



# Delta Studies Center

Arkansas State University

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## THE SLAVE

By: Leonard T. Smith



Leonard T. Smith

Mr. Smith is a Senior Elementary Education Major from Hazen, Arkansas who will graduate in December 2000 .

A dream of his is to one day publish a book of his own personal poetry.

### THE SLAVE

In the mind of the slave I was only a vision.  
 He had me planned with perfect precision.  
 When I look at him, we see one another and stare.  
 Now my days are so much brighter, he feels the glare.  
 I reach out and try to pull him up to me.  
 But something holds him down, education maybe.  
 To him I was a dream or maybe his king.  
 The Lord gave us both songs to sing.  
 Even more reason for my light to shine on.  
 To me he's a nightmare of terror unknown.  
 He pushes me and never lets me slow down.  
 I'll never stop fighting or get chained to the ground.  
 I keep his blood with me, drink it from a cup.  
 I'll carry him on my shoulders and make him rise up.  
 He had the heart of an eagle and now I can fly.  
 With the two of us together his seed will never die.  
 The slave had nothing to show, I have everything to flaunt.  
 He took what he was given, I take what I want.  
 I will revenge the slave, and feel no remorse.  
 He was never taught, now I teach the course.  
 The slave and I are the same, you ask how could that be.  
 Because I am what he was and he is a part of me!



### Inside this issue:

<i>Improving Roads In Arkansas</i> By: Pat Snodgrass	2
<i>New Age Trailblazers</i> By: Richard Brewer	3
<i>Delta Compact Summit</i> Christine Perry Mckenley	4
<i>Delta Listening Sessions</i> <i>A March On Washington</i>	5
<i>A Message From The Center</i> By: Peggy R. Wright	5

## Celebrating Black History Month

By: Parice Tyler

February, Arkansas State University celebrated Black History Month 2000. Many activities were planned to celebrate the great achievements of African-Americans throughout America's history. This year's theme was "A Celebration of Our Story in the New Millennium."

Many organizations and departments sponsored events to help students understand black history and their history at ASU. Some of the events

included: Lecture Series: Guest Speaker-Judge L.T. Simes II, 1st Judicial Circuit Judge, African-American Experiences at ASU, First Annual Black History Month Marade (march/parade), a Gospel Concert, "Eyes On The Prize" movie nights sponsored by the Delta Studies Center, and more."

This month is not just for African-Americans because it is Black History Month. This is a chance for all cultures to

know what African-Americans had to struggle throughout their existence in the United States and here at Arkansas State," stated by Parice S. Tyler, Coordinator of Minority Affairs.

A committee composed of students, faculty, and staff was established in November 1999 to form a calendar of events for the month-long celebration.

### Think About It!

Heroes are the people who do what has to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.



# The Biggest On-Going Improvement Needed For the Arkansas Delta

By: Pat Snodgrass

In my experiences traveling around the Arkansas Delta, I have been fortunate enough to interview many interesting people, but they all have asked the same question. What will help the everyday life in the Delta? When I was reminded that I should be submitting an article for the newsletter, I started thinking about what they said, and I have to admit I agree with them a 100%.

We all know that we need to have better training and more technology in the hands of the current and future generations of workers. We know that we all need to work on better housing, and better relationships among the people and the things that all the politicians promise us every time there is an election. And we all agree, but some how we have forgotten. After the counting of votes and promises that were made, what are we doing to improve the every day life in the Delta?

I got to remembering, when traveling with my father John P. Snodgrass, Jr. salesman for O'Bannon Bros., a General Electric Supply and Hardware Company, out of Little Rock, all the dirt, rough and narrow roads. Now remember that this was back in the early forties and late fifties. We traveled all over the southeast and eastern part of Arkansas and sometimes went as far northwest as Fort Smith and Fayetteville, way up in Washington County. Then next week we might be in southwest Texarkana.

We had the same problem then as we face today; good and dependable roads. Now, don't misunderstand me. I would be the first to praise the work that has been done in some areas. But one of the biggest problem that Dr. Grady Cullum, a country doctor from Hughes, Arkansas, reflected on during our interview

about his early childhood in the Hughes area, was lack of highways in the back rural areas. Then one afternoon he saw the highway, in front of his house become a part of 'black asphalt river of transportation'. Now just think the buses, if there are enough, will be able to get into the areas where the kids were not

able to walk out. Time frame – would you believe in the fifties and still exist today.

