

## Nomination Statement

### Mississippi Humanities Council – Racial Equity Grant Program

As William Faulkner wrote in *Requiem for a Nun*, “the past is never dead, it’s not even past.” This famous line certainly describes Faulkner’s home state of Mississippi where our complicated history continues to impact nearly every contemporary challenge we face.

Imbued with a strong sense of place and rooted to its past, history is contested terrain here. The lingering effects of a long, dark era of white supremacy continues to hang over the state as communities remain divided over their past and even their contemporary narratives. Our newly opened state history museum uses the motto, “One Mississippi, Many Stories.” A more accurate, if cynical, description would be “two Mississippis, two stories” since 200 years after statehood, 153 years after the end of the Civil War, and 53 years after passage of the Voting Rights Act, Mississippi remains deeply divided by race.

While Mississippi has made great progress in facing and remembering the struggles of the civil rights era, even dedicating a state-funded civil rights museum, there is still a major disconnect between this difficult yet triumphant narrative and the broader picture of Mississippi history as well as contemporary economic and social challenges the state still faces. For example, our state flag and the presence of Confederate monuments in front of every county courthouse portray a narrow, incomplete, and often inaccurate version of Mississippi’s past, one that excludes the experiences and achievements of the state’s substantial African American population. Our state’s political leadership can celebrate the new civil rights museum while declaring that the explicit racism it depicts is confined to the past, something we have overcome. And yet, the specter of race profoundly shapes life in Mississippi today, including its politics, its policy debates, its lagging economic development, and its educational system. In Mississippi, race permeates everything, though a substantial portion of its population engages in willful denial of the continuing impact of white supremacy.

#### **Project Aims:**

The Mississippi Humanities Council has always supported and developed public programs that address our state’s legacy of racism. But as we approached our state’s bicentennial and as new state history and civil rights museums were being built in Jackson, we wanted to develop a program that would empower local communities around Mississippi to address the history of racism in their community and its lingering impact. We wanted to highlight how the tools of the humanities - historical analysis; deep, thoughtful examination of a subject; and civil discourse - could help Mississippi communities face and address their racial divides.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject, we needed to defer to the expertise of local communities. We could not bring our programming ideas from Jackson and assume that they would fit or be embraced by the community. As we were developing this program, Cleveland, Mississippi, was going through a federal court-ordered school integration which forced the merger of the town’s two high schools – one all African American the other evenly divided between black and white

students. As much as we wanted to host programs to help the community discuss and work through this issue, we knew such programs needed to come from Clevelanders themselves – they best understood the sensitivity of the issue and the community’s needs. To support such programs statewide, we needed to listen, learn, and cautiously advise communities on how they could use the humanities to approach these challenging issues their community was facing. And so we conceived it to be a grant program that would enable us to fund the organizations that know their communities best while connecting them to scholarly resources and experts who could help their programs have an impact. This project was far more than a simple regrant program. The MHC actively sought out and partnered with organizations working toward racial equity in our state, and encouraged proposals from them. In some instances staff even worked with applicants to structure their programs and projects, identify partners and connect with humanities scholars to inform and guide their programs.

We also wanted to make a concerted effort to reach out to small, nonprofit organizations to advise and build their capacity for humanities-based exploration of these issues. We wanted to go beyond our traditional group of partners to work with new organizations to spread the MHC’s reach geographically and institutionally. In order for this to succeed, we needed a dedicated staff member to work exclusively on outreach, building relationships with communities across Mississippi, encouraging them to develop public humanities programs that addressed racial issues, and helping them navigate the grant application process. It would be labor intensive, but it would be essential to our achieving our goals for the program. Finally, we wanted to help build a statewide community of practice that would engage a diverse group of organizations in pursuing humanities-based racial equity work. We took this vision to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which identifies Mississippi as one of its geographical areas of emphasis. In 2016, we were pleased to receive a two-year grant of \$250,000 to support the creation of a Racial Equity Grant Program.

