



THE BENJAMIN L.  
HOOKS INSTITUTE  
FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



## Newsletter

Fall 2015

### CONTENTS

**Director's Message**

**In the Spotlight**

**Program Highlights**

**Save the Date**



### Director's Message

*By Daphene R. McFerren*

The Charleston Shootings, excessive use of police force, marginalized communities that face limited educational and economic opportunities: the list of inequities that various communities in our nation face goes on and on and on... The fact that this "list" is from the headlines of 2015, rather than 1960s or before, shows that issues of race and class continue to permeate American life. While it is undeniable that our nation made great strides in civil rights during the 1960s, this decade, and the memorable leaders it produced, could not

remove vestiges of slavery and other inequalities woven into the fabric of our nation since its inception. This is where you and the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change come in. The question we must ask ourselves is, "what must we do, in this place, space, and time, to make our communities more just places for *all* people?" Providing meaningful, workable, and sustainable solutions to such questions requires hard work by our institutions and each of us.

The mission of the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis (U of M) is teaching, studying, and promoting civil rights and social change. We maximize our resources to obtain meaningful impact in the communities we serve.

Working with faculty members and students at the U of M, community leaders, and others, the Hooks Institute lecture series, conferences, publications, community programs, and documentaries help to create discussion and community engagement on issues that impact lives. Hooks Institute film productions like *Duty of the Hour*, a film on the life of Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks, and our upcoming film on civil and women's rights activist Ida B. Wells (1862-1931) chronicle how oppressive periods for African Americans and women in American history were slowly transformed through personal sacrifice and struggle of heroic individuals.

Launched in spring 2015, The Hooks Institute's African American Male Initiative (HAAMI), focuses on mentoring and coaching African American males at the U of M to increase their retention and graduation rates. The failure to develop, thus benefit from, their talents results in immeasurable losses to the economic, cultural, and civic fiber of our communities. HAAMI seeks to stem these losses by cultivating this talent.

The Hooks Institute continues to work with community partners to increase the swimming proficiency among minority youth: African American and Hispanic children have the highest drowning rates in the nation. Through publications, like the Hooks Institute's, A

*Continued on p. 2*

### Staff

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*Associate Director*

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# In the Spotlight



## Rorie Trammel:

*Hooks Institute  
Assistant Director*

Originally from Rochester, New York, Rorie Trammel came to Memphis to attend the University of Memphis, where she received a Bachelor of Business Administration and a Master's of Science in Education. Since then,

Trammel has been involved in the community, having served on the boards of the Memphis Urban League, Le Bonheur Center for Children & Parents, Partners in Public Education and Shelby Farms Park Conservancy. She has also been a volunteer reader for WYPL for several years.

Trammel is excited to be a member of the Institute staff at a time when the Institute is approaching its 20th anniversary, and moving forward on existing and new initiatives.

For additional commentary on Hooks Institute programs and contemporary issues of civil rights and social change, please visit the Hooks Institute Blog at

**[blogs.memphis.edu/benhooksinstitute](http://blogs.memphis.edu/benhooksinstitute).**

## William Love:

*Hooks  
Digitization*

Working with the Hooks Institute and the University of Memphis Preservation and Special Collections, William Love has been tasked with reviewing approximately 397 boxes of personal

papers donated by the late Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks (1925- 2010) in 1996 to the University of Memphis. Dr. Hooks was a native Memphian, a civil rights activist, the first African American Commissioner of the U.S. Federal Communications, and Executive Director of the NAACP.

Love, who began work on this project this summer, is formerly from Atlanta, GA, and is a PhD candidate in the Emory University Graduate Division of Education.

The digitization project will focus on selecting photographs, documents, or other materials that are the most historically significant. The digitized materials will be featured on a University of Memphis website, thus making this collection accessible to scholars and the general public around the world.



*Director's message, continued from p. 1*

*Call for Collective Action: Tackling Social Challenges in Memphis* (2014), U of M faculty proposed policy changes to create positive educational, economic, and other outcomes for community members. If the number of persons with Associate and Bachelor's degrees increased exponentially, the economic impact would be in the billions for Memphis and the State of Tennessee. This demonstrates that everyone has a stake in the success of others, especially minorities and the poor who are often marginalized and face limited opportunities.