Mr. Clarence Cornish, of Leachville, Arkansas, tells of the time that the crops of his neighbors would ruin because they couldn't move equipment from one field to another, sales of crops missed because the rain-washed out the 'new gravel' road. Willie Fears, West Helena, Arkansas, tells of his neighbors sharing two tractors for the community and not being able to move from field to field because of washed out roads. Hey, I am not talking about twenty years ago; I am referring to as little as three years ago.

In studying for my degree in Public Administration, I've learned of the many ways that monies could be 'found', utilized, redirected, changing of priorities or whatever you want to call it, but how do you change human nature when they won't help each other with a common

problem. I understand that money buys changes, big helps big so they will be able to help the 'little guy' but I contend that we have got to do something with the 'back roads' of the Arkansas Delta before the workers we are trying to train, the

companies that want to build new housing, the major companies that will be the future of the Delta, will ever look hard at coming to the South. We have shown that we know how to bring industry to the areas, but we can't keep them. Railroads are restricted to laid tracks, rivers only go where there are flowing 'deep'



Pat Snodgrass  
Oral History Interviewer  
Delta Studies Center

water for barges. Good roads go where 'man' puts them.

Now stop and think of the time and effort that goes in producing a road, and it is not an easy or short process. There has to be studies of the need, the type of soil, the base needed to support the type of traffic that might use the new road. Now let's talk money. Surely it will be there, right? No, the funds

have to be found. All the taxes that we pay are directed to specific projects. Then the money has to go through an appropriation

process. It has to be budgeted, it has to be approved and then and only then can contracts be let for the work. And after a period of studying the project, the bids and the materials that have been checked for specifications, can the first dirt be turned. This is not only frustrating to the people wanting the road improvement, but the people also submitting the work. The county Judges live under the gun of doing the most popular thing for the people of their communities. The state representatives live on the edge of the next election in doing the right thing for their people. And needless to say, not all of the people are happy about the final location, it could have been closer, it could have been wider, not so many curves, not as many blind turns and of course always smoother. And let's not talk about the repair crews that are tearing up the 'wrong' places.

Right now there is major legislature working on improving US 412, US 67, US 40 and many other major highways. And these things are important to the people of the communities and to the state. But have you heard anybody talking about paving Country road CR 363 in Craighead /Mississippi County where you can't get from one town to another when it rains. Redoing JK 407, where road crumbles each time it rains and equipment falls in the creek over by Grubbs? All we ask is for the officials to look at the problem as a long time improvement for the Delta. Many of the jobs that are being brought into the areas, people can't get

*"We had the same problems then as we face today, good and dependable roads."*

# The Biggest On-Going Improvement continued

to, on bad weather days. This point was brought out at the Delta Compact Summit meeting recently held in Clarksdale, Mississippi. We have had more snow days on record, or ice days in the last twenty years than anybody can recall. Yes, there was a big freeze and the Mississippi did freeze up, but not for the long duration that we are now experiencing.



Rural Road found in St. Francis County South of Madison, AR

Yes, Alice and Ralph, there is a better Delta! But we need to sit down with our elected officials and let them know that we support their programs. And that we have a few that we would like to bring to the table, not just sit at home and badmouth the 'big politicians.' And it is when we all sit down and begin working together, not just talk about working together, that the every day improvements of the rural area will begin to happen.

Yes, I know that the votes and the jobs are moving to the cities, but the future of the Delta is still in the rural area. And we need to face the fact that we've got to improve the way that you get to go see your Aunt Sarah over in St. Francis county from Wynne without traveling sixty miles out of the way. We can for once take that old tree

covered county road that your grandmother traveled, remember some of those old happy days the stories she told you about when you were younger. Please make sure that you tell your grandchildren so we can all share in the beautiful part of the South. And yes, I travel as many of the gravel roads as I dare, for they still have trees, the birds, and occasionally a opossum if it hasn't become a 'Frisbee' from some eighteen-wheeler.

