARKSDALE
www.visitclarksdale.com

In September and October 2019, grant workshops were held in five Delta communities - Senatobia, Lexington, Belzoni, Vicksburg, and Clarksdale. Over 50 representatives from approximately 40 organizations attended, and 25 proposals were submitted in November. These documents are currently being reviewed with recipient announcements to be made in March 2020.

In 2019, we awarded more than $200,000 in grants to support heritage projects in communities across the Mississippi Delta. Thirteen organizations received grants up to $24,500 each. Their projects range from educational programs, such as the Grammy Museum's youth music and songwriting workshops, to the preservation of the Delta's historic landmarks, such as the Ellis Theater in downtown Cleveland.

Learn more about our grant program by visiting our website.

MISSISSIPPI
DELTA
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA
10TH
ANNIVERSARY

MISSISSIPPI DELTA
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

10TH ANNIVERSARY

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Hawkins v Town of Shaw

New Hope Missionary Baptist

Catfish Row Museum

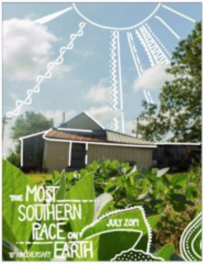
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

2019 marked the 10th anniversary of the nationally recognized Most Southern Place on Earth: Music, History, and Culture of the Mississippi Delta K-12 teacher workshop

Click the image below to view a highlight video.

THE MOST
SOUTHERN
PLACE ON
EARTH
10th ANNIVERSARY
00:35

JUNE 2019
THE MOST SOUTHERN PLACE ON EARTH
10th ANNIVERSARY



Summer 2019 Educational Resources

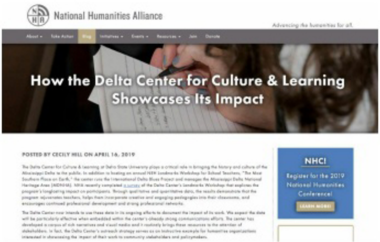
For the past 10 years, The Delta Center has hosted the NEH Most Southern Place on Earth workshop for K-12 educators from throughout the U.S. The workshop has educated over 700 teachers about the music, history, and culture of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

In summer 2019, Robertson Scholar interns from Duke University and University of North Carolina Chapel Hill worked with Obsidian Productions to take photographs and create short films that document workshop activities. The Robertson Scholars also created portfolios that tell the story of the workshop, along with lesson plans that educators anywhere can access for use in their classrooms.

See the reports and other multimedia

View workshop lesson plans

MISSISSIPPI RIVER BLUES: THE 1927 FLOOD


National Humanities Alliance
Advancing the humanities for all.
About
Take Action
Blog
Initiatives
Events
Resources
Join
Donate

How the Delta Center for Culture & Learning Showcases Its Impact

POSTED BY CECILY HILL ON APRIL 16, 2019

The Delta Center for Culture & Learning at Delta State University plays a critical role in bringing the history and culture of the Mississippi Delta to the public. In addition to hosting an annual NEH Landmarks Workshop for School Teachers, "The Most Southern Place on Earth," the center runs the International Delta Blues Project and manages the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA). NHA recently completed a survey of the Delta Center's Landmarks Workshop that explores the program's longlasting impact on participants. Through qualitative and quantitative data, the results demonstrate that the program rejuvenates teachers, helps them incorporate creative and engaging pedagogies into their classrooms, and encourages continued professional development and strong professional networks.

The Delta Center now intends to use these data in its ongoing efforts to document the impact of its work. We expect the data will be particularly effective when embedded within the center's already strong communications efforts. The center has developed a corpus of rich narratives and visual media and it routinely brings these resources to the attention of stakeholders. In fact, the Delta Center's outreach strategy serves as an instructive example for humanities organizations interested in showcasing the impact of their work to community stakeholders and policymakers.

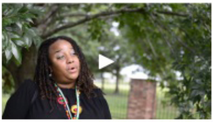
National Humanities Alliance feature on DCCL
(from the article)

"The Delta Center for Culture & Learning at Delta State University plays a critical role in bringing the history and culture of the Mississippi Delta to the public. In addition to hosting an annual NEH Landmarks Workshop for School Teachers, "The Most Southern Place on Earth," the center runs the International Delta Blues Project and manages the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA). NHA recently completed a survey of the Delta Center's Landmarks Workshop that explores the program's longlasting impact on participants. "

READ MORE

Want to Learn More?

Watch the videos below or visit our media page to see additional photos and videos from the "Most Southern" Institute.



Community Engagement @ The Delta Center

The Delta Center creates and strengthens mutually beneficial cultural heritage connections between Delta State University and local, national, and international visitors and stakeholders.

Lens Collective photojournalism workshop session at Delta State

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY
Delta Center for Culture & Learning

With faculty at University of Caxias do Sul, Brazil

Dr. Herts and Lee Aylward with newly elected State Senator Sarita Simmons

Madison Middle School student tour

MDNHA passport visitor from Texas

28th MDNHA passport station installment at Tutwiler Quilters

MDNHA board and staff with Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement at Mississippi Civil Rights Museum

National Park Service Civil Rights Sites Resource Study team in Mound Bayou

Pueblo West Colorado High School students at The Delta Center's Cast of Blues exhibit

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY
Delta Center for
Culture & Learning

For more information on The Delta Center for Culture and Learning, please visit http://deltacenterdsu.com/

For more information on the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, please visit www.msdeltaheritage.com

---

STAY CONNECTED:

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning | 662-846-4311