

# THE DELTA MEDIA PROJECT

"Preserving Yesterday With  
Today's Technology"

**Prospectus**  
January 2008

**"Bright Moments"**

Presented By:  
The Delta Media Project  
[www.DeltaMediaProject.com](http://www.DeltaMediaProject.com)

## THE MISSION

**The Delta Media Project** is a nonprofit organization that is committed to presenting original photographs, video presentations and audio recordings that contribute to a greater awareness and understanding of the daily life and Blues tradition in the Delta region of Mississippi. Through the use of digital technology that employs various Internet platforms, digital technology precepts and new media stages we archive existing material and create original content that explores one of the richest evolving cultural traditions in the global community.

## THE VISION

**The Delta Media Project** is poised to become the number one digital repository of Mississippi Delta related media in the world. Through our efforts, we will enhance global awareness of The Delta and its impact on the socioeconomic landscape of African American and American history and culture as a whole.

We shall continue to further collaborations with Mississippi elementary, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions in addition to Delta government and community organizations. This inclusiveness shall remain a major consideration in all DMP endeavors, for it insures an accurate depiction of The Delta through the eyes and voices of The Delta and its people.

**The Delta Media Project** will provide a definitive, one-stop, databank for students, researchers and scholars in all aspects of Delta history and culture while providing an opportunity for participatory action research for anyone wishing to share such content.

## Inside The Delta

The Delta is one of the pivotal regions of the United States reflecting both the Old South, where white supremacy was and remains to a lesser extent a coveted value, and the New South where forces of racial tolerance and greater economic equality are gaining increased respect and support. The Delta remains, however, a *conspicuously underdeveloped* region. It is the poorest region of one of the poorest states. Employment and business opportunities lag behind national norms and the African American population remains severely disadvantaged in local commerce. This has sustained an environment of limited resources and cultural suppression that leaves the African American population vulnerable to economic, political, and even physical intimidation.

The nadir in the historical evolution of the Delta region, and one that can be used to illustrate the point was the *lynching of Emmett Till in August 1955*, fifteen months after the 1954 watershed *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision. The incident involved a boy who was caught between the two defining options exercised by African Americans in the Delta. His parents who migrated north to Chicago exercised one option; blood relatives who decided to remain in the Delta chose the other. The incident and the subsequent lynching were taken to symbolize a difference between local ways and ways of the North. Focusing on the putative differences between Northern ways and local ways, the NAACP focus used the incident to galvanize the nation pointing out that the Till murder was not an isolated happening but part of a systemic process coming, as it did, within months of the killing of Reverend George Lee in nearby Belzoni. A local incident in an agricultural region of declining population came to symbolize a defining moment in the struggle for racial equality in the United States.

A centerpiece of the evolving Delta culture was a *Blues* musical tradition that would come to be enjoyed with admiration on a global scale and represented by performers such as Jimmy Reed, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, B.B. King, and by lesser known blues men, including the writer and bassist Willie Dixon, and the early lyricist Robert Johnson. All from the state, King, Reed, and Johnson were born in the Delta. They operated in the context of a movement of the population characterized by an allure of freedom in the North, especially Southside Chicago, and the appeal of an

art form they liked except for its location inside segregation. This aspect of the Delta is better documented in works noting the rediscovery of the Blues in commercial circles.

Finally, there is the more compelling, but less well-documented or understood, history of the *struggle for democratization* in the region. It involves a tradition of affirmative community struggle to transform the existing social reality. These efforts included lobbying the national government and other institutions prior to WWII, demanding regional economic development, and following the war, the rise of the great civil rights movement. The movement precipitated reform of the racial caste system and promoted political and socio economic opportunities for African Americans. This story involves a group of individuals who would remain in the Delta and come to represent a genuine insurgency focused on transforming social relations. Amzie Moore, Aaron Henry, Fannie Lou Hamer, Medger Evers, Hartman Turnbow, Walter Bruce and L. C. Dorsey among others, are examples of those who assumed and exercised public leadership in response to a new spirit of activism. During the 1960s the struggle for democratization expanded dramatically. In 1962 as the Freedom Rides terminated in Jackson, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), initiated the movement in Greenwood, a town represented as the capital of the Delta and located just six miles from the campus of Mississippi Valley State University. The *Greenwood Movement* became a national symbol for racial organizing a year before Martin Luther King, Jr., and SCLC opened the campaign in Birmingham. In some ways the Greenwood Movement embodied the critical features that would later define the Civil Rights Movement including external mobilization of volunteers, cagey resistance by local authorities, the visible use of police dogs, and vigilante violence.

In time, the struggles in Greenwood, Mississippi and elsewhere in the Delta, as mentioned earlier in this narrative, brought about significant changes in relations between the people of the Delta. In 2008, political structures are more open and diverse. There is greater toleration among and between the races and there are significant political and economic actors who understand the need for inter-group consultation and cooperation to address the continuing problems that beset the region.

