

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY SUMMIT
OPENING REMARKS – MALCOLM WHITE
AUGUST 10, 2011

AND SO BEFORE I BEGAN MY REMARKS, I MUST BE MINDFUL THAT PRESIDENT REGAN ALWAYS REMINDS US OF HE CALLED THE MOST FEARED WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE “I’M WITH THE GOVERNMENT, AND I’M HERE TO HELP”...SO BE FORWARDED!

THIS IS A REALLY BIG DEAL FOR ME AND THE MS ARTS COMMISSION TODAY. THIS DAY REPRESENTS AN EXPRESSION OF “HOW THE ARTS WORK IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT” ON SO MANY LEVELS. THIS DAY ALSO REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIP THAT BEGAN WITH LELAND SPEED SPREADING A FEW SEEDS AND GOVERNOR BARBOUR AND GRAY SWOOP AND WHIT AND MY FRIEND MELISSA ALLOWING THE SUN TO SHINE AND ENCOURAGING THE FRUIT TO GROW, THAT HAS BROUGHT US TO THIS ORGANIC MOMENT. A MOMENT THAT I AM VERY PROUD AND HOPEFUL ABOUT, A MOMENT THAT SAYS A LOT ABOUT OUR BELOVED MISSISSIPPI, OUR RICH AND DIVERSE STORY AND OUR PLAN TO ENVISION AND IMAGINE OUR FUTURE THAT INCLUDES ALL STRATEGIES, ALL IDEAS AND ALL POSSIBILITIES FOR ALL 2.9 MILLION GOOD FOLKS WHO CALL THEMSELVES OUR NEIGHBORS, OUR FRIENDS, OUR FAMILY AND OUR FELLOW MISSISSIPPIANS!

SPECIAL THANKS TO MELISSA MEDLEY AND ALLISON WINSTEAD. AS I SAID TO ALLISON THIS MORNING, “MELISSA ROCKS, WE ROLL.”

THIS SUMMIT, THIS GATHERING, THIS CONVENING IS AN INTRODUCTION, A DEMONSTRATION, AN EXPLANATION OF:

WHAT IS THE CREATIVE ECONOMY?
HOW MUCH AND WHERE IS IT IN MISSISSIPPI?
AND, HOW DO WE GROW, DEVELOP, NUTURE AND ENCOURAGE IT?

THIS SUMMIT IS A ROLL OUT OF “MISSISSIPPI’S CREATIVE ECONOMY” THE STUDY, THE GOALS, THE NUMBERS, AND THE WAYS THIS “NEW ECONOMY” WORKS IN OUR STATE. THE STUDY IS A SNAPSHOT IN THREE PART HARMONY AND ALL 125 PLUS WORDS OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, THE STUDY ITSELF AND THE VIGNETTES ARE “ON LINE”, LIVE AND AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING NOW!

SO, THE FIRST OF TODAY’S THREE UNVEILINGS; ONE OF THIS STUDY, ANOTHER IN A MINUTE OF SOME NEW MUSIC HERITAGE TECHNOLOGY AND THE OTHER OF THE KING EDWARD BLUES MARKER...

AND WITH MELISSA’S ASSISTANCE AND THE BLESSINGS OF THE TECHNOLOGY GODS, I PRESENT THE LONG-AWAITED UNVEILING OF MISSISSIPPI’S CREATIVE ECONOMY “MICRO SITE”, WHERE YOU CAN DOWNLOAD AND/OR VIEW ALL THE GLORIOUS DETAILS OF OUR MULTI-YEAR PRODUCTION.

WWW.MSCREATIVEECONOMY.COM

MISSISSIPPI’S CREATIVE ECONOMY IS WHAT I LIKE TO THINK OF AS THE CROSSROADS OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND PROSPERITY.

THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND THE MISSISSIPPI ARTS COMMISSION PARTNERED WITH NORTH CAROLINA-BASED REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIES TO LOOK AT OUR CREATIVE

PEOPLE, CREATIVE PLACES AND CREATIVE ENTERPRISES. I HAD HEARD OF THIS WISE OLE JEWISH GUY FROM WISCONSIN NOW LIVING AND WORKING IN NORTH CAROLINA AND WE FOUND A WAY TO ENGAGE HIM AND HIS CREATIVE TEAM TO CANVAS OUR STATE, TO DIG INTO OUR CULTURE, TO SHOW US THE MEANS TO UNEARTH OUR CREATIVE ECONOMY. STU ROSENFELD PLEASE SAY HELLO. HE IS CONDUCTING A SESSION LATER IN THE DAY, SO INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND SPEND SOME TIME WITH STU WHEN YOU HAVE THE CHANCE.