### **Project Impact:**

With this Kellogg support, we were able to hire a part-time outreach coordinator, Tim Lampkin, who is based in the Mississippi Delta, our state’s poorest and most racially divided region. Tim created a nonprofit enterprise in 2015 to provide entrepreneurship education and implement revitalization projects to address generational poverty in the Mississippi Delta. In that role, he works to build collaborations among stakeholders in the Delta to address our state’s negative statistics, many of which are directly linked to racial disparities. Tim’s established connections and his emphasis on encouraging Mississippians to address our disparities from within positioned him well to travel the state, meeting with museums, historical societies, colleges, and community organizations about leveraging MHC grant funds to help them explore the racial divisions in their town.

In addition to working with traditional MHC partners, he made a special effort to connect with small, grassroots organizations who were unfamiliar with the Council. He consulted with them, gave them advice on how to incorporate the humanities into their work, and connected them to scholars and other partners who could help them strengthen their program. In several cases, he walked them through the grant application process, helping them meet the MHC’s rules and guidelines. As a small organization, we have never offered this degree of outreach before. Based

on its success in the racial equity grant program, we have established a fundraising goal of hiring a full-time community outreach coordinator to help us reach more underserved communities across Mississippi.

Over the past two years, this racial equity grant program has supported 50 different projects carried out by 45 different partners. Of these partners, 24 were first-time MHC grantees or had not worked with the council in the past five years. Thus, our goal to use this project to expand our connections and partnerships to new organizations and to revive those that had gone dormant was extremely successful.

While we don't have the space to discuss each project we supported, we found that they fell into a few main categories.

### **Fostering Reconciliation through Confronting the Past:**

We supported several programs that shined a light on past racial injustice to foster reconciliation today. In Hattiesburg, there have long been tensions between the local African American community and the University of Southern Mississippi. In the late 1950s, Clyde Kennard, a Hattiesburg-native and World War II and Korean War veteran, attempted to transfer from the University of Chicago to USM, an all-white institution at the time. The school rejected his application several times, in consultation with the governor of Mississippi. After Kennard was yet again turned away from enrolling in the school in 1960, he was arrested on a trumped-up charge and convicted by an all-white jury based on planted evidence. Kennard was sent to the state's notorious Parchman Prison, where he fell very ill. After being refused medical treatment, he was eventually diagnosed with cancer and died in 1963.

The Clyde Kennard story, while not as well-known as James Meredith's integration of Ole Miss or the murders of Civil Rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, reflects the worst of Mississippi during the Jim Crow era: the corrupt use of state power to enforce segregation and destroy the lives of those who challenged it. Many in the Hattiesburg African American community have long felt the university has never properly acknowledged its role in the tragic episode. With our racial equity grants, we supported a Clyde Kennard lecture series organized by a small group of USM professors. Our outreach coordinator convinced the professors to hold the series off campus, in the heart of the historic African American neighborhood, to encourage community participation and to symbolize USM's efforts to build bridges to the community. The three lectures about Kennard were a tremendous success, drawing significant numbers of students, faculty, and administrators from USM as well as members of the local African American community. Building on this success, the group of professors came back to us to fund a short documentary film about Kennard that would be shown as part of freshman orientation on campus. Also, the university dedicated a special civil rights state historical marker telling the full Kennard story, including the complicity of the university. (The marker text was written by MHC Executive Director Stuart Rockoff.) While the wounds have not completely healed, these projects funded by the MHC through our racial equity grant program have helped foster a sense of reconciliation between the university and the African American community over the mistreatment of Kennard.