*This narrative is adapted from the Delta Research and Cultural Institute:*  
[http://www.mvsu.edu/center-conflict-resolution/delta\\_research.php](http://www.mvsu.edu/center-conflict-resolution/delta_research.php)

# Current On-line Offerings

## ▶ Photography

**Bill Steber** ~ *Stones In My Pathway* is the work of an award winning Tennessee photographer. An excellent portfolio that eloquently depicts various aspects of life on the Delta. His accompanying articles and audio media give his images an added sense of life and relevance.

**Brandy Kayzakian-Rowe** ~ Ms. Rowe's photographic images spontaneously capture the Delta while her paintings dig deep into the soul on many levels

**John Rocklin** ~ Exquisite color performance photographs from the Delta and blues festivals around the country

**Dr. Marvin Haire** ~ Hauntingly beautiful bayou images, one of the Black Bayou where Emmett Till met his untimely death.

**Ernest Gregory** ~ New York Photographer travels extensively with Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at Lincoln Center.

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## ▶ Active Links

City of Glendora  
Delta Blue Legends Tours  
Delta Research and Cultural Institute  
Mississippi Blues Commission  
Mississippi Blues Commission Newsletter (recurring)  
Randy Weston (Legendary jazz musician and Blues & Abstract Truth participant)  
Tyhimba Jess (Award winning poet's book [Leadbelly](#) and B&AT participant)  
Jus' Blues Foundation

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## ▶ Web Development

Delta Blues Legend Tours website  
DRCI Human Rights And Wrongs web template  
Digital Delta web template  
The City of Itta Bena, Ms. website

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## ▶ Video

B&AT ~ 90 minute documentary on the B&AT program  
Black Bayou Tour ~ Glendora Mayor Johnny Thomas tours the Emmett Till Memorial Bridge where Till ultimately met his death.  
2007 Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival ~ Documentation  
2008 A Conversation with "Sony Boy" Williams



The Delta Research and Cultural Institute's mission is to enhance the capacity of Mississippi Valley State University to promote enlightened development in the Mississippi Delta. The DRCI strives to crystallize ways of thinking about both the problems that beset the Delta region of Mississippi and the viability of competing alternative solutions that have been proposed to address these problems. DRCI seeks to fulfill this mission by engaging faculty, students and community leaders in action focused research and reflection to describe the life chances of and socio-economic concerns confronting Delta residents. It is The Institutes expectation that such descriptions can be used to inform public discourse and lead to progressive public policies that promote sustained political, social and economic development.

To date DRCI has lead the region in the development and implementation of several community and economic components that include: Cultural Heritage/ Tourism Initiatives, Small Town Economic Development, DRCI Delta Databank: Cultural Rights & Human Wrongs, The Southern Echo Catalyst Roundtable - The Human Right to a Quality Education, Support & collaboration w/ New Media Institute of the National Black Programming Consortium (affiliated with PBS).

The Delta Media Project is a direct outgrowth of the collaboration between DMP founder Ed Silvera and DRCI. In the fall of 2005 and through the spring of 2007, DRCI launched an initiative called Blues & Abstract Truth! This program presents an annual series of lectures and workshop demonstrations honoring the Blues tradition in the Delta, and the linkages between this tradition and those of traditional African society. The visiting musicians and scholars who participate in the series assist DRCI in the production and presentation of new African American cultural resources and models that can be infused as educational reference materials into a Delta Studies minor at Mississippi Valley State University, and into social studies programs in Delta area public schools that have adopted Blues in the Schools programs.

# Blues & Abstract Truths

**(The) Blues**, *noun* a) a song, originating with American blacks, that is marked by the frequent occurrence of blue notes, and that takes the basic form, customarily improvised in performance, of a 12-bar chorus consisting of a 3-line stanza with the second line repeating the first.

**Abstract**, *noun* a) something that concentrates in itself the essential qualities of anything more extensive or more general, or of several things; essence

**Truths**, *noun, plural* a) a verified or indisputable fact.  
b) actuality or actual existence

## THE FILM

**Blues & Abstract Truths** is a ninety-minute documentary film that comes as the result of documenting DRCI's Blues & Abstract Truth program. It is the first co-produced film between the DMP and DRCI.

**Blues & Abstract Truths** weaves the musical history of blues music with the social dynamics and culture of the Mississippi Delta. It takes viewers from the classrooms of Mississippi Valley State University to the murder site of Emmett Till, from the burial site of Robert Johnson to an exclusive solo performance by world-renowned pianist Randy Weston. The film, like the DRCI initiative, bridges the history of ancient Africa, the transatlantic slave trade, the plantation, the sharecropping system, the civil rights movement, and the promising future of the Delta's youth. All of this takes place within the context of a blues paradigm -- stripped down to bare essentials, improvised, characteristically existential and very entertaining.

