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Tupelo Pride 2019 Exhibit

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Tupelo Pride 2019 Exhibit

Summary of files available as “Additional Downloads”

The Invisible Histories Project-Mississippi launched during Tupelo Pride 2019's opening event at the Link Centre.

IHP-MS had an information table with two pop-up exhibits: 1) a selection of record covers from the collection of DJ Prince Charles (Charles Smith), now housed in the University of Mississippi Libraries Archives and Special Collections, and 2) a selection of "ethno-poems", curated by students of Dr. Jessica Wilkerson's Oral History of Southern Social Movements class (S ST 560).



Photos from Tupelo Pride 2019

Files (L to R) Photo of advocacy tables; Photo of stickers for sale; Photo of archival material, IHP exhibit at Tupelo Pride 2019

Record Exhibit: DJ Prince Charles

DJ Prince Charles Collection

These LPs are from the “DJ Prince Charles” collection in Archives and Special Collections at the University of Mississippi. The collection is part of Invisible Histories Project – Mississippi. The Prince Charles collection consists of 864 vinyl dance tracks and remixes, pop singles, and full-length albums from the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s that belonged to Charles Smith, a record aficionado and DJ from Booneville, Mississippi.

Smith set the soundtrack for queer life in Mississippi. He spun records at the short-lived venue in rural Palmetto called “Cow Patties,” a bare bones building that sat in the middle of roaming cows; Crossroads in Columbus, O’Hara’s in Shannon, and then Rumors in Shannon, Mississippi. When Rumors first opened, Smith’s Technics turntables and Coffin—a padded transportable case that holds turntables and mixers—were permanent fixtures of the bar. Rick Gladish describes Smith as someone who took great pride in his role as a DJ and in his records. Smith favored remixes of 70s and 80s dance tracks, but he also purchased Top 40 hits for the drag shows. Smith took great care of his collection and insisted that others do the same. The records in this collection are in superb condition.



Files (L to R) Description of DJ Prince Charles LP Collection; Photo of Record Exhibit; Photo of Hooper Schultz and Maddie Shappley



Files (L to R) Photo of Eric "Godiva" White; Photo of Eric "Godiva" White, close up; Photo of Eric "Godiva" White and Maddie Shappley; Photo of Imogen Azzengruber



Files (L to R) Photo of guests viewing exhibit; Photo of attendee, Amy McDowell, Maddie Shappley, Hooper Schultz; Photo of Maddie Shappley, Amy McDowell, Jessie Wilkerson, Hooper Schultz

Invisible Histories Project-Mississippi Launched during Tupelo Pride, 2019

On October 11, 2019, the Invisible Histories Project-Mississippi (IHP-MS) launched at Tupelo Pride's opening event, held at the Link Centre. The mission of IHP-MS is to document and preserve the history of LGBTQ Mississippians. Co-project directors Amy McDowell (sociology) and I, and graduate assistants Maddie Shappley (sociology) and Hooper Schultz (Southern Studies) were joined by Joshua Burford and Maigen Sullivan, the directors of the first and primary IHP site in Alabama. Students from McDowell's and my graduate seminars in sociology and Southern Studies also attended.

The Tupelo Pride organizers gave the IHP-MS team the opportunity to spread the word about the project and invite people to participate. We had an information table and two pop-up exhibits. One exhibit showcased a selection of record covers from the collection of Charles Smith, known as DJ Prince Charles, a record aficionado who provided the soundtrack to several gay bars in North Mississippi in the 1990s and early 2000s. His record collection is now housed in Archives and Special Collections at the University of Mississippi. For the second exhibit, Shappley and Schultz curated "ethno-poems" from oral history interviews that they completed as part of the Queer Mississippi Oral History Project, directed by McDowell and me. The main event was a drag show, featuring local performers and emceed by GoDiva Holliday, who was also interviewed for the oral history project.

The following day the IHP-MS team attended the second annual Tupelo Pride Festival at Fairpark

in downtown Tupelo. Many people stopped by the table to see the archival documents—magazines, photographs, newsletters, and memorabilia—on exhibit and to discuss donating materials or recording an oral history interview. On Sunday, McDowell and I wrapped up the IHP-MS launch at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford, where we were invited to speak about the project's mission and goals.

With funding from a Mellon grant and in collaboration with IHP directors Joshua Burford and Maigen Sullivan, we founded IHP-MS in April 2019. With support from the Isom Center, Archives and Special Collections, and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture (which has included the project in its Future of the South Initiative), IHP-MS

hopes to expand the reach of the project. If you are interested in learning more about the project or possibly donating manuscript collections or print materials, please contact Jessie Wilkerson (jcwilker@olemiss.edu).

