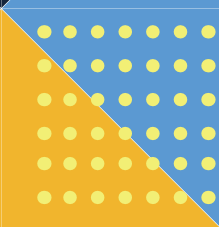




Humanities

2025



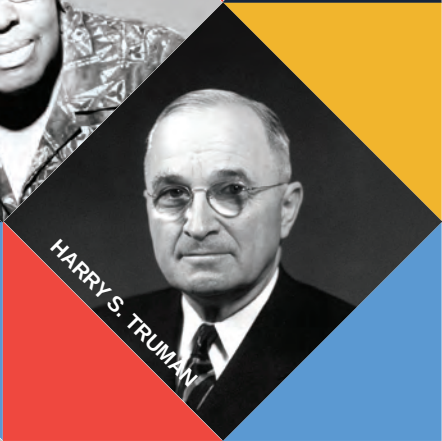
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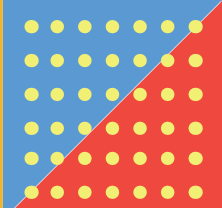
WILLIAM JEWELL

INSIDE

2025 SIGNATURE SERIES

MISSOURI VOICES:
CIVICS & CITIZENRY

An Important Public Purpose
Writing to Repair
In a Family of Pines



FY24 Statewide Impact

507,263

Individuals engaged in programs hosted and supported by Missouri Humanities across the state.

386,230

Individuals reached by Mini & Major Grants to 90 cultural, community, and educational Missouri organizations.

52,000+

Views and downloads of our digital programming, including podcasts and short video stories.

Humanities TV

Launched, offering Missourians a streaming platform with a curated collection of films, docu-series, and other digital storytelling exploring the humanities in Missouri and beyond.

The views and opinions expressed in *MO Humanities* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Missouri Humanities and its partners. The content provided is for informational purposes only, and while we take every precaution to ensure the information contained in this issue is correct, we cannot guarantee complete accuracy.



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MH MISSION STATEMENT

Missouri Humanities is a state-wide nonprofit that explores history, civics, and culture through community partnerships and public programming.

The Missouri Humanities Council (MH) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that was created in 1971 under authorizing legislation from the US Congress.

Table of Contents

MISSOURI VOICES

Missouri Humanities:
An Important Public Purpose 2

Writing to Repair 8

In a Family of Pines 11

You Are the Father...
Maybe? 12

PROGRAMS

Proud to Be: Writing
by American Warriors 15

Double the Impact 16

Humanities Tv 18

MOmentum Gala Sponsors 19

Great Reads from
Great Places 20

Small Town Showcase 23

Voices and Votes Exhibit 24

GRANTS

Grants Awarded 25

Semiquincentennial
Grants Awarded 28

BOARD SPOTLIGHT

Not in Our Wildest Dreams:
Missouri's First Female
Majority Supreme Court 30

Join Missouri Humanities 33

Missouri Humanities: An Important Public Purpose

ASHLEY BEARD-FOSNOW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MISSOURI HUMANITIES

The origins and evolution of the Missouri Humanities Council, more commonly known as simply Missouri Humanities (MH), are fascinating and help illustrate the importance of the humanities across the state. MH was created in 1971 under authorizing legislation from the U.S. Congress. Formally affiliated with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), MH has consistently provided grant support for humanities projects and offered public programs that facilitate learning connected with human culture. Our programs and community conversations explore history, religion, archaeology, anthropology, philosophy, literature, law, ethics, and languages.



President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act.

Predating MH by six years, the NEH was founded in response to the ongoing debate around public investment in intellectual pursuits throughout the 1950s. As Americans became caught up in the space race, many public square conversations focused on the value of cultural research to accompany investments made in science and technology. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act on September 29, 1965. This act established two separate organizations: the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The agencies were designed to promote and support the arts and humanities for all Americans. The NEH was established to strengthen our republic by conveying the lessons of history to all Americans. In his 2013 article, “Public Works: NEH, Congress, and the State Humanities Councils,” Jamil Zainaldin called the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act “the most ambitious piece of cultural legislation in American history.”¹ On the day of the signing, President Johnson delivered a speech in the White House Rose Garden saying,

*To produce true and lasting results, our States and our municipalities, our schools and our great private foundations, must join forces with us. It is in the neighborhoods of each community that a nation's art is born. In countless American towns there live thousands of obscure and unknown talents. What this bill really does is to bring active support to this great national asset, to make fresher the winds of art in this great land of ours. The arts and the humanities belong to the people, for it is, after all, the people who create them.*²

¹Zainaldin, Jamil. “Public Works: NEH, Congress, and the state humanities councils.” *The Public Historian* 35, no. 1 (2013): 28-50.

²Remarks at the Signing of the Arts and Humanities Bill | The American Presidency Project (ucsb.edu)



The humanities preserve our stories, awaken us to new ideas, assist us when considering the information we read, and allow us to understand those things we have not experienced ourselves.

“Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens,” declared the NEH founding legislation. It calls on the NEH to support the humanities to help us “achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future.”³ The creation of the agency to promote lifelong learning and cultural education underlined its importance to the common good and our national interest. The humanities preserve our stories, awaken us to new ideas, assist us when considering the information we read, and allow us to understand those things we have not experienced ourselves. They inspire intellectual curiosity. The humanities guide us to informed and ethical decision-making in our personal choices and in the implementation of public policies and new technologies.

While the NEH and history’s leaders have made it evident that the humanities are a national asset, initiatives are best delivered from neighborhoods, at the local level. Thus, when President Johnson signed the Arts and Humanities Act, the legislation laid the groundwork for state-level organizations, known as humanities councils, to emerge

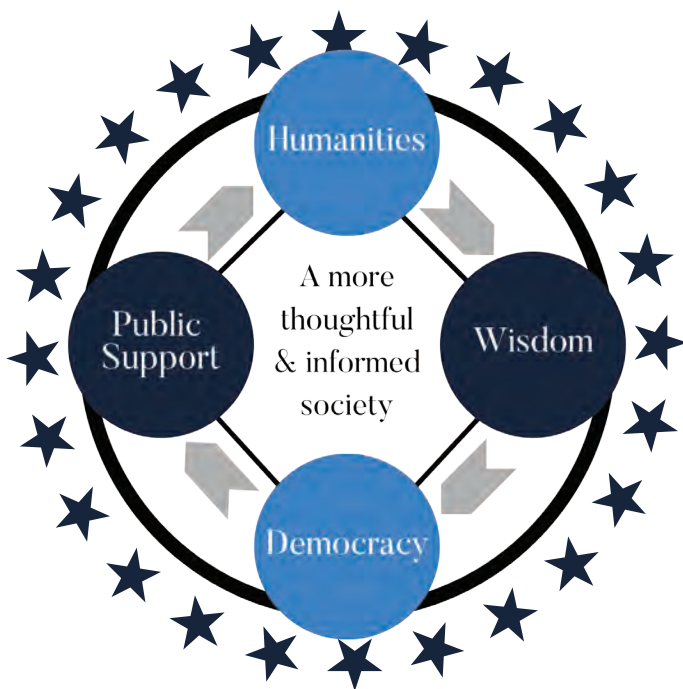
in the following decade. Just as President Johnson requested, local communities joined forces with state committees to promote regional culture and stories. In 1971, just five years ahead of the nation’s bicentennial, the NEH piloted a state-level program to create state humanities committees in six states: Georgia, Maine, Oklahoma, Oregon, Wyoming, and Missouri. The adult education experiences funded through the humanities committees were each centered in humanities scholarship and related to public issues.