Sometimes reconciliation is harder to achieve, and our programs reflected small, first steps in that direction. In Grenada, court-mandated school integration in 1966 unleashed a wave of white violence against African American children. Mobs of whites congregated outside the public school to forcibly prevent African American children from entering. Those young children who managed to get to school were attacked by the mob when leaving. After several weeks of this, the courts finally ordered the police to protect the children and prohibited the mob from assembling outside the school. This ugly history has been largely forgotten by the town's white community today. Its political leadership has explicitly discouraged people from "dredging up the past." But Grenada's black community remains deeply scarred. The town's racial divisions will never be bridged until these scars are healed through an honest, accurate accounting of this dark history. To encourage this difficult process, the MHC funded a series of programs in Grenada that enabled local citizens to tell their own stories about the school integration. Speakers also connected this history with continuing problems related to educational equity in Grenada today. Our hope was to attract a significant white audience for the programs, but we found the audience was primarily African American. Nevertheless, just telling these painful stories in public have helped some families heal. As the project director reported, "it is the beginning of ending the silence." While the audience was not as diverse as planners hoped, we observed important cross-generational dialogue between elders who lived under the constraints and threats of Jim Crow laws and much younger Mississippians who may not recognize the lingering effects of that era on their lives today. There is still much work to be done in Grenada.

Other communities were more ready to atone for their sins of the past. In Jackson, civil rights activists tried to integrate prominent white churches in 1963 and 1964, sending interracial groups of worshippers on Sunday mornings to attend services at various places of worship around the city. In most cases, they were turned away or arrested when they refused to leave, highlighting the hypocrisy of Jackson's white Christian establishment. In 2017, a consortium of some of those churches that had turned black worshippers away held a series of MHC-funded public programs honoring the "kneel-in" campaign. Panels with scholars, kneel-in participants, and contemporary religious leaders discussed the moral witness of the "kneel-in" movement and how faith communities today can address the continuing legacy of racism. These programs drew a majority-white audience and reflected the progress those congregations have made since the era of segregation. Even better, they built new partnerships between white and black churches in Jackson. According to the project director, "The Kneel-In programs will be the beginning of a better understanding between African American and white churches in Jackson. The pastors and church members who worked on the various planning committees spent time building trust and relationships which will enrich future efforts to work together in the community." The kneel-in programs show how acknowledging the dark parts of our history is one step in bridging continuing racial divides.

### **Creating More Accurate Narratives:**

Another important theme of the projects we funded was the creation of more accurate, inclusive narratives of our communities and their histories. The best example of this is the "Behind the Big House" program we support in Holly Springs. This small town has an annual spring pilgrimage

in which locals and tourists tour the many surviving antebellum homes. Several of these homes have outbuildings in back that once housed the town's enslaved population. A group of local residents, in partnership with humanities scholars, have created a "Behind the Big House" tour in which tourists and school groups can learn about the lives of the enslaved, in addition to admiring the grand mansions during Pilgrimage. Initially, Behind the Big House was separate from the Pilgrimage. Eventually, once people realized how compelling the Behind the Big House tours were, featuring nationally recognized scholars like Michael Twitty, they merged into one event. But recently, new leadership in the Pilgrimage organization has shown resistance to featuring slavery in their tours and they have reverted to hosting separate tours. Nevertheless, "Behind the Big House" continues, offering compelling living history tours of slave dwellings during Pilgrimage weekend. Over 950 people, 40% of whom were students, toured the slave dwellings in 2017, gaining a more accurate and complete account of their community's history. MHC staff has worked with the Behind the Big House scholars to help expand the program to other communities.

For many Mississippi communities like Holly Springs, inaccurate "old south" mythology is the cornerstone of their heritage tourism. Nowhere has this been truer than Natchez, which was a thriving 19<sup>th</sup> century cotton trading port on the Mississippi River. Natchez was also home of one of the largest interior public slave trading markets in the country: the Forks of the Road. In recent years, there have been growing efforts in Natchez to tell this story of the enslaved and the remarkable African American community that emerged in the city after the Civil War. Through our racial equity grant program, we supported the progressive-minded Historic Natchez Foundation on a series of programs entitled "Telling Our Own Story: Untold Natchez History of African American Women" which highlighted the role of women in this African American community and discussed ways their contributions could be featured in local heritage tourism. The organizers made a successful effort to attract a large racially mixed audience and reported the project resulted in significant progress in incorporating African American women into local history narratives. The Natchez mayor commented that the project was "transformative in its approach to engaging arts, culture, and heritage in Natchez...Black and white, young and old, all brought together to lift up the cultural heritage of the African American community."