Hang in there, Alice and Ralph; with your help and support, we are going to get it done! Get out there and let the world know that you care and you want to help not just ridicule. You want to make major contributions, because you care about the Delta and you want your children to care.

## New Age Trailblazers

By: Richard Brewer

Crowley's Ridge is a fascinating natural phenomenon that arises from an otherwise flat delta region in eastern Arkansas. The primary objective of the Crowley's Ridge Hiking and Biking Trail Project is to research and discover trails along this forested ridge to eventually be linked with other trails in the Mississippi delta region, including the Crowley's Ridge Scenic Byway.

The focus of the first phases of this project involved research to determine the present site of the Crowley's Ridge Old Military Road. Most people do not know that this trail, constructed in the 1830s for mail delivery, Indian migration, and later for troop movement during the Civil War, stretches from the Chalk Bluff battle site in northeastern Arkansas to Helena, a span of eight counties and almost 170 miles. After two visits to the Arkansas Historical Commission in Little Rock, dozens of hours searching through literary aids and websites, and initial scouting of every county along the ridge, GPS (global positioning system) interpretation and mapping and video-

*"The primary objective of the Crowley's Ridge Hiking and Biking Trail Project is to research and discover trails along this forested ridge...."*

graphy/photography of the proposed trail was conducted (where on one occasion I was stalked by a howling carnivore and on another I became lost for two hours along the beautiful-but lonely-Village Creek State Park walking trail).

We are now among the final stages of the project. Mapping of the trail will soon be completed, and our new GIS

(geographic information systems) software will prove to be a helpful tool for the mapping process. Future phases include the research and testing of the ecological impact of the proposed trail and a final look at the feasibility of the trail.

With the usage of modern geographic tools, the search of data, and the pursuit of the goal to improve and better appreciate our beautiful and serene lands, the Delta Studies Center has strengthened the student body of A.S.U. with this internship and its plans for the future.



Richard Brewer, Student Assistant  
Delta Studies Center  
Hiking & Biking Trail Project



The Old Military Road that goes through the St. Francis National Forrest in Phillips County



The Old Military Road that goes through the St. Francis National Forrest in Lee County

# Delta Compact Summit Summary

By: Christine Perry McKenley

The March Delta Compact Summit was hosted by the Coahoma Community College in Clarksdale, Mississippi. The Community College itself is situated in the middle of rich farmland. It was a great place to hold the meeting, right in the middle of one of the Delta's most precious commodities it's farmland. As I prepared myself to attend the second day of the Delta Compact, I could not help but stare out at the farmland located across the street from the College. This land had recently been prepared for planting and soon there will be budding plants of soybean, rice, and cotton to look at all across this Mississippi Delta. In my heart, I was hoping the same thing would begin to happen in this Delta Compact Summit meeting. I was hopeful that seeds would be planted and watered at this meeting, so that the next time the Compact met for a Summit the evidence of a little growth could be seen. I was wondering could this happen? Will it really go from the talking, and initial planning stages, to the actual planting and watering phases? No one knew, for we all came to that meeting with our own ideas, our own agendas, and it was up to this little group of people to begin adopting, plowing, and preparing the Delta Compact for the upcoming futurist growth we all hope to see. Could this be accomplished?

The meeting began with the supplying of ideas and questions during this day of deliberations. Many of the speeches were situated around what that particular person thought should be addressed by the Delta Compact. There were quite a few people in attendance and some were there to listen and some were there to share, but one thing that I felt was accomplished was the developing of ideas and concepts that could catapult this Compact into a working, moderating group of hard-working individuals. Here are some of the ideas shared at this meeting.

- Better early Childhood Education and Development
- Developing a passion for the Delta, loving it beyond measure.
- Being commendable to those who work closely in the grass root communities in the Delta.

- Support each other in the work that we all do.
- Having a major attitude Shift.
- Making jobs a top priority.
- Put more emphasis on the future of the Delta, it's children.
- Begin to bring the American Dream to the Delta.
- Work together, because this is our home. Make it a place that people would want to come back to after college!