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* published an article about the initiative in Missouri on March 15, 1971, titled, “Panel Gets \$100,000 For Humanities Program.” The article quotes the State Committee Chairman, Robert G. Walrond, acting dean of the Metropolitan College at St. Louis University, who explained, “The objective of the state program is to make the content of the humanities an essential part of each citizen’s approach to problem solving.” This intention to help citizens improve their problem-solving skills has been the guiding focus of our work for more than 54 years and remains our core

In 1971, just five years ahead of the nation’s bicentennial, the NEH piloted a state-level program to create state humanities committees in six states: Georgia, Maine, Oklahoma, Oregon, Wyoming, and Missouri.



³ (20 U.S.C. 951) Enacted Nov. 5, 1990, P.L. 101-512, sec. 101, 104 Stat. 1961.



Missouri Humanities was formed on the belief that the humanities can empower individuals to test ideas and imagine consequences.

purpose today. Missouri Humanities' mission statement aims to realize two outcomes: enriched lives of individual Missourians and stronger Missouri communities. Both outcomes are achieved through connecting Missourians to the people, places, and ideas that shape our society.

In Missouri and beyond, the formation of the NEH and the state committees helped popularize the concept of "public humanities." This democratized approach to the work emphasized confidence in the power of dialogue to create just and informed civil societies. In Missouri, the members of the State Committee for the Humanities used the platform to increase appreciation for the nation's history under the theme "Mar. and the American Dream- 1776-1976."

The state committees eventually evolved into the structure we now

know as "State Humanities Councils." Missouri Humanities Council received IRS 501(c)(3) designation in May 1977. In the United States, these councils are private, nonprofit organizations designated by the NEH. Each council develops a strategic plan based on the unique needs, strengths, and resources of its state under the guidance of independent boards of directors. Every humanities council board of directors is comprised of both elected and gubernatorial-appointed members. State councils frequently value community dialogue, lifelong learning, and public programming rooted in humanities disciplines.

A council's work extends beyond academia, emphasizing the democratization of information and community engagement. Missouri Humanities was formed on the belief that the humanities can empower individuals to test ideas and imagine

MISSOURI HUMANITIES TIMELINE

1965

LBJ signs the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act.

1971

Missouri, Georgia, Maine, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Wyoming committees for the Humanities were formed.

1975

The Missouri Committee for the Humanities became "The Missouri Humanities Council" and received IRS 501(c)(3) designation in May 1977.

1995

State of Missouri defines "humanities council" and acknowledges the support of the not-for-profit organization is an important public purpose.

consequences. We foster dialogue in the public square and contribute to a deeper understanding of our shared heritage and culture. Experiences rooted in the humanities can highlight the similarities among people and open us to the experiences of others that we have not experienced ourselves. They can help explain politics, religion, community values, and even business practices. Missouri Humanities' mission statement is "to enrich lives and strengthen communities by connecting Missourians to the people, places, and ideas that shape our society."

The Missouri General Assembly echoed this belief in the importance of the humanities in the lives of residents when it enshrined the idea in state statute effective August 28, 1995:

186.050. Humanities council, purpose — definitions. —
1. The general assembly, giving due consideration to the historical and continuing interest of the people of the state of Missouri in encouraging the educational and cultural



enrichment of its residents, finds that public humanities education, including the study of history, literature and other aspects of culture, contribute significantly to such enrichment, and consequently that support of a humanities council is an important public purpose.

In partnership with the State of Missouri for the last thirty years, MH has supported grassroots humanities projects developed at the local level through Mini and Major Grant awards. We offer in-person events and digital programs packaged under a unifying annual theme. In advance of next year's Semiquincentennial, our 2025 theme is "Missouri Voices: Civics and Citizenry" mimicking our very first theme in 1971 ahead of the nation's Bicentennial, both of which intended to help citizens consider the bold experiment of a government run by and for the people. Using the content of the humanities, we are assisting Missourians in sharpening their problem solving and critical thinking skills. Through public humanities offerings throughout 2025, we will look at the words and ideas that inspired key moments of change in our past.



Missouri Humanities celebrates Missouri's literary voices at the annual Heartland Book Festival as the Missouri Center for the Book, promote presentations through the Missouri Speakers Bureau, and offers workshops and an annual publication, *Proud to Be: Writings by American Warriors*, to capture and preserve the stories of Missouri veterans, military personnel, and their families. Leading up to America's Semiquincentennial in 2026, we hope you will join us as we consider the role of Missouri in the dynamic history of the nation and how every Missouri community has a stake in this ever-evolving American story. Building on our affiliations and the Missouri General Assembly's validation of our important public purpose, we will continue to build a more thoughtful, informed, and civil society.

Writing to

The Communal Benefit of Restorative Poetics

GLENN NORTH

DIRECTOR OF INCLUSIVE LEARNING AND
CREATIVE IMPACT, THE MUSEUM OF KANSAS CITY

“When power leads man toward arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the area of mans concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses, for art establishes the basic human truths which must serve as a touchstone for our judgement.”

— PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY AT THE DEDICATION
OF THE ROBERT FROST LIBRARY, OCTOBER 26, 1963

Like most poets, I would love for my work to be published in the coveted peer-reviewed literary journals, or to have a book of poems win a prestigious poetry award. However, in my desire to maximize the power of poetry that President Kennedy spoke of, I have been led to write poems that have more “utility” in public spaces than on the pages of a book. Think of Amanda Gorman sharing her amazing poem, “The Hill We Climb” at former President Joe Biden’s inauguration. In a similar fashion, I have written poems for community events held in the wake of tragedy that roused the audience in ways that a speech could not. I have facilitated workshops and witnessed the way a poem can change the reality of a student in a detention center or a



Repair

homeless shelter. **Restorative Poetics** is the term I now use to identify the work I have been doing as a poet. My attempt to define it is as follows:

***Restorative Poetics** is a subgenre of poetry concerned with the healing properties of poetry in our personal and communal relationships. The reading, writing, and “practice” of poetry can be useful in confronting individual trauma or the harm we see unfolding in our communities. In the larger field of Black poetry and poetics, **Restorative Poetics** examines how poetry can be an apparatus for the recovery and repair of Black historical narratives, while also envisioning a brilliant future.*

With that in mind, I've shared a poem I wrote years ago when I first discovered Julia Lee, who was a phenomenal piano player and a “dirty blues” singer. With titles like “I Need a King Size Papa” and “Snatch It & Grab It,” she was the perennial queen of double entendre songs. She was so well loved that President Truman invited her to sing at the White House in 1949. While researching her legacy, I came across a quote from local promoter:

“She was a big fat black colored girl who was just great, and could play any request you wanted to hear.” – John Tumina, Promoter and Booking Agent

Perhaps John Tumina felt he was complimenting her, but a restorative poem would endeavor to reach through the corridors of time to correct him and show Ms. Lee some real love. And in that act of reclamation, poetry is also restorative.

