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Third Annual Racial Reconciliation Week Set for Sept. 7-12 at UM

Events include 'Lunch and Learn' with Ross Bjork and Derrick Evans, Will Campbell Plaza dedication

AUGUST 28, 2015 BY JESSICA POOLE



William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi Department of Athletics and the university’s William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation are sponsoring a slate of activities for the third annual Racial Reconciliation Week, which runs Tuesday through Saturday (Sept. 7-12).

Entering its third year, Racial Reconciliation Week is dedicated to promoting racial equality and encouraging dialogue throughout campus and the Oxford-Lafayette County community. The observance is critical to helping the university meet its core mission goals, Acting Chancellor Morris Stocks said.

“The University of Mississippi is committed to promoting diversity and creating an inclusive community on the Ole Miss campus,” Stocks

said. “It is our hope that this partnership between the William Winter Institute and Ole Miss athletics will shine a spotlight on diversity issues and bring our community together to fight for racial equality and help end discrimination.”

Ole Miss Athletics Director Ross Bjork and outgoing Chancellor Dan Jones were recently recognized as the first recipients of the NCAA’s Champions of Diversity and Inclusion award for their efforts in spearheading Racial Reconciliation Week. The award recognizes the work of those in athletics to create opportunities for people in underrepresented populations to advance into senior leadership positions, demonstrate longevity or consistency in their support, or initiate or coordinate cultural change in an athletics department or at an NCAA member school in matters related to college sports.

“Athletics is proud to partner with the William Winter Institute and host Racial Reconciliation Week as a testament that we should strive to create as much harmony in the world as we possibly can,” Bjork said. “In the spirit of Gov. Winter, we must continue the fight against injustices that we see around the world and utilizing the platform of athletics, we can showcase that there is still work to be done, but we are moving in the right direction each and every day.”

Highlights from the week’s programming include a “Lunch and Learn” session with Bjork, who will discuss the background of Racial Reconciliation Week, the athletics department’s relationship with the William Winter Institute and recognition of diversity efforts by the NCAA. A screening of the documentary “Come Hell or High Water: The Battle of Turkey Creek,” and a “Lunch and Learn” with producer Derrick Evans also is planned.

Additionally, a panel will examine diversity in athletics, and the Winter Institute will dedicate Will Campbell Plaza. The observance will conclude Saturday (Sept. 12) with in-game recognition of Racial Reconciliation Week at the Ole Miss vs. Fresno State football game, where the Nathaniel Northington Groundbreaker in Athletics Award will be presented.

“It is our daily mission to provide leadership, serve others and embrace all members of society, regardless of their background or differences,” Bjork said. “As the flagship university of the state of Mississippi, we are humbled we can give back in a meaningful way.”

Racial Reconciliation week will kick off in earnest Tuesday, following the Labor Day holiday. Tuesday’s events feature the “Lunch and Learn” with Bjork from noon to 1 p.m. at the Grill at 1810. The day’s activities conclude with the showing of “Come Hell or High Water: The Battle of Turkey Creek” at 7 p.m.

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children’s play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith’s Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school’s first African-American student.

at Luckyday Residential College. The movie documents the painful, but inspiring, journey of Derrick Evans, a Boston teacher who moved home to coastal Mississippi when the graves of his ancestors were bulldozed to make way for the sprawling city of Gulfport. Over the course of a decade, Evans and his neighbors stood up to powerful corporate interests and politicians, and faced Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill in their struggle for self-determination and environmental justice.

On Wednesday, producer Evans will conduct a “Lunch and Learn: from noon to 1 p.m. in Bryant Hall.

At 7 p.m., a panel examines diversity in athletics in Overby Auditorium. The panel will feature several former Ole Miss student-athletes and Nathaniel Northington, the first African-American football player in the SEC. Northington broke the color barrier by becoming the first African-American to play any SEC sport when the University of Kentucky played Ole Miss in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1967. The author of “Still Running,” Northington received the inaugural Groundbreaker in Athletics award in 2013.

“I am thrilled about the 2015 Racial Reconciliation Week events,” said Jennifer Saxon, assistant athletics director for student-athlete development. “We have expanded our on-campus partnerships to include student housing, fraternity and sorority life, and the Center for Inclusion and Cross Cultural Engagement. We have worked with our campus partners to provide educational opportunities, for not only our students, but also faculty, staff and our stakeholders. We are proud of the work that has been done thus far and believe that the programs will be positive, not only for the University of Mississippi, but (for) the Oxford and Lafayette communities.”

Friday’s activities feature the dedication of the Will Campbell Plaza outside Paris-Yates Chapel. The week’s events conclude Saturday with the Ole Miss vs. Fresno State football game at 2:30 p.m., featuring in-game recognition of Racial Reconciliation Week.

In addition to the dedication of the Will Campbell Plaza, the William Winter Institute will present two awards during the week: the Florence Mars and Betty Pearson Commitment to the Movement award and the James Meredith Youth Activism Award.

Al Butler, a Washington, D.C., native who died in February 2012 at age 82, was a U.S. Marshal during the 1950s and ’60s. He served at the university during and after the riots surrounding the enrollment of James Meredith in 1962 and helped protect the four young girls who, in 1960, integrated two of New Orleans’ public schools. Butler will be awarded the Florence Mars and Betty Pearson Commitment to the Movement award, while Robert Wilson Jr., a senior at Greenwood High School, will receive the James Meredith Youth Activism award.

In 2013, Wilson attended the Winter Institute’s Summer Youth Institute, where youths develop a project based on needs in their home communities. While at the institute, Wilson conceived Youth for Change, which promotes positive change by educating Greenwood’s youth about things they don’t encounter in class, such as anti-bullying, civil rights history and sex education.

“Gov. Winter loves to recognize those who help the cause of civil rights, young and old,” said **Susan M. Glisson**, Winter Institute executive director, referring to the former Mississippi governor, who turned 92 in February. “We’re humbled to honor what Al Butler did in the past, and what Robert Wilson is doing now for the future of Mississippi. And how lucky are we to do so with Ross Bjork and the Ole Miss athletic department during Racial Reconciliation Week”

The Winter Institute works in communities and classrooms in Mississippi and beyond to support a movement of racial equity and wholeness as a pathway to ending and transcending all discrimination based on differences.

The week’s full schedule includes:

Tuesday (Sept. 8)

– “Lunch and Learn” featuring Athletics Director Ross Bjork, noon at the Grill at 1810

– Screening of “Come Hell or High Water: The Battle of Turkey Creek,” 7 p.m. at the Luckyday Residential College

Wednesday (Sept. 9)

– “Lunch and Learn” featuring producer Derrick Evans, noon at Bryant Hall

Thursday (Sept. 10)

– Panel on Diversity in Athletics, 7 p.m. in Overby Auditorium

Friday (Sept. 11)

– Will Campbell Plaza Dedication, 2 p.m. on the plaza outside Paris-Yates Chapel

Saturday (Sept. 12)

– Ole Miss vs. Fresno State football game, 2:30 p.m. at Vaught-Hemingway Stadium

“James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier,” a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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