**Blues & Abstract Truths** is scheduled for a formal release in the late spring 2008 and is seeking educational distribution on a global scale through traditional and new media platforms. Clips from the film are available through the Delta Media Project website which since August 2007 has received 2,500 views.

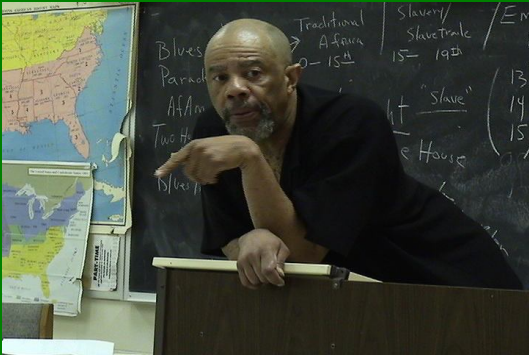
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***"The Blues & Abstract Truths embodies the heart and soul of the Mississippi Delta and the Delta Blues in a way that I have yet to see in a documentary."***

Jim Connors  
Programming Director  
WNED - Think Bright TV  
Buffalo, NY  
(PBS)



# Screen Captures From The Film



# FILM

Photographed and Edited by Ed Silvera

## Visiting Scholars and Artists

Randy Weston  
Dr. Clark E White  
Corey Harris  
Dr. Al Bright  
Rhonda Richmond  
Mohamed Kouyate  
Tyhimba Jess

## For DRCI

Dr. Marvin Haire, Interim Director  
Dr. Mack Jones, Former Director  
Pamela Gray-Forrest, Assistant Director  
Glenda B. Neal, Admin. Coordinator

## Additional MVSU Coordinators

Dr. Moses Newsome, VP  
Research, Planning, Community Development  
Dr Alphonso Sanders, Chair, Fine Arts Department  
Dr. Jaiqing Zheng, Chair, English/Foreign Language Department  
Professor Dorothy Vaughn, Fine Arts Department  
Dr Tazinski Lee, Chair, Social Science Division  
Paul Schrieber, Associate Professor, music  
Daryl Dickerson, BB King Recording Studio

## Special Thank You

Sylvester Hoover, Delta Blues Legend Tours  
Mary Ann Edwards Hoover, Back in the day museum  
Mayor Johnny B. Thomas, Glendora, MS  
Baptist Town Performance  
Terry "Big T" Williams  
Mr. W. T. Norwood  
Mr. Frank Bryant  
Ms. Alice Osborne  
Debra Minor, Director, MVSU Child Development Center

## Additional Music

Rhonda Richmond  
"5 miles To Midnight"  
Works and Vocals by Rhonda Richmond  
Resophonic Guitar, Chris Alford  
Acoustic Guitar, Bernard Jenkins  
Acoustic Bass Reginald Veal  
Percussion, Bruce Golden  
Drums Xavyon Jamison  
Tohmari Publishing/Ogah Media Group

Sony Boy Williams, "Bad Luck Blues"

Thomas Dorsey and Marian Williams  
"The Lord Will Find A Way"  
Sony Music Entertainment, Inc

Bougarabou Drumming  
Saikouba Badjie  
C1996 village Pulse

Additional Still Photographs  
Willie Dixon Courtesy of Moblues.org  
Muddy waters Courtesy of Willford Alexander  
Plantation Slaves Timothy O'Sullivan  
Arkansas Black History On-line  
Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration

Under the Auspicious of the Office of President of  
Mississippi Valley State University

Dr. Roy C. Hudson  
Interim President

Lester C. Newman  
Former President

# DMP DEVELOPMENT

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- ▶ Establish a functional Board of Directors that will help DMP gain influence in the State of Mississippi and on a national and international level as well as attract marketing and funding opportunities.
- ▶ Develop an Advisory Board that has the knowledge and background to assist in the conceptualization and implementation of DMP programming objectives.
- ▶ Create a five-year Strategic Business Plan that will outline the objectives of DMP. Within the plan will be a comprehensive Needs Assessment that clearly defines the tools, personnel and financing required to carry out DMP programming objectives as well as general development for a five-year period.

## Programming

### **Education**

Execute opportunities for Delta citizens to explore and define their environment utilizing media such as photography, film, and audio production as well as new media methods such as podcasts, webcasts and other Internet technology. Within this concept is the establishment of community workshops, formal classes, elementary, secondary and post-secondary curriculum enhancements that encourage participation in DMP content creation.

### **Research**

Provide greater opportunities for participatory research through web development, research excursions and archiving processes that affect the global research community. This process contributes and enhances the ability to create original DMP content.