Once the term Restorative Poetics popped into my brain, I was so thrilled to finally have language to contextualize my poetic project (and the project of so many poets, past and present, that I have come to love and admire), I wanted to share my ideas with the world. As the Director of Inclusive Learning & Creative Impact and Poet-in-Residence of the Museum of



Kansas City, I decided to establish the **Restorative Poetics Initiative**. This initiative includes a slate of programs, poetry readings, workshops, etc., under the Restorative Poetics umbrella. I scheduled the launch for February 15th, 2024. Since February is Black History Month, many media outlets looking for content began contacting me. Once the word began to spread about the event, it was quickly sold out. Noting the February 15th date is important because, February 14th was the date of the 2024 Kansas City parade to celebrate the Chiefs winning the Super Bowl. Tragically, it was also the day the mass shooting occurred, killing Lisa Lopez-Galvan and injuring twenty-two others, including eleven children.

Because I was reeling with shock like the rest of the city, I didn't have the presence of mind to cancel the launch. I later decided perhaps it was best to move forward with the event, and I'm glad I did. Understandably, no reporters came, and the sold-out crowd was reduced to twelve people. But that night, I shared poems that addressed gun violence and grief. We discussed poems that spoke to social justice and the pursuit of authentic democracy. At the end of the evening, the twelve of us exchanged tears and hugs, and thanked one another for being present to help each other bear the burden of our communal grief. Did poetry take the place of therapy, or was it a cure for PTSD? No. However, that evening I was able to put theory into practice. I experienced poetry's restorative power in my city's darkest hour.

As I was leaving that evening, I recalled a night twenty-three years prior when I had put together a poetry performance for a group of area high school students I was tutoring in an afterschool program. When the show was over and the roar of the crowd began to die down, the mother of one of my most troubled students elbowed her way through the sea of bodies, gave me one of the warmest hugs I've ever received and said, "I want to thank you for saving my daughter's life." I have no doubt she believed that. I do too.



Glenn North is the Director of Inclusive Learning and Creative Impact and Poet-in-Residence at The Museum of Kansas City. He is also an adjunct English professor at Rockhurst University.



In a Family of Pines

SVETLANA LITVINCHUK

Nature doesn't need words
to understand itself,
as humans do.
Everything simply
has its place.

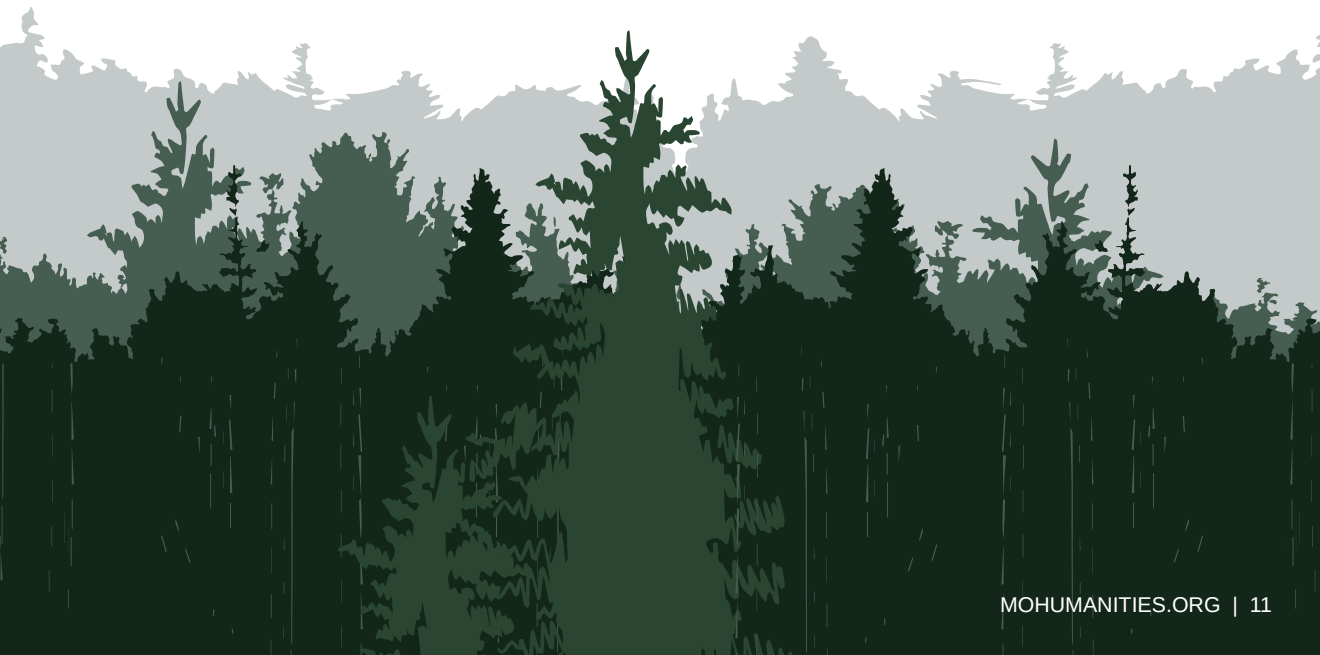
On this Earth, sometimes a thing
is both mother and father,
like the pine behind my house.

All around, it is encircled by its children,
silently teaching through its roots
about which beetle might happen to be
chewing on their smooth inner bark
and whether they be friend or foe.

Their messages to each other spread
across the forest floor in the same way
that one massive teardrop
might undulate among a sea of trees—
concentric ripples quaking below the soil.

They are a family with their *rootsforeverconnected*
after birth. One cannot be felled without
causing grief to them all.

The news travels under the Earth via a network
of interlocking hands, teaching us that to hold
each other tight is to be alive.



You Are the Father. . . Maybe?

NICOLE PRICE, ED.D.

Imagine sitting at your kitchen table, sipping coffee, scrolling through Ancestry.com, thinking, “*This will be fun.*” That’s where I was when I accidentally turned my family tree into an episode of *Jerry Springer*. Missouri roots? Oh, I’ve got those. Deep ones. But as it turns out, some of my family tree branches needed a little pruning.

Growing up, I always knew where I belonged—or so I thought. The sixth child in a family big enough to fill two pews at church, I was confident I was my dad’s favorite. You couldn’t tell me otherwise. My dad was my hero, a man who worked hard, loved

his family, and had a quiet way of showing care. When he passed, I carried that belief with me, along with the cherished memories of him.

Years later, when both of my parents were gone, curiosity about my ancestry led me to Ancestry.com.



Like so many others, I was hoping to find distant cousins and fun facts about my lineage—not a revelation that would upend everything I thought I knew about myself.

Midwest Nice and Family Secrets

Missourians are known for being “Midwest nice.” We value kindness, politeness, and avoiding confrontation at all costs. It’s a cultural badge of honor—but sometimes, that same politeness leads to omissions that cause more harm than good. In my case, “nice” came in the form of a family secret. For half a century, I was shielded from the truth about my biological father.

In the spirit of not hurting my feelings, my family broke my heart.