If the racial equity grant program helped reshape historical narratives in Mississippi, it also helped create fuller, more accurate contemporary narratives about African Americans in our state. One project we supported, "The ROOTS of Sunflower County," used storytelling and oral history to empower young African American men in Indianola to share their own stories to counteract the overwhelmingly negative media narrative that often surrounds them. They interviewed community elders and local leaders, uncovering vital history often overlooked in this racially divided Delta town. They also recorded their own stories, which they turned into a video, booklet, and traveling exhibit that was on display at four different museums around the state. Before and after survey results showed the project had a significant impact on its audience, with audience members reporting that they were far less likely to perceive young black men as violent and dangerous after viewing the exhibit. The ROOTS (Reclaiming our Origins Through Stories) project helped produce a counter-narrative to the negatively framed media depictions that are often presented about young men of color.

## Fostering Difficult Conversations by Exploring History

Another recurring theme to the projects we supported was using a better understanding of the past to drive important contemporary conversations. The issue of school integration remains extremely salient in Mississippi. While the state's public schools were forced to integrate in 1970, many whites responded by leaving the public schools for hastily set up all-white private schools, especially in areas with a significant percentage of African Americans. Others moved to all-white suburbs. This ugly history has largely disappeared from public discourse over public education. In many parts of the state today, students learn about the *Brown v. Board Education* decision while sitting in all-black, under-resourced classrooms – a fact which begs the question of how much has changed. The MHC has been very interested in exploring the largely forgotten tumultuous history of school integration in Mississippi to foster public discussion about segregation today. We supported the award-winning documentary film “Yazoo Revisited” with a racial equity grant. The film presents a rich, nuanced account of school integration in Yazoo City, which was hailed as a national model of success back in 1970. There was no violence and most whites remained in the public schools initially. This changed in the 1980s, as more and more white families sent their children to the local “seg academy.” The ultimate failure of school integration in Yazoo City is a sobering reminder of how racism continues to shape life in our state even after the great achievements of the civil rights movement.

Because of MHC's support for the film, it was broadcast several times over our statewide public television network. We also organized a televised conversation broadcast after the film about the issue of school integration today featuring the president of the Mississippi NAACP, the superintendent of the successful, racially-mixed school district of Clinton, and a community leader who helped oversee the successful merger and integration of public schools in Starkville. Our goal was to show through examples that racial integration is of great public benefit to a community and that segregation is not inevitable and unchangeable. In the wake of the documentary's showing on Mississippi Public Broadcasting, we also addressed the subject of school integration at programs in Jackson and in Cleveland using our “Ideas on Tap” discussion model, which encourages humanities-based community discussions about important contemporary issues.

Another exciting documentary project that connects the history of racism in Mississippi with contemporary issues is “Fannie Lou Hamer's America.” Hamer, a sharecropper who rose from a humble, rural existence in the Mississippi Delta to become one of the most important civil rights leaders in Mississippi, is best known for her “I Question America” speech before the Democratic Party's Credentials Committee during the 1964 Democratic Convention in Atlantic City. Her leadership of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party brought her to national attention. Afterward, she continued her activism, working to secure political power and economic empowerment for African Americans in the Mississippi Delta. Our racial equity grant program helped support preproduction of the film, schedule for release next year. The [short excerpts](#) the filmmakers have released attest to how powerful it will be. Eschewing traditional expert “talking head” interviews, this film tells the story of Fannie Lou Hamer in her own words, akin to the James Baldwin film “I Am Not Your Negro.” Though Hamer died in 1977, the film uses

contemporary images of police violence and political demonstrations to show how Hamer's work and words remain relevant today. Once the film is completed, we will use it in public programs exploring both the history of the civil rights movement and its continuing relevance to the racial divisions we face in Mississippi.