NEW IDEAS, NOT MONEY OR MACHINERY, ARE THE SOURCE OF SUCCESS TODAY. THE CREATIVE ECONOMY IS REVITALIZING MANUFACTURING, SERVICE, RETAILING AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES. IT IS CHANGING WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE, WORK AND LEARN--WHERE THEY THINK, INVENT AND PRODUCE.

THIS IS A FIRST. NEVER BEFORE HAVE WE LOOKED AT THE STATE'S NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH FOR-PROFIT ENTITIES TO ASSESS THE POTENTIAL OF OUR CREATIVE ASSETS.

TO QUOTE JOHN HOWKINS, "CREATIVITY IS NOT NEW, AND NEITHER IS ECONOMICS, BUT WHAT IS NEW IS THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM, AND HOW THEY COMBINE TO CREATE EXTRAORDINARY VALUE AND WEALTH"

THE GOVERNOR HAS TOLD YOU HOW MUCH CREATIVE ECONOMY THIS SNAPSHOT HAS SHOWN US-- AND THIS IS TOTALLY ORGANIC! CAN YOU IMAGINE THIS SECTOR IF WE WATERED, TENDED AND FERTILIZED IT? WELL, THAT IS WHAT WE INTEND TO BEGIN --TODAY--

HISTORY TELL US THAT THE U. S. WAS ONCE AN AGRARIAN ECONOMY, AND INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY, BUT NOW, WE ARE AN INFORMATION ECONOMY-

IN A PARADOXICAL WAY, TODAY WE BEGIN "TO FARM OUR CREATIVE ECONOMY"

TODAY WE ARE GOING TO OFFER YOU MUCH INFORMATION ABOUT MISSISSIPPI'S

CREATIVE PEOPLE: ARTISTS, PROFESSORS, CHEFS, DESIGNERS, ARCHITECTS, AND BLUES MUSICIANS----

OUR CREATIVE PLACES: LIKE OXFORD (*SEE OXFORD STORY BELOW*), OCEAN SPRINGS, CLARKSDALE, FONDREN NEIGHBORHOOD IN JACKSON, ROLLING FORK, MERIDIAN AND INDIANOLA TO NAME A FEW.

THE OXFORD STORY...

IN 1980, OXFORD WAS A SLEEPY MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE TOWN, A COUNTY SEAT IN THE LONG TAIL OF THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN RANGE. WILLIE MORRIS WAS INVITED TO COME HOME FROM YEARS OF SUCCESS IN NEW YORK AS A WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE. WILLIE LIKED WHAT HE FOUND AND WAS SHORTLY CONNECTED TO A SMALL, BUT CREATIVE, BAND OF CULTURE CLUB. RON SHAPARO ARRIVED SHORTLY THEREAFTER AND OPENED THE HOKA THEATRE IN AN OLD COTTON WAREHOUSE, WHERE HE SERVED LATE-NIGHT GREAT GRUB, INDEPENDENT FILMS AND LIVE MUSIC ALL IN A BOHEMIAN ATMOSPHERE THAT WE KNEW TO THIS NORTH MISSISSIPPI HAMLET, THAT HAD NOT SEEN THIS KIND OF ACTIVITY SINCE WILLIAM FAULKNER PASS IN 1963.

SOON AFTER THE HOLKA, SQUARE BOOKS WAS OPENED BY THE ONE DAY, FORMER MAYOR RICHARD HOWORTH, AND THEN THERE WAS A PLACE TO BUY WILLIE MORRIS AND WILLIAM FAULKNER BOOKS. BILL FARRIS SOON ARRIVED WITH AN IDEA TO ESTABLISH THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOUTHERN CULTURE AT OLE MISS AND THEN SCHOLARS OF SOUTHER CULTURE BEGAN TO ASSEMBLE. WILLIE

INVITED HIS FAMOUS FRIENDS FROM NEW YORK TO VISIT AND THEY READ FROM THEIR BOOKS AT SQUARE BOOKS AND LECTURED AT THE CENTER.