To be clear, I would have preferred hurt feelings.

I wish someone had pulled me aside and said, *“Here’s the truth. It’s going to sting, but you deserve to know.”* Instead, the secret stayed buried. When I stumbled upon the truth on my own, it felt like a betrayal wrapped in the piss of politeness. The truth didn’t surface in a conversation over Sunday dinner. It came through a DNA test, a message on a screen with a faint suffocating disgust and a full-blown plot twist.

Yet, I followed the clues, enlisted the help of a DNA angel (yes, those exist), and eventually found my biological father—living in a nursing home less than an hour away. Walking into that room felt like stepping onto a stage.

“Hello. Do you know my mom?” I asked.

His answer? A simple “Yes.”

“Are you my father?” I continued.

“Yes,” he replied, like he was confirming the sky was blue.

The room was quiet, save for his roommate, who jumped around behind the divider as if he were watching a rap battle.

A Mosaic of Missouri

Missouri, like my life, is built on stories—some easy, some hard. This is a state where, during the Civil War, we couldn’t decide whether slavery should be legal or not. We were a literal crossroads, divided by geography and ideology. Yet, it’s also the birthplace of Sarah Rector, the first Black female millionaire—a woman who defied seemingly insurmountable odds.

Missouri is as much about bee farms and rolling hills as it is about international airports and world-class sports teams. It is home to both abject poverty and breathtaking wealth, massive prisons, and renowned art museums. Its story, like mine, is woven from contradictions and resilience.

The beauty of Missouri lies in its diversity—whether it’s the landscape, the food, or the people. But we all have a shared identity—a shared sense of belonging—we are Missourians. My DNA story reminded me that we’re all part of something bigger, even when it’s messy. My story might not be typical, but it’s mine. It’s proof that identity is complex, layered, and sometimes surprising.

Our roots—no matter how tangled—anchor us. They give us a sense of place, a sense of purpose.

Empathy: The Glue That Holds Us Together

What my DNA journey taught me is that empathy is essential. It's the bridge between what we know and what we're willing to understand.

My family didn't tell me the truth because they thought they were sparing me pain. They thought they were being kind. But real empathy isn't about shielding people from discomfort; it's about facing hard truths together, offering support, and trusting that we can handle it. I think the same is true for our beloved state. We can honor the massive accomplishments of J.D. Reece and condemn the redlining concept he devised. We can do both. It is necessary to do both.

When I finally met my biological father—a man I'd never known existed—I realized empathy had to go both ways. It wasn't about people understanding my experience or empathizing with my feelings. Neither was it just about understanding my family's silence and the reasons why. It was also about understanding his absence. Empathy allowed me to grasp the fuller picture, messy as it was, and to make peace with the pieces I'd been handed.

For too long after my discovery, I was angry. I was accusatory. I was focused on everything except creating a sense of belonging. I believe that's because I was hurt and in need of a community that felt like home when "home" had a completely different meaning.

The Truth That Sets Us Free

My DNA discovery wasn't just about finding a new branch of my family tree; it was about uncovering a deeper sense of who I am and what it means to belong. It reminded me that citizenship, at its core, is about connection: to the people around us, to the places we call home, and to the truths that shape us—even when they're hard to face.

My parents came to Missouri in the last wave of the Great Migration, and I've never lived anywhere else. For me, Missouri means a lot of things. It is a land of tension and triumph, contradictions and community. Above all, it is home, and I love home. It is good to be in love with what is—all of it.

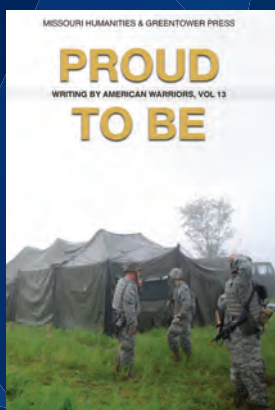
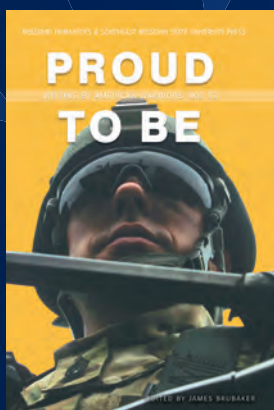
So here's my advice to anyone fortunate enough to call Missouri home: Embrace all that it means. Always be ready. Be open. And above all, be empathetic—to your story, others' stories, and the communal stories we all have. You never know where curiosity might take you, or how it might dramatically shift your capacity to make sure that others feel like they belong.

Because in life, it's our shared truth that sets us free—even if it means disrupting a little Midwest nice to get there.

Dr. Nicole Price is an executive coach, author, and keynote speaker based in Missouri. With a doctorate in Leadership and Management, she uses storytelling to explore empathy, identity, and connection. Her work, including her book *Spark the Heart*, centers on helping individuals and organizations thrive through empathetic and inclusive leadership. Dr. Price's unique perspective, rooted in her Midwestern upbringing, blends humor and insight to inspire transformative personal and professional growth.

Proud to Be:

Writing by American Warriors



**Volume 14
is coming
November 11,
2025**

*Volume 13 is available
for purchase!*

“Emotional work by veterans of U.S. military conflicts from World War II to Afghanistan, in creative nonfiction, poetry, fiction, and photographs. . . The poems are really something.”

— ST. LOUIS MAGAZINE

Proud to Be: Writing by American Warriors is a creative writing anthology of poetry, fiction, essays, and photography submissions by and about veterans from across the nation. It is an annual series first released in November 2012.

The anthology preserves and shares military service perspectives of our soldiers, veterans, and their families, spanning generations. Each submission is a combined product of self-expression and a historical documentation of our nation's wartime experiences. Submissions are reviewed by a panel of judges for inclusion in the anthology, with a \$250 prize in each of the four genres listed above.

Keep an eye out for *Proud to Be: Writing by American Warriors* volume 14 — to be released on Veterans Day, 2025!



To learn more about this program, how to submit your work to future volumes, and to purchase *Proud to Be* online, visit mohumanities.org/veterans.

Double the Impact

Support Missouri Humanities Before December and See Your Gift Matched

Missouri is full of stories; from the rolling Ozarks to the busy streets of St. Louis and Kansas City, we are a state shaped by valuable history, a multitude of voices, and bubbling communities. At Missouri Humanities (MH), we've dedicated ourselves to connecting people to those stories — through reading and writing programs, cultural events, historical explorations, and more. But today, we need your help to keep that work alive.

Why Now?

2025 has brought unexpected changes to the funding of public humanities. Like many state and territorial humanities councils, Missouri Humanities has long relied on a blend of public and private support to serve communities across the state. Recent shifts in federal funding priorities have impacted that balance, creating new challenges for sustaining the programs our audiences value most.

In response, the [Mellon Foundation](#) stepped forward with a generous emergency initiative to help bridge the gap. They awarded Missouri Humanities an unrestricted \$200,000 grant — along with a [\\$50,000 matching challenge](#) to inspire support from individuals and organizations like you.