IHP-MS will be hosting a one-day symposium, "LGBTQ+ Activism and Advocacy in Mississippi," on the campus of the University of Mississippi on Thursday, April 30, 3:00–5:00 p.m. At the event, cohosted with the Isom Center and part of the Oxford Pride schedule, we will hear from advocates and activists about their work to make Mississippi a more welcoming, safer, and fairer state for LGBTQ+ people. Check the Center's website for more information.

Jessie Wilkerson



(Left to right): Maddie Shappley, Amy McDowell, Jessie Wilkerson, and Hooper Schultz, at the Tupelo Pride drag show, where they exhibited a record collection and oral history interviews from the Invisible Histories Project-Mississippi.



File: Photo of Hooper Schultz, Maddie Shappley, and Moe Bristow

Ethnopoems: compiled by Maddie Shappley

The Future for Mississippi *Compiled by Maddie Shappley*

When I met Lena Conwill early in August, she brought smoothies. Upon meeting, I felt as though I had been friends with her my entire life. Her robust laugh filled the air as we sat down on two black futon chairs. I listened carefully as Lena shared her life story. As the interview wrapped up, I asked Lena what she wants to see in the future for Mississippi and the LGBTQ community.

You know what I would like to see.

[mutual laughter]

I would like the state to look like

The Coffee House.

Where we all figure out there's
a place for us.

And as long as-you don't try
to take another
person's place, [pause] from them,

It
will
be
alright.

But we have not done that.
We have continued to believe the lie.

The first time I dressed up in drag *Compiled by Maddie Shappley*

When I met Eric "GoDiva" White in the Link Centre parking lot, he was carefree and making big plans for Tupelo. We roamed the halls chatting until we found a room fit for the interview. Eric shared moments that led him to GoDiva and Rumors bar. Here he shares a story from his childhood when he first dressed up in drag for Halloween.

I would always dress up in drag.
The first time I got in drag,
I was eight years old and I asked my mom,
"Can I please dress up as a woman for Halloween?"
And she was like, "sure."

So she let me [pause]
wear her little blue suede shoes—and [pause]
I wore pantyhose and—. I would have killed my dad—. I wore a skirt.

I worked this robe looking top with a tie
and then a T-shirt on my head for hair.
This blue eyeshadow
and her lipstick
and all that stuff.

I'd get in trouble all the time playing in her makeup,

But I was eight years old.
We went trick or treating,
and when we had to go to the preacher's house,
I was supposed to pretend like I was Moses.
So that's what I did.

[laughter]
He'd open the door,
I was on my knees in front of him,
with praying hands.
I was really like—
"Please don't recognize me as a girl right now."

I had a scarf,
tied around my head.

I remember it like it was yesterday.

Ethnopoems: compiled by Hooper Schultz

Firm Believer

Compiled by Hooper Schultz

PJ Newton and I sat in her living room as the blue glare of the TV screen-saver bounced around the corners of its box. PJ took a deep breath, looking at me every so often, but for the most part she gazed into the distance.

I did grow up attending church every Sunday.

And I'm just a firm believer in
you know
worshipping Jesus Christ.

I do. I do believe in Him.

I read my Bible and I pray every day.

I'm just a gay Christian.

So not really any different.

Just my lifestyle
my sexual preference
and partners

are the only thing that
pretty much

sets me apart from everybody else.

And that's really all
about it all
just what it's about.

Just people just need to be themselves.

I think that whatever you want to — you dream

and whatever you want to be — you should

try to achieve that

and not let anybody stand in your way.
I haven't.

I fought for years
and years
and years.

Every chance I got
to try to be better.

What's Going to Happen to Me?

Compiled by Hooper Schultz

Star Newsom and I sat at a large wooden table at the Lee County library. She talked for a long time, and we laughed a lot — about family, life, first kisses, and coming to terms with who we are. Although she could laugh about these things now, none of them had been uncomplicated.

My coming out was a long drawn out process
over many years and many different layers —
— before I finally just got to the point and said:
"I'm done."

You know, this is it.
Once and for all.
This is who I am.

Deal with it or move on.

But my fear for so long was the fear of rejection.

You know of being kicked out of a group.
Being kicked out of the family.
Being kicked out of a job.
Being kicked out of where I lived.

Which were very —
— are still real things today
but even more so
during that coming out time for me.

And once again
there were no role models.
There was nothing being shown anywhere
about this process.

Did we know Elton John was gay? Yeah.
But he didn't talk about it.

Did we know Melissa Etheridge was gay? Yeah.
She didn't talk about it.

ELLEN.

I mean all those things.
It was like
the secret society
that
we knew.

But if they can't come out and say it,
then I sure can't.

Because they've got money
and wealth
and power.

You know, what's going to happen to me?