THE CONFERENCE ON THE BOOK, THE FAULKNER CONFERENCE, THE SOUTHERN FOODWAYS SYMPOSIUM AND MANY OTHER CONFERENCES ON CULTURE NOW RIVAL FOOTBALL WEEKENDS FOR IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY. ABOUT THIS SAME TIME, DEAN FAULKNER AND LARRY WELLS BEGAN A SMALL PRESS KNOWN AS THE YOKNAPATAWPHA PRESS AND THEY BEGAN TO PUBLISH NEW WORKS FROM WILLIE AND OTHER SOUTHERN WRITERS WHO BEGAN TO COME TO TOWN TO VISIT ALL THESE NEW GOINGS ON. SOON, THE FREE-SPIRITED AND INNOVATIVE FICTION MASTER, BARRY HANNAH ARRIVED TO TEACH AT UM AND ADD A LITTLE FLARE TO THE FLEDGING OXFORD NIGHTLIFE. SUDDENLY, THE SLEEPY COUNTY SEAT BEGAN TO SEE NEW RESTAURANTS AND LIVE MUSIC CLUBS POPPING UP HERE AND THERE AND A CREATIVE ECONOMY WAS BORN.

TODAY, OXFORD IS A LIVING, BREATHING EXAMPLE OF A CULTURAL COMMUNITY, BASED FIRMLY IN LITERATURE, MUSIC AND SCHOLARSHIP AND IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THE CREATIVE ECONOMY IN MISSISSIPPI.

AND OUR CREATIVE ENTERPRISES: PEAVEY ELECTRONICS, VIKING RANGE CORP. THE ELVIS PRESLEY BIRTHPLACE AND MUSEUM, LAZY MAGNOLIA BREWING COMPANY, NUNOERIN, MISSISSIPPI MUSEUM OF ART, THE RENAISSANCE (HOME OF THE APPLE STORE) AT HIGHLAND COLONY, AND ROBERT ST. JOHN AND HIS VAST CULINARY EMPIRE.

MISSISSIPPI'S MOST VALUABLE ASSET IS OUR STORY. AND WE HAVE AN ABUNDANT AND IMPORTANT STORY TO TELL, THROUGH OUR CULTURE, OUR ARTS AND OUR HISTORY, EVERYDAY, WE WRITE THE BOOK; THROUGH MUSIC, LITERATURE, ARCHITECTURE, FOOD, THE CIVIL WAR AND CIVIL RIGHTS, THE ARTS AND OUR SACRED SPACES, WE POSSESS AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES.

NOW LET'S TAKE A PEAK AT ANOTHER TWIST ON OUR ALREADY REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY AROUND CREATING TRAILS AND TRAVEL ITINERARIES.

MELISSA, LET'S EXPERIENCE THAT INTERACTIVE MOBILE APP WE CAN NOW CONNECT TO THE MS BLUES TRAIL WITH OUR SMART PHONES.

[HTTP://WWW.MSBLUESTRAIL.ORG/APP](http://www.msbluestrail.org/app)

THE BLUES TRAIL AND THE SEEDING OF THE NUMEROUS "MINI CREATIVE ECONOMIES" THAT SPROUT UP AROUND THEM IS A WELL DOCUMENTED, INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS STORY. AS MY FRIEND WARD EMLING HAS SAID FOREVER---THE ENTIRE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI IS A MUSEUM!!

AND THIS MUSIC HERITAGE TOURISM INITIATIVE (THE BLUES TRAIL) LEADS THOUSANDS OF VISITORS AND OURSELVES THROUGHOUT AMERICA'S MOST CREATIVE, DIVERSE AND ORGANIC MUSEUM --- THE GREAT STATE OF MISSISSIPPI!!