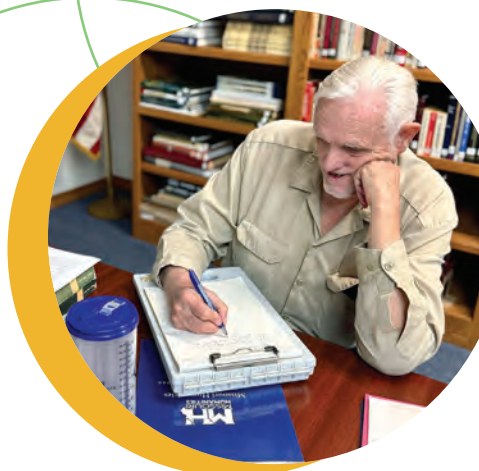


Your Gift Will Be Matched

From now until **December 31, 2025**, every dollar you give will be **matched** by the **Mellon Foundation**, up to \$50,000. That means:

- A \$25 gift becomes \$50
- A \$100 gift becomes \$200
- A \$1,000 gift becomes \$2,000

Whether you're a longtime donor or giving for the first time, this is the moment to make your contribution go further than ever before.



What Your Gift Supports

Your support enables programs like:

- **Storytelling**: bringing Missouri's voices to life and connecting communities through books, lectures, writing workshops, and public dialogue.
- **Cultural Heritage**: Preserving and sharing the rich histories that define our identities.
- **Digital Humanities**: using technology to make the humanities accessible at any time, anywhere.
- **Community Investment**: providing funding and opportunities to strengthen humanities-driven programming in communities around the state.

At a time when public funding is in flux, your donation helps ensure that these programs not only continue, but grow and reach more people, in more places, through more mediums than ever before.

Invest in Missouri's Story

Humanities aren't just about the past—they're about people, connections, and community. When you support Missouri Humanities, you're investing in your neighbors, your heritage, and your future.

Please consider making a gift today and **double your impact** before the year ends.



Visit mohumanities.org/donate or scan the QR code to give online.



Humanities Tv

EXPANDING DIGITAL STORYTELLING

CAITLIN YAGER
PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
MISSOURI HUMANITIES

Humanities Tv (H-Tv) is Missouri Humanities' streaming service dedicated to providing curated digital programming rooted in the humanities to help tell stories of how we connect to one another and the world around us.

This national platform features accessible, on-demand content that offers an opportunity for audiences to explore the role of the humanities in our everyday lives. Subscribe today for free and immerse yourself in films and docu-series geared toward creating a more thoughtful, informed, and civil society.



Available to watch online and on your TV or mobile device! Learn more and join the community by scanning the QR Code.

Want your project on H-Tv?

Contact Caitlin Yager at
Caitlin@mohumanities.org



Thank You to Our MOMentum Gala Sponsors

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Platinum Level (\$5,000)



Gold Level (\$2,500)



Silver Level (\$1,500)



Bronze Level (\$750)



Great Reads *from* Great

Missouri's Picks for 2025

LISA CARRICO
FORMER PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
MISSOURI HUMANITIES

As the Missouri Affiliate for the Library of Congress Center for the Book, Missouri Humanities is excited to announce its selections for the 2025 Great Reads from Great Places book list: *Mark Twain* by Pulitzer-Prize winning biographer Ron Chernow, and *Bijan Always Wins* by award-winning Kansas City author Adib Khorram.

With input from the Missouri Center for the Book Planning Team, these titles were chosen to represent Missouri at the 2025 National Book Festival on September 6 in Washington, D.C., to highlight the state's rich literary contributions.

Organized by the Library of Congress Center for the Book, *Great Reads from Great Places* is a national reading initiative that invites all 50 states and U.S. territories to select books that reflect their literary heritage. Each year, these selections are featured in the "Roadmap to Reading" activity at the National Book Festival, where festivalgoers can explore affiliate booths, discover stories tied to each state or territory, and collect stamps in their passport.

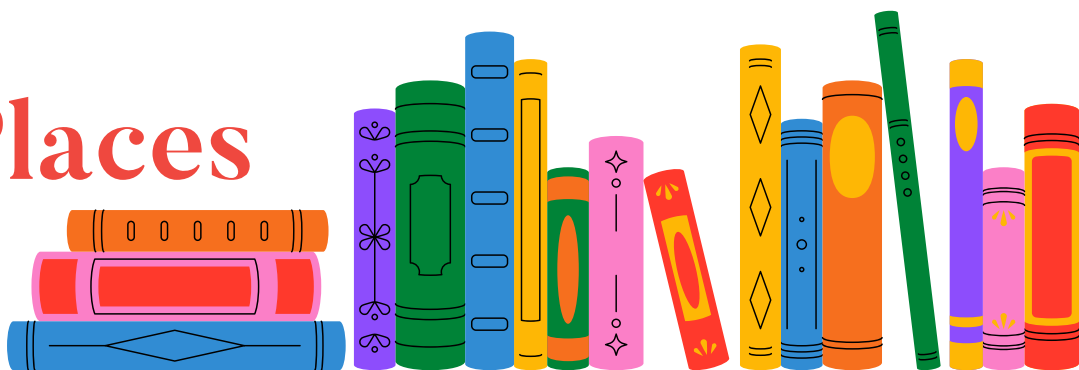
This year marks the 25th anniversary of the National Book Festival, co-founded by First Lady Laura Bush. The festival offers a full day of free programming for readers of all ages, including author talks, book signings, live readings, and hands-on activities for children and young adults.

A highlight for many is the "Roadmap to Reading" activity, where Missouri's selected titles—this year featuring a contemporary local author (Khorram) and one of the state's most iconic literary figures (Twain)—will be among the many stories celebrated on a national stage, connecting readers across the country through books that reflect the unique voices and experiences rooted in each state.



To learn more about the Missouri Center for the Book and our Great Reads, please visit mohumanities.org/center-for-the-book or scan available QR code.

Places



MISSOURI'S 2025 "GREAT READS FROM GREAT PLACES" PICKS



FOR YOUNG READERS:

***Bijan Always Wins* by Adib Khorram**

Adib Khorram is a Kansas City native, theater enthusiast, and award-winning author of books for all ages. After high school, he studied design and technical theater at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, focusing on lighting design and later spent several years working in event production.

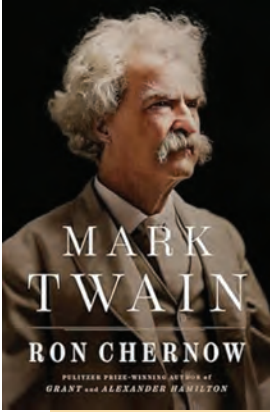


Khorram's debut novel, *Darius the Great Is Not Okay*, was published in 2018 by Dial Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Random House. The book won several awards, including YALSA's William C. Morris Award for Best Debut Author, the Asian/Pacific American Literature Association's Young Adult Award, and a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor. His follow-up, *Darius the*

Great Deserves Better, was published in 2020 to critical acclaim, becoming an Indie Bestseller and earning a Stonewall Honor.

In his 2024 release, *Bijan Always Wins*, Khorram presents a thoughtful and beautifully illustrated picture book that explores what can be lost when the pursuit of winning becomes everything. Bijan loves to win, and he always does. But after declaring himself the winner of drawing, dinosaurs, and even lunch, Bijan notices that his friends aren't as eager to play. With warmth and insight, this story highlights the emotional toll of competitiveness, reminding readers, both young and old, that the true rewards of life lie beyond victory.