### **Original Content**

DMP will continue to create groundbreaking media products, like Blues & Abstract Truths. This includes long and short form film and audio documentaries, oral history projects, music products, and multimedia products. A supplementary and ongoing aim of this agenda is to create viable ancillary revenue streams based on these projects.

### **Web Development**

In addition to developing the functionality and depth of the DMP website an agenda will be set to offer web development opportunities to underserved communities and grass roots organizations throughout the Delta using DMP web servers and talent. A key element here is to establish a partnership with a forward thinking technological company.

## Ed Silvera, Founder and President

A native of Orange, New Jersey, **Ed Silvera** was introduced to the media in 1982 at WRFG-Radio in Atlanta as an on air personality. His creative drive led to a position as *Underwriting and Event Coordinator* and program *Producer*. After a short term as an air personality at *Clark Atlanta University's WCLK-Radio*, Ed was introduced to video production at *Cable Access Channel 12*. There, from 1985-88, he produced and hosted a talk show entitled **Open Studio**.

He was hired by the *City of Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs* as a key member of the production staff and played a major role in the production of the internationally renowned **Atlanta Jazz Festival** and the **Montreux Atlanta Music Festival** from 1991-94 with duties that included concept development, production logistics, national and local booking and transportation. In working with the BCA, Ed also developed the **Billie Holiday Festival: "A Tribute To Women In Jazz"**, **The Red Hot Music Festival**, and the first **World Drum and Dance Summit** in 1993 that involved over one-hundred international drummers and dancers.

Ed assisted in conceptual development and served as *Operations Manager* for the world famous **UniverSoul Circus'** inaugural performance in Atlanta in 1994. He was the *Permit Manager* for the 1998 and 1999 twenty-eight city national tours of The Circus.

As *Program Manager* for the **Institute for the Study of African Culture**, he managed production concerns for the 1994, '95 and '96 **World Drum and Dance Summit** at *Clark Atlanta University* in association with the *1996 Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games* and the *National Black Arts Festival*. In the winter of '97 while at The Institute, he produced several major jazz performances and cultural arts incentives at *Morris Brown College; Jamaica, West Indies* and several universities throughout the southeast. He was an *Associate Music Curator* for the **1998 National Black Arts Festival** involving booking travel and performance logistics for over twenty international artists from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Africa.

As an accomplished videographer, Ed has worked on numerous television and industrial projects. He has worked on several major motion pictures (**PBS, Showtime, Paramount, NBC**) and music video projects (**Motown, LaFace**) as essential crew (production management, art, transportation, Key PA) as well as on screen talent (**Heat of the Night/NBC, I'll Fly Away/PBS**). In 1997 he was an *Associate Producer* for the **Nancy Lieberman Kline Story** for **NBC**. In 1998 he was the behind the scenes videographer for the **K.D. BOWE** gospel music video in Cape Town South Africa (**Black Star Records**). He also produced the *Too Crazy, Knock, Knock* music video for **Guest Shot Records**.

Ed Silvera is a still photographer who has worked extensively with the **City of Atlanta Department of Recreation** as well as various national publications, nationally recognized non-profit entities, political campaigns and major corporate concerns. His website [www.edsilvera.com](http://www.edsilvera.com) displays his photography.

Ed currently holds a development consultancy with *Prestige Sports International*, a professional athlete representation firm; and recently consulted with *SoarUnlimited* a personal coaching firm that specializes in sports and entertainment. He is a media/programming consultant with the Delta Research and Cultural Institute at Mississippi Valley State University. As a screenwriter, Ed has a film in pre-production with *Onyx Nineveh Films* called "Magic". Rapper/Actor, David Banner, Morris Day, Marla Gibbs and Bernadette Stanis are among those slated to star in the film.

## SUMMATION

The Delta's history is broad and varied. Many stories have been told and many have gone untold. As mentioned, the region represents the poorest in the country. It is ironic that one of the richest cultural areas of America is also its most economically ravaged. However, it remains vital to the American story, an integral part of what America has become. If America were to look into a mirror, much of what it would see looking back is the Mississippi Delta.

The fact of this matter is known throughout the world. People as far away as Europe and China actively show an interest in the Delta and its most notable export, the Blues. It deserves a powerful presence on the digital highway, which can be an impetus for economic revitalization through cultural tourism and cutting edge educational components.

DMP can uncompromisingly help the Delta establish its identity in accurate and thorough terms. It can place the Delta on the digital highway. As this brave new technological world twists, turns and matures it is critical that the Delta participate in this explosion and not sit on the side of the road, eating the dust of progress.

By making the history and culture of the Delta available to a global constituency with a sound tableau of innovation and programming that harvests the energy of its citizens, DMP can serve as a model for how culture, history and the digital world can symbiotically exist. DMP shall become the epitome of *social technology*.

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