HERITAGE AND CULTURAL TOURISM NOT ONLY BRINGS COMPANY TO VISIT, BUT BUILDS CIVIL PRIDE AND YES, IS A DRIVER FOR THIS NEW CREATIVE ECONOMY. THIS CAN, AND IS HAPPENING AS WELL, WITH THE CULINARY TRAILS, THE FREEDOM TRAILS, THE CIVIL WAR TRAILS AND WILL CONTINUE WITH THE LITERARY, ARCHITECTURE AND SACRED SPACES WORK. YES, WE WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD MUSEUMS, EXPERIENCES AND TRAILS, BUT WE NEED TO BE MINDFUL THAT OUR ENTIRE STATE IS ALREADY AN AMERICAN MUSEUM, AN IMPORTANT CURIOSITY AND AN AMAZING WORK OF ART!!!

MISSISSIPPI ALREADY HAS MUCH OF WHAT IT NEEDS TO BE MORE WIDELY RECOGNIZED, TO EXTEND THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS TO MORE PEOPLE AND MORE PLACES, AND TO BROADEN THE IMPACT OF CREATIVITY ON OTHER SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY. IT HAS CREATIVE PEOPLE AND IT HAS HISTORIC, CREATIVE, AND UNIQUE PLACES.

THE STATE HAS LITERARY AND MUSIC TRADITIONS AND A PRESERVED HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURE THAT CAN HOLD THEIR OWN AGAINST ANY STATE IN THE NATION. MISSISSIPPI IS A MECCA FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY OF THE BLUES, AMERICAN MUSIC, SOUTHERN FICTION, ANTEBELLUM ARCHITECTURE, SACRED SPACES (OUR NATIVE AMERICAN BURIAL GROUNDS, CHURCHES, ETC.). THE CIVIL WAR, OR CIVIL RIGHTS. IT'S ALSO KNOWN FOR BEING A WELLSPRING OF PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTISTS.

MISSISSIPPI ALSO HAS REGIONS THAT ARE RICH IN CREATIVE TALENT, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY IN ASSETS OR INCOMES; REGIONS THAT HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY POOR THAT HAVE BEEN marginally IMPACTED BY INDUSTRIALIZATION. CREATIVITY, WHICH IS UNBOUNDED BY AGE, CLASS, RACE, OR ETHNICITY—AND SOMETIMES EVEN BENEFITTING FROM IT—OFFERS A NEW APPROACH TO ECONOMIC GROWTH. IT BUILDS ON ITS EXISTING PLACE- AND PEOPLE-BASED STRENGTHS, NOT ON LOOKING ELSEWHERE, ON DISTINCTIVENESS, NOT ON IMITATION, ON DESIGN-ORIENTED CUSTOMIZATION, NOT ON PRICE-CONSCIOUS MASS PRODUCTION.

CREATIVITY CAN AFFECT AND INFECT LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES. IN THE PAST, EMPLOYERS HAD BEEN MORE APT TO VALUE CONVENTIONAL WORK HABITS OVER NEW IDEAS, AND THE UNCONVENTIONAL WORKER WAS PENALIZED. TODAY, THE NEW FASTEST GROWTH SECTORS NOT ONLY WANT BUT SAY THEY NEED CREATIVE PEOPLE, AND THEY ARE RESTRUCTURING THEIR MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND WORKPLACES TO ACCOMMODATE THEM.

CREATIVITY ALSO APPEALS TO YOUNG PEOPLE, BOTH AS IT IS EXPRESSED AND EXPOSED IN THE AMENITIES THAT ARE AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY AND IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT. THOSE WHO ARE MOBILE OFTEN CHOOSE LOCATIONS TO SETTLE IN BASED ON SUCH AMENITIES, AND THEY NEED TO BE MADE AWARE OF WHAT MISSISSIPPI HAS TO OFFER THEM.

MISSISSIPPI'S CREATIVE ECONOMY GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL OUR STORY THROUGH OUR PEOPLE, PLACES AND PRODUCTS. IT IS OURS ALONE AND WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO BE OUTSOURCED. WE HAVE ALLOWED OTHERS FOR FAR TOO LONG TO DEFINE WHO WE ARE; WE NOW HAVE AN ARTFUL, THOUGHTFUL, OPPORTUNITY TO SET THAT STORY STRAIGHT.

WE NOW RECOGNIZE THE CROSSROAD AND CAN CHOOSE TO TAKE A BOLD AND INNOVATIVE DIRECTION THAT WILL LEAD US INTO A NEW ERA OF CREATIVITY AND PROSPERITY!