When he's not writing, Khorram enjoys yoga, figure skating, electric guitar, food, wine, tea, board games, and explaining to people why Kansas City has the best barbecue (as a true Kansas Citian would).

FOR ADULT READERS:***Mark Twain* by Ron Chernow**

Ron Chernow is the prizewinning author of seven previous books and the recipient of the 2015 National Humanities Medal. His first book, *The House of Morgan*, won the National Book Award, *Washington: A Life* won the Pulitzer Prize for Biography, and *Alexander Hamilton*—the inspiration for the Broadway musical—won the George Washington Book Prize. He has twice been a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. He is one of only three living biographers who have won the Gold Medal for Biography of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. A past president of PEN America, Chernow has been the recipient of nine honorary doctorates.

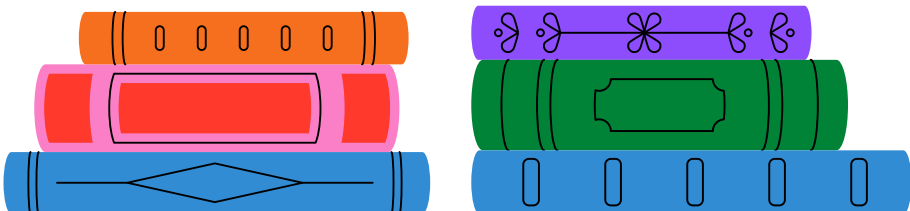


Though not a native Missourian, Chernow's upcoming biography, *Mark Twain*, is deeply anchored in Missouri's cultural and historical landscape. Born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in Florida, Missouri, Twain spent his formative years along the Mississippi River in the town of Hannibal—

experiences that would later shape the backdrop of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

As a young man, Samuel Clemens realized his dream of piloting steamboats on the Mississippi River—until the Civil War brought that career to a halt and set him on a new course that would shape American literature under his pen name: Mark Twain.

Drawing on thousands of letters and manuscripts, Chernow paints a rich, nuanced portrait of Twain—from his Missouri boyhood to international fame—chronicling his rise as a journalist, satirist, and lecturer who shamelessly sought fame and fortune, wrestled with personal loss, and became the complex figure long celebrated as the father of American literature.





2025 FEATURED FIVE COMMUNITIES

CAITLIN YAGER,
PROGRAM DIRECTOR, MISSOURI HUMANITIES

Missouri Humanities strives to highlight the uniqueness of rural Missouri, and to showcase the bigger picture of what Small Town America really is and why it shouldn't be overlooked, overshadowed, or unappreciated.

Each year, communities are nominated and voted on by Missourians to become annual "Featured Five" communities. Each town works with Missouri Humanities to produce a video about their community and a roundtable-style podcast episode.

Our 2025 Featured Five Communities

In 2022, pilot communities included Lamar, Sweet Springs, Chillicothe, Marble Hill, and Mountain Grove. 2023 communities were St. James, Norborne, Seymour, Carl Junction, and Doniphan, and the 2024 communities included Marceline, Pacific, Albany, Aurora, and Carrollton. The 2025 Featured Five communities will be:

Tarkio

(Atchison County, pop. 1,500)

Ste. Genevieve

(Ste. Genevieve County, pop. 5,033)

Potosi

(Washington County, pop. 2,600)

Elsberry

(Lincoln County, pop. 2,000)

Prairie Home

(Cooper County, pop. 263)

Congratulations to these wonderful Missouri communities, and thank you to everyone who nominated and voted! Stay tuned to Missouri Humanities' website, socials, and newsletters for updates about 2025's Featured Five and for notifications about 2026 nominations.

ABOUT SMALL TOWN SHOWCASE:

Missouri Humanities strives to highlight the uniqueness of Missouri's small towns and to showcase the bigger picture of what Small Town America really is and why it should not be overlooked, overshadowed, or unappreciated.

Small Town Showcase provides an opportunity to connect with more of our rural communities, form partnerships, and provide communities with a platform to tell their stories.

Each year, communities will be nominated and voted on by Missourians to become our annual "Featured Five" communities.

For all Small Town Showcase info, as well as videos and podcasts for featured communities, visit mohumanities.org/small-town-showcase.

VOICES AND VOTES

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

A SMITHSONIAN TRAVELING EXHIBIT

2025-2026 Dates

Maryville

April 23, 2025 – June 4, 2025

Sikeston

June 10, 2025 – July 22, 2025

Neosho

July 28, 2025 – September 8, 2025

Memphis

September 14, 2025 – October 26, 2025

Grain Valley

November 1, 2025 – December 12, 2025

Washington

December 19, 2025 – January 30, 2026

ABOUT VOICES AND VOTES:

The Smithsonian traveling exhibit, Voices & Votes: Democracy in America explores the foundational principles of American democracy, tracing its roots from the country's beginnings and examining key questions that continue to shape our nation today: Who has the right to vote? What are the freedoms and responsibilities of citizens? Whose voices will be heard? This exhibit serves as a springboard for vital discussions about these issues, reflecting our local stories and experiences.



An exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution, Voices & Votes: Democracy in America is developed as a Museum on Main Street (MoMS) program. Support for the Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress. Each year, 6 sites are selected to host the exhibition throughout the year. **To find out more or to apply to be a future host site, please scan the available QR code or visit mohumanities.org/traveling-exhibits.**



Grants Awarded

May 2024 through August 2024

GRANT DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	COUNTY
Midwest Genealogy Center Oral History Program Audio Kiosk Project	Mid-Continent Public Library	Jackson
Honoring DeKalb County's Early Pioneers and Veterans	DeKalb County Historical Society, Inc.	DeKalb
Civic Books to Explore The Humanities	Community Capital Fund (OBO Parent Leadership Training Institute – Kansas City)	Jackson
SCHGS Museum Exhibit Digital Reconfiguration Project	Stone County Historical/ Genealogical society	Stone
Preserving and Sharing Our Rural Communities History	North Platte Historical Museum and Cultural Center	Platte
The Missouri Council for History Education's 20th Annual Best Practices Conference	Missouri Council for History Education	St. Louis County
Historic Signage Project in Downtown Chillicothe	Livingston County Community Development Corporation	Livingston
Raiders Read! – Mark Twain Nominee Challenge	North Shelby	Shelby
Conversations with Playwright Kelundra Smith, on the world premiere of THE WASH	The St. Louis Black Repertory Company	St. Louis County
Historic Preservation Month programming for Missouri Main Streets	Southeast Missouri University Foundation – Center for Regional History	Cape Girardeau
Saluting our Soldiers: Veterans Symposium and Concert	Jefferson County Library	Jefferson
Community Conversation: Exploring Cruzar la Cara de la Luna	Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Inc.	Jackson
International Institute of St. Louis	Inclusive St. Louis: Leaders Shaping Our Future	St. Louis City
10th Annual Tennessee Williams Festival St Louis Scholar's Conference	Tennessee Williams Festival St Louis	St. Louis City
2025 St. Louis Jewish Film Festival	Jewish Community Center of St. Louis	St. Louis City
Rendezvous on the Ridge 2025: An Upper Current River Community Celebration	Ozark Riverways Foundation	Shannon