Does this sound familiar. Many of you are probably saying "YES, I have heard that a million times, but have never seen the change." We have all suggested these changes, but before change can occur people need to stop talking and start working. The seeds need to be planted, watered, and cultivated before any major change can occur. Once this is done, we will start to see the fruits of our labor rise when the Delta evolves from a poverty-stricken area to a full grown field of opportunity. I should stress that there are many people who are out there doing this, but what has failed is more cooperation. That is one of the issues the Delta Compact needs to focus on, more cooperation. Stop the dog and pony shows and just get out there and work together. Many people in grass roots communities

are planting seeds, only to have someone in a higher position to stop or slow them down. This doesn't bring about change it just slows the process down to a slow grinding halt.

Cooperation is suppose to be the very center of

what the Delta Compact stands for, and it wasn't surprising when cooperation became another central theme in this meeting. We all know the Delta Compact was built on the cooperation/partnership concept, but I think that people are now starting to get more of an idea of what that really means. They are starting to try and jell themselves together with a com-



Delta Compact Summit meeting, March 14, 2000  
Coahoma Community College  
Clarksdale, Mississippi

mon vision and shared efforts to attain the ultimate reward, a prosperous Mississippi Delta.

In closing, I would like to mention what the Former Governor of Mississippi, William Winter's said in his opening statements..."everyone needs access to these five basic wants: a basic education, a decent house in a safe neighborhood, access to good healthcare, to be

treated with respect, and a job that will support their family". These wants should be emphasized in every Delta Compact meeting, for they are the basic needs the Delta Compact should see accomplished in this Region. It needs to help the people of the Delta attain these basic five

*"everyone needs access to these five basic wants: a basic education, a decent house in a safe neighborhood, access to good healthcare, to be treated with respect, and a job that will support their family"*

wants. Once this is accomplished, you will begin to see a shift in attitudes. Attitudes will begin to change because, for once in their lives, the people of the Delta will have back their hope for life and their American Dream. They will finally be able to stand on their own two feet, and create their own change. It will no longer be about what the government, or the Delta Compact can do but it will be about what they can do. You are empowering them to bring about their own changes, and this will in turn register in the children. And I think we all understand that when generations of children are raised with a sense of hope and empowerment there will be no boundaries as to where the Delta can go!



# Delta Vision, Delta Voices: Mississippi Delta Beyond 2000



Delta Listening Session, Baton Rouge, LA  
October 1999



Rodney Slater, U.S. Secretary of Transportation speaks with a Reporter in Baton Rouge, LA

## Delta Vision, Delta Voices: Mississippi Delta Beyond 2000, A National Conference

May 10 - 11, 2000

This meeting will be held at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, VA, with the opening address by Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater.

President Clinton will host a reception at the White House for attendees on Wednesday evening.

For more information concerning this meeting you may check out our website at: <http://www.clt.astate.edu/dsc/> or



This map can be found on the <http://www.dot.gov/delta/> website.

## A Message From The Center

By: Peggy Robinson Wright

Things have been moving fast at the Center in the last few months.

Identification and mapping of the Old Military Road and of a Hiking and Biking Trail along Crowley's Ridge has been an exciting adventure. Student Interns, Richard Brewer and Lenka Soukupova' have done a tremendous job and as we approach the end of this project, we look forward to other student projects. A few are already in the works.

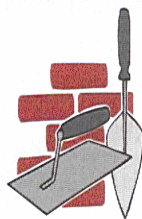
Our biggest accomplishment has been the receipt of a \$175,000 grant from the Ford Foundation for 18 months to promote Delta Tourism. Visits by the Foundation are scheduled in May and June to the Delta Studies Center to talk about this grant but also future funding. A highlight of the May visit will be a visit by a team of representatives from the Angiang University, Vietnam. They wanted to visit some colleges/universities that were representative of institutions that were committed to community development activities. We are very honored to be chosen as one of those sites.

Members of the DSC Team will also be attending the Delta Conference, May 10-11, 2000 in Arlington, VA. In its effort to

continue documenting significant events occurring that affect the Delta Region, members will audio/video the conference for the DSC Archives.

We appreciate the support of the administration and look forward to other opportunities that await us.

*"When it comes to getting things done, we need fewer architects and more bricklayers."*



*Colleen C. Barret*

*"Our biggest accomplishment has been the receipt of a \$175,000 grant from the Ford Foundation for 18 months to promote Delta Tourism."*

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