

Hooks Institute Will Present Training on Civil Rights Movements to Local Teachers

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July 24, 2014 - The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis, in cooperation with Tennessee History for Kids, will present in-service training on the history of the civil rights movements in Fayette and Haywood counties in Tennessee to Shelby County teachers on July 31 at White Station High School.

The Fayette and Haywood County movements began in the late 1950s when African-American residents demanded the right to vote. African-Americans were swiftly retaliated against by white residents for exercising this constitutional right. The Tennessee Department of Education has mandated that all 11th-grade history curricula throughout the state include instruction on these two significant movements.

The Hooks Institute has played a leading role among Tennessee institutions in preserving and promoting the history of the Fayette County movement. The University of Memphis Libraries' Special Collections Department contains 19 cubic boxes of materials containing civil rights activist newsletters and correspondence, copies of the official records (including FBI reports from the 1950s and 1960s from the U.S. Department of Justice investigation into retaliation against blacks), and video recordings of Fayette County activists recounting their civil rights activities.

Daphene McFerren, director of the Hooks Institute and daughter of two of the movement leaders, John and Viola McFerren, created the core of this collection as part of a summer grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. A website on this movement is being created by the Hooks Institute, working with Dr. Loel Kim, a faculty member in the Department of English, McFerren, and Sasha Arnold, a masters of arts candidate in literature at the U of M. This site is expected to be publicly launched later in the summer.

Dr. Richard Saunders, who received his PhD in history from the U of M and whose dissertation was devoted to analyzing the civil rights history of Fayette and Haywood counties, will team with McFerren, Kim and Arnold to present an overview of the civil rights history of these counties and proposed approaches to teaching this history to high school students.

Organized in 1996, the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change is an interdisciplinary center at the University of Memphis. It was founded by the late Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks and officials at the University. The Hooks Institute archives include Hooks' personal papers, which are housed in Special Collections.

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