GRANT DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	COUNTY
Osage County Through the Years – Personal Perspectives	Osage County Historical Society	Osage
250th Commemoration High-Impact Interactive Website & Speakers Bureau	Clay County 250	Clay
Route 66 Missouri Centennial Short Film and Public Events	Route 66 Association of Missouri, Inc.	St. Louis City
The Aspirations Network Youth Civics Film Project	The Aspirations Network	St. Louis City
Literacy KC Visiting Writer Series & Creative Writing Anthology	Literacy KC	Jackson
Benton County Barn Quilt Trail	Benton County Tourism and Recreation	Benton
Jazz Talk	Reel Images Film & Video Group	Jackson
Show Me State Air Show	Show Me State Air Show	Callaway
Forty Years of Missouri's Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program – history, context & impact	The Curators of the University of Missouri – Missouri Folk Arts Program	Boone
Historic St. Louis 250th Passport Program	Eugene Field House Foundation	St. Louis City
Storytime Program: Expanding Access to New Books for Children	Ready Readers	St. Louis
Spatial Awareness in Indian Country	National Tribal Geographic Information Support Center	St. Francois
Tell Our Story: A Black History Month Concert	The Missouri Symphony	Boone
A Slice of History in Chillicothe	The Home of Sliced Bread	Livingston
CivicAI: Empowering Civic Engagement through Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence	Lindenwood University– Human Culture and Society	St. Charles
Sit Down and Shut Up	Arts Council of Southeast Missouri	Cape Girardeau
From Kansas City to Beijing: Digitizing the Collection of Journalist Edgar Snow	UMKC Foundation on behalf of UMKC Libraries	Jackson

GRANT DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	COUNTY
Chin Up Missouri	Chin Youth Organization of Missouri	Buchanan
Bicultural Poetry Program	No Divide KC	Jackson
Celebrating Local Literature: KC Book Beat Fall Catalog and Lit & Libations	KC Book Beat	Clay
Madam, an original musical inspired by local history	Fly North Theatricals	St. Louis City
Beyond the Story—Bridging Past and Possibility	Ozark Vitality	Howell
The Rock Island Trail Heritage Sites Clio Tour Creation and Advertising	Morgan County Historical Society Museum	Morgan
Stories That Shape Us: Connecting Children to Books & Culture	Kansas City Public Library	Jackson
Historical Museum Plan	Saline County Historical Society	Saline
Digitizing the Haskell Monroe Oral History Collection at the State Historical Society of MO	University of Missouri – Theatre	Boone
Opera on the Go!: Live Tour & Video	Opera Theatre of Saint Louis	St. Louis
Mill Creek: Black Metropolis exhibit	Missouri Historical Society	St. Louis City
The Age of All Women: The Becoming of Younousse Seye	University of Missouri – History	Boone
Jazz Masters Lecture Series	American Jazz Museum, Inc	Jackson
I Bear Witness: The Untold Stories of American Race Riots, Missouri	Heritage Programs, Inc	St. Louis City
Missouri Voices Literacy Program	Grow Pediatric Therapy Services	Lafayette
2025 Missouri's Premier Downtown Revitalization Conference	Missouri Main Street Connection	St. Charles

Semiquincentennial Grants Awarded

250
years

GRANT DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	COUNTY
Celebrating Springfield MO History; Semiquincentennial Exhibit	History Museum on the Square	Greene
Burnt District Monument Silhouette Art Project	Harrisonville Chamber of Commerce Foundation	Cass
Young Twain – Film Project	Presser Arts Center	Audrain
St. Joseph, MO – An American (HIS)story, (HER)story, and (OUR)story	St. Joseph Museum	Buchanan
Continuing the Pony Express Story – 165 years 2025	Pony Express Museum	Buchanan
KSMU's Notable MO-ments	Missouri State University – Ozarks Public Broadcasting	Greene
A Living History of Washington County, Missouri	Washington; County of	Washington
Gateway to the Nation: Missouri's Role in America's 250 Years	Wornall/Majors House Museum	Jackson
Introducing Rocky Ridge Farm Film Project: How a Pioneer Girl Became a Beloved American Author	Laura Ingalls Wilder Home & Museum	Greene
The Katy Trail — where history is the future	Magnificent Missouri	Warren
The Story of the Museum and Memorial	National WWI Museum and Memorial	Jackson
Route 66 Centennial Interpretive Traveling Exhibit	Route 66 Association of Missouri, Inc.	St. Louis County
Our History: Exhibits from the Archives	Grand River Historical Society & Museum	Livingston
Beyond The Haunting	Fat Daddys Farm Foundation	Ironton
Missouri Statewide Trails	Clio: The Digital Museum of America	Cass
Battle of St. Louis Commemoration Event Improvement and Expansion	French Colonial America	St. Louis
Hidden in Plain Sight: Important Sites in Missouri Women's History	Vidwest	Boone

GRANT DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	COUNTY
The Trail Remembered: Steelville's Journey to Honor the Past	Steelville Area Historical Society	Crawford
Cicadian Rhythms – a short documentary film	TechArtista Foundation	St. Louis City
"Wazhazhe: Osage Cultural Heritage & History in Missouri"	Kansas City Museum Foundation	Jackson
An immersive experience with A People's History of Kansas City	UMKC Foundation – KCUR 89.3	Jackson
Laying Down the Burden	Missouri's National Veterans Memorial	Perry
Missouri Century Tractor Website	America's Tractor Museum	Perry
America 250 and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman	Harry S. Truman Library Institute for National and International Affairs	Jackson
From Roots to Restoration: Small Towns, Big Histories	Ozark Vitality	Howell
From Colonies to Cape Girardeau: 250 years of Independence / Celebration 250 – MO!	The Mary Ann and Bert J. Kellerman Foundation	Cape Girardeau
Celebrate America: Bates County celebrates the 250th Anniversary of the USA	Bates County Historical Society and Museum	Bates
DREAM BIG: The True Tall Tale of a Missouri Giantess	Springfield Regional Opera dba Ozarks Lyric Opera	Greene
Tracks of Transformation: Railroads, Connections, and the Making of Missouri	Blackwater Preservation Society	Cooper
The Bond Dance Hall Explosion: Through the Lens of 250 Years of History	West Plains Council on the Arts Inc.	Howell
Gatekeepers of the Ozark Plateau Centuries Before the Louisiana Purchase	Stone County Historical/ Genealogical Society	Crane
Expanding Access to New Books for Children—Celebrating the Indigenous People of Missouri	Ready Readers	St. Louis
Jazz Talk	Reel Images Film & Video Group	Jackson
Migration and Missouri: Sharing Stories to Connect to Each Other and Our Ever-Changing Communities	University of MO – Cambio Center	St. Louis City
James Shipley, World War II Tuskegee Airman from Tipton, Missouri	Opportunity 1888 Foundation, Inc.	Moniteau
Exploring the Juncture of Diverging Cultures in the Cape Girardeau Region in Early America	Cape Girardeau County Historical Society	Cape Girardeau
Camp Crowder Traveling Interpretive Exhibits	Newton County Tourism Council	Newton
Exploring Missouri's Trail of Tears – Then and Now	Trail of Tears Association	Greene
A History of the Kansas City Streetcar	Union Station Kansas City, Inc.	Jackson

NOT IN OUR WILDEST DREAMS

Missouri's First
Female Majority
Supreme Court

MARILYNN BRADFORD
PREVIOUS CHAIR,
MISSOURI HUMANITIES

As a part of our year-long Signature Series, Missouri Voices: Civics and Citizenry, we chose to highlight the historic first female majority on Missouri's Supreme Court and the seven groundbreaking women who made history in this landmark achievement. Missouri now stands with only 16 other state supreme courts with a female majority.

