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Hooks Institute Lecture Series Will Continue Feb. 17 in Memphis and Feb. 24 in Washington, D.C.

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For press information, contact [Curt Guenther](#), 901/678-2843 or Daphene R. McFerren, 901/678-3974

Twice this month, the University of Memphis' Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change will present the second of a three-part dual-lecture series, *Civil Rights and Social Justice: Past, Present and the Future*. The talk will be given Feb. 17 at the University of Memphis and again Feb. 24 in Washington, D.C., by Dr. D'Ann R. Penner, former director of the Hooks Institute and current Scholar in Residence at the Southern Institute for Education and Research at Tulane University.

Penner's speech Feb. 17 at the University of Memphis will begin at 7 p.m. at the Michael D. Rose Theatre. On Feb. 24 at 6 p.m. she will address members of Congress, their staffers, and the public at the Judiciary Committee Hearing Room, Rayburn House Office Building, in Washington, D.C.

Receptions, free and open to the public, will follow both lectures.

Penner will discuss her book *Overcoming Katrina: African American Voices from the Crescent City and Beyond*, which she co-authored with Dr. Keith C. Ferdinand. Winner of the 2009 Leadership-in-Journalism Award from the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust, *Overcoming Katrina* is based on more than 300 interviews conducted from 2005 to 2008.

Pre-Katrina New Orleans consisted of generations of African-Americans who were deeply loyal to New Orleans, in part because of its comparative freedom, hospitality, and prosperity that set it apart from the surrounding Southern towns and cities that enforced segregationist practices more rigidly. While modern New Orleans was no stranger to urban problems, generations of African-Americans nevertheless survived and thrived as a result of the neighborliness and spirituality of extended families and local communities.

These values and habits, according to Penner, guided the African-Americans who remained in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and who actively rescued and sustained the community's elderly, disabled, and most vulnerable during their week-long wait for food and medical supplies. The collective picture that emerges from these eyewitness accounts contrasts starkly with the media's negative portrayal of black New Orleanians as poor, violent and/or irresponsible.

Penner's lecture will also highlight the disparities in the treatment of the city's African-Americans of all economic and social backgrounds and the 20,000 white residents who did not evacuate. She will analyze the policy implications of the longest-lasting tragedy of Katrina's aftermath - the destruction of middle- and working-class African-American communities, notably Pontchartrain Park, the Lower Ninth Ward, and New Orleans East. The lessons offered by Katrina's survivors suggest safeguards for the rights, health, and dignity of all citizens in future domestic or international disasters, such as the ongoing crisis in Haiti.

Former president Jimmy Carter explained in his foreword to *Overcoming Katrina* why we must examine our nation's response to citizens of New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina: "These stories provide an opportunity for Americans to reflect on how we want to be viewed internationally for our treatment of the most vulnerable in our midst."

In 1996 University of Memphis officials received approval from the Tennessee Board of Regents to create the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of

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303 Administration Building
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Memphis. The mission of the Institute is to preserve the history of the American Civil Rights Movement and to advance the legacy of that movement through scholarship and community action. The Hooks Institute archives include Hooks' personal papers, which are housed in the Mississippi Valley Collection in the University's McWhorter Library.

Founded in 1912, the University of Memphis is a comprehensive metropolitan research university that is recognized nationally and internationally for its academic, research, and athletic programs. With more than 21,000 students, the U of M offers more than 254 areas of study for those seeking bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. It also offers the juris doctor (law) and education specialist degrees.