### **Civil Community Dialogues About Race**

The public conversations that "Fannie Lou Hamer's America" will foster fall under another theme of these racial equity projects – community dialogue. Civil discourse, empathy, and deep examination of complicated issues are central tools of the humanities. They are essential to any productive group discussion about racial divisions. In our racial equity grant program, we were able to support several structured community discussions about race. In Tupelo, 182 people attended a six-month series of dialogue programs about race called "The Open Doors Project." Spread over six sessions, the first two covered relevant terminology and the idea of structural racism. The next two sessions were discussions about the impact of racism from different perspectives. The final two sessions were focused on finding common ground and working together to help solve community problems. The goal of project was to do what the title implied, to open the door to having productive, meaningful conversations about this difficult issue.

Two-thirds of participants were white. Despite this success in finding a diverse audience, the program was not easy. Two planned facilitators backed out of the program due to concerns of being associated with it. The project director reported that "Tupelo remains a climate of unease in publicly discussing these topics."

Despite these challenges, the program was a tremendous success. An extremely large majority of participants reported the discussion series was very effective in helping them understand racism and fostering community dialogue. A large majority of participants reported that after going through the program, they were very likely to take part in other activities that address the problem of racism. Indeed, many of the participants have taken the program to their own communities, creating racial dialogue initiatives in their churches and social and professional organizations. One participant took what she learned from these programs and organized a discussion about white privilege on her nearby community college campus. She reported that "what followed was one of the most honest and open discussions about race relations I have ever been a part of. In fact, it was a discussion I would have initially told you we couldn't have on our campus. The discussion lasted 2.5 hours and remained both civil and challenging throughout."

The project organizers noted that after the series they recognized the need for more safe spaces where people can talk openly about race in a dialogue designed with empathy and self-reflection instead of confrontation at the forefront. While the Open Doors Project did not transform Tupelo, it has planted seeds that are moving the community forward in bridging its racial divisions. The MHC remains engaged with this work in Tupelo through a partnership with the Kettering Foundation.

The impact of MHC's grassroots outreach approach is reflected in two programs we supported in the Mississippi Delta town of Cleveland. In contrast to virtually every other Delta school district, Cleveland has integrated public schools. Everywhere else, whites have left the public schools for

“segregation academies,” [private schools](#) that often use the iconography of the Confederacy and the Lost Cause myth. Until recently, Cleveland High School was 50% white, 50% black, while East Side High School, which had been an all-black school during segregation, remained virtually all-black. A lawsuit brought by the U.S. Justice Department forced the Cleveland school district to merge the two schools in 2017, creating one integrated school. This case was often reported in the national media (*New York Times* and *Washington Post*) without any context – it was portrayed as an anomalous holdover from the Jim Crow era, akin to the stories of Japanese soldiers remaining holed up in island caves long after World War II. In fact, the lawsuit challenged the only successful, lasting school integration in the Mississippi Delta. This forced merger was extremely controversial in Cleveland, with segments of both the black and white communities opposed to it. Emotions were raw, among both parents and the students affected by the merger.

The MHC’s outreach coordinator worked with people in the Cleveland community to develop and support various programs to ease this transition using the tools of the humanities. In the summer of 2017, just before the first school year at the new consolidated school, we funded a community youth summit in Cleveland that reached more than 200 students to discuss the history of racial inequality in education in Mississippi. These presentations helped put the forced consolidation into historical context, giving the students a deeper understanding of the ruling that had upended their school district. This program, organized by an African-American nonprofit organization called FlyZone, attracted primarily a black audience. Many in the Cleveland African American community were unhappy about the closure of their historic high school. According to the project director, this community summit “allowed the students to be more receptive to the change. It caused them to enter the new school year with open minds.”

If this program had an impact on the local African American community, there was still a need to bridge the town’s racial divides, especially among its young people. The MHC outreach coordinator brought the idea of creating a special youth track to Delta State University (located in Cleveland) as part of their annual “Winning the Race” conference. This conference has brought national speakers and panel discussions about race to campus, but has struggled attracting people from the larger community. This youth track was designed to bring together white and black high school students from the area to discuss racial issues. With the court-ordered school merger, they made a special effort to include high school students from Cleveland. All told, the youth track brought more than 100 students together before the conference for guided discussions about the history of racism in Mississippi and its continuing impact. The students later attended the “Winning the Race” conference.