Finally, the Hooks Institute and the Office of the Provost have been tasked by the president of the U of M to lead an initiative, called *Critical Conversations*. The goal of the

*Critical Conversations* is to use the collective scholarship of the university to sustain and facilitate a democratic civil society that values diversity, civil rights, human rights, and nonviolent movements and initiatives. If we, as a nation, are to move closer to the goal of ensuring life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for *all* people, meaningful dialogue on effective and responsible policing in minority communities, gender equality, and removing racial, economic, and other disparities must take place among ourselves, in the halls of government, and in political, civic, and other forums. The Hooks Institute's mission of teaching, studying, and promoting civil rights and social change advances that goal. We encourage you to add your voice to these efforts.

# Program Highlights



The goal of the Hooks African American Male Initiative (HAAMI) is to increase academic, personal, and career success among African American males attending the U of M, by positively impacting their retention and graduation rates. In monthly group sessions, HAAMI participants learn from university faculty and staff as well as business leaders. Session presentations include topics such as: university

support resources, mental health, student loan debt, internship, professional etiquette, and job readiness. Mentoring and individual coaching are additional components of HAAMI. Enrollment in HAAMI takes place at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. For information on how to enroll in HAAMI or how you might support this initiative, please contact the Hooks Institute at [bhi@memphis.edu](mailto:bhi@memphis.edu) or (901) 678-2769.



IDA B. WELLS.

The Hooks Institute is excited to begin production on its next feature length documentary film following the Memphis experience of Ida B. Wells (1862-1931). The lynching of Thomas Moss, Clint McDowell, and Will Stewart on March 9, 1892, by a gang of whites, fueled Wells' rage to organize a national and international campaign to tackle the brutal practice of lynching of African Americans. This film will examine how the cultural, social, and political conditions of Memphis in the late 19th century shaped Wells' activism later in life. The Hooks Institute gratefully acknowledges Tennessee Humanities and FedEx for their contributions to this production.

*Critical Conversations* is an initiative of the University of Memphis led by the Office of the Provost and the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change. The goal of Critical Conversations is to use the collective scholarship of the University of Memphis to sustain and facilitate a

democratic civil society that values diversity, civil rights, human rights, and nonviolent movements and initiatives. Panel discussions, lunches, and film screenings intend to facilitate discussions on topics including the police and minorities, marriage equality, sexual assault on college campuses, and civil and human rights issues facing our nation and the world.



## Did You Know?

*The Hooks Institute relies on grants and donated dollars to fund its programs. We need you to help us in our efforts to bring quality programs to the communities we serve. Donations may be made online at [memphis.edu/benhooks](http://memphis.edu/benhooks). The [MAKE A GIFT](#) button is on the left side of the page. Alternatively, you can contact the Hooks Institute at [bhi@memphis.edu](mailto:bhi@memphis.edu) or (901) 678-3974 for assistance. All donations are appreciated!*





The Benjamin L. Hooks  
Institute for Social Change  
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A Tennessee Board of Regents Institution. An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action University.

## SAVE THE DATE

Lecture by Douglas  
Blackmon on his Pulitzer  
Prize-winning book, *Slavery  
by Another Name*

November 19, 5:30pm reception,  
6:00pm lecture followed by book  
signing

University of Memphis, Michael D. Rose Theatre



National Book Award  
Winner Lecture

Congratulations! Peniel E. Joseph, PhD  
was awarded the Hooks Institute's  
National Book Award for *Stokely: A Life*,  
a biography on Stokely Carmichael.

Lecture: February 11, 2015, 11 to 12:30  
pm. University Center River Room (UC 300)

Lunch: courtesy of the Hooks Institute



*Events are free open to the public unless otherwise stated.*

THE BENJAMIN L. HOOKS  
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE  
ANNUAL GALA

**Empowering • Supporting • Celebrating  
African American Men**



**Triumph through Perseverance**

**April 21, 2016, 7 pm to 10 pm**

This is a ticketed event.  
Please check our website for updates.