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U of M's Hooks Institute Welcomes Assistant Director and Fellows

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Images from left: Dr. Rychetta Watkins, Dr Loel Kim and Carla Peacher-Ryan

The Benjamin L Hooks Institute at the University of Memphis has named a new assistant director, Dr. Rychetta Watkins, and Hooks Institute Fellows Dr. Loel Kim and Carla Peacher-Ryan.

The mission of the Hooks Institute is teaching, studying and promoting civil rights and social justice through its programming, which includes funding faculty research and community service projects; hosting conferences, symposia and lectures; and promoting and recognizing local and national scholarship on civil and human rights.

As assistant director, Watkins assumes a leadership role that involves implementing and sustaining programs that facilitate the Hooks Institute's mission. She completed her undergraduate degree at Washington University in St. Louis and her PhD in English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Most recently development manager for Stand for Children, Watkins also was an assistant professor of English at Rhodes College. Her first book, *Black Power, Yellow Power and the Making of Revolutionary Identity*, was released in January 2012. An April 2013 graduate of the New Memphis Institute Fellows program, she is active in several community groups, including a local initiative to secure a permanent memorial for civil rights activist Ida B. Wells.

Kim, associate professor in the U of M Department of English, has joined the Hooks Institute as a Faculty Fellow for fall 2014. The Faculty Fellows program provides course buyouts to allow faculty to complete projects that complement the Institute's mission. Kim is developing a website on the Fayette County, Tenn., civil rights movement that is expected to be launched in spring 2014. This movement began in 1959 when whites retaliated against African-Americans for demanding the right to vote. This website will include primary source materials from the holdings in the Mississippi Valley Collection (Special Collections) in the University's Ned McWherter Library. It will tell the story of that movement through the voices of activists, photographs, FBI files, newsletters and other materials.

Kim's teaching and research is in professional and technical writing. She earned her PhD in rhetoric at Carnegie Mellon University. Her research interests and teaching

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emphasizes the intersection of technology and written, visual and spoken communication.

Peacher-Ryan is a shareholder in the Memphis law office of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz. As the Hooks Institute Corporate Fellow, Peacher-Ryan will work with staff over the next six months to build program infrastructure and to better connect the Institute to non-profit, business and legal communities. Peacher-Ryan has practiced law for 29 years in the areas of commercial finance and real estate transactions. She has been listed in The Best Lawyers in America® in real estate law, securitization and structured finance law and banking and commercial finance law since 2007. She was named the 2013 Best Lawyer - Memphis Securitization and Structured Finance Law and 2012 Memphis Real Estate Law "Lawyer of the Year."

A 2010 graduate of Leadership Memphis, Peacher-Ryan is committed to community engagement. She is chair of the Hooks Institute's Local Advisory Board. She also is on the board of directors of the Memphis Center City Revenue Finance Corp. and serves as legal counsel to the Rise Foundation, Community L.I.F.T. and River City Capital Corp.

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 of Memphis. The Hooks Institute archives include Hooks' personal papers, which are housed in Special Collections.