Post-conference surveys show the impact of these discussions on both black and white students from Cleveland’s consolidated high school. One student reported the youth track “had me thinking differently about race” and taught her that racism is a socially constructed belief. A white student reported, “I have now realized that there are actual racism issues that need to be solved.” A black student reported, “I now know that no stereotypes characterize an entire group and this is racism. I realize that I have been doing the same things to other groups that I hate being done to me.” Another student wrote, “We need to continue having these uncomfortable

conversations to assess the problems we have.” The Winning the Race youth track is an important example of how the MHC helped shape the programs we funded through the racial equity grant program, using our expertise and wide network of humanities scholars and organizations. This youth track has become a permanent part of Delta State’s Winning the Race conference.

### **Failures & Resistance**

Obviously, in a Schwartz Prize nomination we focus on the most successful programs. But it is worth noting not all of the projects we funded were successful. Since we made a special emphasis on working with small nonprofit organizations with whom we haven’t worked before, some of our grants were “high risk.” Some turned out beautifully, like FlyZone’s community summit in Cleveland and a program in the tiny town of Oakland (population: 514) that examined the experiences of black women, organized by a small organization called GRACE Mississippi. In these cases, our goal to help build the capacity of small organizations to write grants and host public humanities programs was a tremendous success. But in a few cases, the organizations who received racial equity grants did not carry out their projects. Our grant “default rate” for this project was a bit higher than our usual rate. Of the 54 we agreed to fund, four did not occur. In a few other cases, the reporting was substandard, hindering our ability to evaluate the success of the program. Nevertheless, the benefits of working with these small grassroots organizations far outweighed the drawbacks. And even when projects failed to achieve their intended goals, the MHC gained a working relationship with organizations that, with greater guidance and support, will have the experience and capacity to pursue other, similar work in our state.

Also, in focusing on the positive impact of the programs we funded, we should not overlook the continuing resistance to these sorts of programs. Most white people in Grenada did not want to learn about or discuss the town’s violent resistance to school integration fifty years ago. In Holly Springs, the local garden club cut ties with the “Behind the Big House” program because they believed it dwelled too much on the negative aspects of the community’s history. We received two letters of complaint because a short film we funded about the civil rights history of Hazlehurst was “too negative.” Even though Hazlehurst is a black majority town, its white residents are not comfortable with narratives that present a more inclusive perspective on their town’s history. In the case of a racial dialogue program on the Mississippi Gulf Coast we funded, the sponsoring organization, the Mississippi Rising Coalition, received a threatening letter from the area chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. Undaunted, the group moved forward with the dialogue program. Such resistance only highlights the continuing need for these sorts of programs. We have clearly struck a nerve and will not shy away from bringing the tools of the humanities to bear on our state’s unpleasant history and the continuing racial divides we face.

### **Building a Community of Practice**

Not content with funding standalone projects in communities across Mississippi, we wanted to use the racial equity grant program to build a community of practice around using the humanities to address structural racism. Earlier this year, we hosted a convening for all of the organizations we funded so they could share information, cross-pollinate ideas, and form a network of entities

doing humanities-based racial equity work. Representatives from 35 different organizations from across the state gathered in Jackson for the day-long conference.

The convening included a keynote speaker who discussed the underlying structure of systemic racism followed by panels that highlighted several of the projects we funded. We selected projects that we found to be most innovative and replicable, so organizations could bring these ideas back to their communities. We also wanted a candid discussion about local resistance to these sorts of programs. The lead scholar of “Behind the Big House” talked about how they have navigated the opposition of the local garden club to their work. The clear message was that these programs are vital, but not easy. Participants then broke into small groups to discuss how the tools of the humanities can be used to address different aspects of structural racism, including law, economics, racial separation, and unrepresentative narratives. We explained the “humanities tool box,” which includes historical analysis and cultural understanding; deep, critical thinking; civil discourse; and storytelling. Each group came up with a model humanities program that could address one aspect of racially based inequality. Thus, everyone left with specific ideas for developing and implementing humanities-based community programs that address the history and continuing impact of racism in Mississippi.