Missouri Humanities' (MH) short documentary film, *Not in Our Wildest Dreams* (NIOWD), features the inspiring female judges who made Missouri Supreme Court history and their individual paths taken to get to Missouri's highest court.

First Female Supreme Court Judge: 1981

The very first woman was appointed to serve on the United States Supreme Court in 1981. Until then, no woman had ever held this position at this level. Ronald Reagan, during his run for President, made a campaign commitment to appointing the most qualified woman he could find to fill a Supreme Court vacancy.

In 1981, President Reagan named Sandra Day O'Connor to the Court. He said, "One of my proudest days in office came when I appointed her to be the first woman on the United States Supreme Court. She illustrates all that the modern American woman can achieve."

Missouri's First Named in 1988

Since 1820, Missouri has only had 122 Supreme Court Judges. Of those 122, only seven have been women. It was almost a decade after Reagan's extraordinary appointment that Missouri had their first female Supreme Court Judge named in 1988, when Governor John Ashcroft appointed Judge Ann Covington to the state Supreme Court. Judge Covington served as the only woman on the seven-member Court until 2001.

In *NIOWD*, Judge Covington reflects on her early days on the court, saying, "In the conference room, in which the judges convene and discuss cases after oral arguments, there was an adjacent room that it was clear was not open to me."

Following Judge Covington's retirement in 2001, Governor Bob Holden chose Judge Laura Denvir Stith to take her place on the Court. Judge Stith said, "People would come up to me and say "You're a judge? You don't look like a judge." And I'd say, "Actually I do." Judge Stith served as

the lone female Judge until 2004, at which point another female judge was appointed to serve alongside her.

Women Judges Gaining Ground: 2004

Three years after Judge Stith's appointment, the Court gained its second female judge, Judge Mary Russell, also named by Governor Bob Holden. Then, in 2007, Judge Patricia Breckenridge was appointed by Governor Matt Blunt, becoming the third female to join the seven-member Court.

First African American Woman Named to Court: 2021

When Judge Stith retired in 2021, Governor Mike Parson named the first African American woman, Judge Robin Ransom, to the Court. Parson noted, "Appointing a judge to the Supreme Court . . . is an important duty that I do not take lightly. I am

Circuit Court Notice Sign, 2013.
Journal of the MISSOURI BAR
September-October 2013, pp. 285.



proud and honored to name Judge Ransom as the newest member of the State's highest court.”

With Judge Ransom's appointment, the number of female judges stood firm at three.

First Female Majority Court: 2023

Judge George Draper III's retirement in 2023 allowed Governor Mike Parson the opportunity to make Missouri history when he appointed Judge Kelly Broniec, resulting in Missouri's first female majority Supreme Court. Female judges then represented four of the seven seats on the Court.

One month later in October, Governor Parson named Judge Ginger Gooch to replace retiring Judge Patricia Breckenridge. This appointment secured the female majority balance for years to come.

Governor Parson later reflected on this decision, noting,

“...the question was asked: Would it change the opinion of the Supreme Court if it is a majority of women? The law is the law. There is no gender to it. And whoever is in those positions, it's about enforcing and interpreting the law as it's written.”

Documentary Commemorates Historic Court

Chief Justice Mary Russell led the effort to call attention to the historic event and suggested its documentation due to its precedent-setting circumstance. She brought

the idea to Missouri Humanities, and after brainstorming with staff, the documentary film concept was born. It fit nicely with MH's Signature Series, and documentaries are one of the best methods of telling Missouri's stories and recording historic events for future generations.

The Seven Judges Tell Their Stories: 2025

Each woman judge had her own path to the bench, but all played groundbreaking roles in showing many young women what could be achieved through hard work and perseverance. The video documentary, *Not in Our Wildest Dreams*, highlights each judge's story, allowing them to share their personal insights into serving on Missouri's highest court.

Not In Our Wildest Dreams will be available for free public viewing on H-Tv in fall 2025.

For more information on MH's civics-centered programming or to watch NIOWD when it arrives on digital platforms, scan the QR code below.



Thank you to the following sponsors for supporting this project: The Missouri Bar, Association for Women Lawyers Foundation, The Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis, Polsinelli Law Firm, Husch Blackwell L.L.P., League of Women Voters of Missouri, Shook, Hardy & Bacon L.L.P., Women Lawyers' Association of Greater St. Louis, Mary Butts Bruntrager

Join Missouri Humanities

Help us enrich lives and strengthen communities by taking the humanities all across Missouri.

Missouri Humanities depends on the support of individuals, foundations, and our corporate partners to connect Missourians to the people, places, and ideas that shape society.

Through Missouri Humanities' in-person and digital programs, our services reach over 300,000 Missourians each year, offering hundreds of educational opportunities for little or no charge. Your membership will move our work forward and help us reach even more Missourians in the coming years.

Membership opportunities begin at the supporter level and increase incrementally. Memberships at the partner level and above are available for individuals as well as organizations. Benefits are subject to change as the needs of Missouri Humanities, our partners, and Missourians change. Please see our website for up-to-date benefit information.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

- SUPPORTER
\$25
- FRIEND
\$50
- CONTRIBUTOR
\$100
- PARTNER
\$250
- PATRON
\$500
- BENEFACTOR
\$1,000
- SALUS POPULI SOCIETY
Our Salus Populi Society recognizes planned gift and estate donors as well as those making gifts of \$5,000 or more.

View your Missouri Humanities membership options at mohumanities.org/become-a-member, or scan the available QR Code.





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Meet Our Team!

Our staff is passionate about engaging and connecting with the people of the Show Me State to create a more thoughtful, informed, and civil society. We look forward to meeting our readers at events and programs across the state of Missouri!

Back row, left to right: Clarice Britton, Kajja Laney, Chrissy Sommer, Nick Lopez, Michael Saldivar, Chris Kempke, Ashley Beard-Fosnow, Alicia Starr (Board Member).

Front row, left to right: Caitlin Yager, Amy Slaughter, Lisa Carrico, Marci Bennett (Board Member), Marilyn Bradford (Board Member), Trish Erzfeld (Board Chair), Juan Meraz (former Board Member), George Pettigrew (Board Member), Dawn Smith-Popelski (Board Member).

Staff not pictured: Claire Bruntrager, Ashley Vogel.

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Let's Stay in Touch

To keep up to date with humanities activities in Missouri, send us a message at mail@mohumanities.org to be added to our Friends of the Humanities contact list.