Participants gave the convening very positive reviews. 80% reported that the convening was “very useful” in helping them think of ways to address racial issues in their community; 20% rated it as somewhat effective. 93% categorized the convening as “very effective” in helping understand how the humanities can enrich this work. Participants were especially positive about the opportunity to meet and share ideas with those doing racial equity work in other parts of the state. Anonymous comments praised the “networking opportunities to learn from other committed, concerned community members...I’d like to do the same in my community! Thanks for the great ideas!” Others saw the potential of this community of practice, writing, “I learned about the very important work being done throughout the state and how my organization may partner with them.” Another commented, “I learned more about the ongoing work around Mississippi on racial equity issues. It was nice to see, in one space, a collective effort across the state to deal with issues similar to those my team and I are working to address.” Another described the most important thing they learned from the convening as “connections, great conversations, and practical examples of how to make projects happen.” Participants also left with a strong sense of the importance of using the humanities in addressing racial issues: “Mississippi has a lot of issues, but Mississippians are definitely the key to figuring out the solutions. We can do that through the humanities.” Another commented, “The convening was nothing short of amazing. I learned that the humanities have an incredible power that I did not know existed.”

Since the convening, we have already begun to consult with participating organizations on future programs that the MHC will be able to fund. Our plan is to continue these convenings on a regular basis to strengthen and sustain the network we have created through our racial equity grant program.

## **Financial Structure**

This racial equity project was extremely efficient. We received \$250,000 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation over a two-year period. We regranting \$160,000 of this amount, using the balance to cover the part-time salary of our outreach coordinator and his extensive travel around the state and the cost of the convening (we paid the travel expenses of each participant). We funded 50 different projects with this \$160,000. While the Kellogg grant period is now over, we are hopeful and optimistic the Foundation will continue to support this initiative. Regardless of whether they fund us again, the MHC will build on the new partnerships we established during this project and continue to work with organizations and institutions around Mississippi to develop public humanities programs that address our state's long history of racism and foster public discussions about how we can overcome its legacy.

*A complete list of projects we funded through the racial equity grant program, along with short descriptions, can be found on our [website](#).*

## Schwartz Prize Nomination

### Mississippi Humanities Council – Racial Equity Grant Program

#### Short description:



The Mississippi Humanities Council created the Racial Equity Grant Program to fund grassroots efforts across the state to use the humanities to address the history of racism and its continuing impact on Mississippi. As Mississippi approached its bicentennial in 2017 and as new state history and civil rights museums were being built in Jackson, we developed a program that empowered local communities around Mississippi to use the tools of the humanities to

address the legacy of racism and how it continues to divide our state. Using a community engagement strategy, the MHC worked closely with 45 different organizations to develop and support 50 different public humanities programs over two years that explored Mississippi's difficult history and our enduring challenges over the issue of race.

#### Links to online information:

List of projects supported by racial equity grant program: <http://mshumanities.org/grants/racial-equity-grants/>

Short film about racial equity grant projects:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VO8xhkf6lC0&t=18>

Clyde Kennard project: documentary film: <https://vimeo.com/246869509>; Q&A with filmmakers and lecture series organizers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Br0F1GA6e0I>

Newspaper article about Kneel-In programs: <https://www.northsidesun.com/front-page-slideshow-news-breaking-news/kneel-movement>

Short documentary about ROOTS of Sunflower County:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnJkb4Qt85Y>

Trailer for “Fannie Lou Hamer’s America: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SzxJuCs\\_nU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SzxJuCs_nU)

Program for Winning the Race Youth Track: <http://www.deltastate.edu/winning-the-race/high-school-leadership-forum/>