



# COMMUNIQUE

A Publication of Mississippi Valley State University for Faculty, Staff, Alumni and Friends | August 4, 2017 Vol. 14 Edition 7

## ACTING PRESIDENT'S VISION FOR MVSU: KEEP MOVING FORWARD

Dr. Jerryl Briggs has a vision for Mississippi Valley State University and that is to keep the institution moving forward.

Briggs has adopted the phrase, 'Valley in Motion' from the universities health and wellness campaign to promote the gains the institution has made and will make in the future.

"To me that means having the vision that we are still moving. We want to put things in place that show our successes and keep us on the forefront. The vision for me is to make sure we are recognized as that great institution we know we are not just in this community, but in the higher education landscape as a whole," said Briggs.

"I have taken the phrase, 'Valley in Motion' from our health campaign with the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation."

On June 15th the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning named Briggs



**BRIGGS**

as Acting President of MVSU. Briggs previously served as executive vice president and chief operating officer at the University.

Dr. Briggs earned his Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry education from Xavier University of

Louisiana, his Master of Arts degree in human relations and supervision from Louisiana Tech University, and both an Educational Specialist degree in higher education administration and doctorate in educational policy, planning and leadership from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. He also completed Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management program.

"I have continued to say that we want to continue on the momentum, growth and sustainability

that we have experienced and will continue to experience," said Briggs. Things have been put in place here that have been successful so there's no need to start the book over," he added.

Through the first month of his role as acting president, Briggs said, "so far, so good."

The New Orleans native has over 25 years of professional experience in higher education administration. Before joining Mississippi Valley State University, he served as vice president for student affairs and enrollment management at Central State University in Ohio.

Prior to Central State University he has held various positions within higher education administration, including serving for ten years at Lincoln University (PA) as vice president for student affairs and enrollment management, and dean of students.

See "Vision" page 4

## ZHENG PUBLISHES FIFTH EDITED BOOK

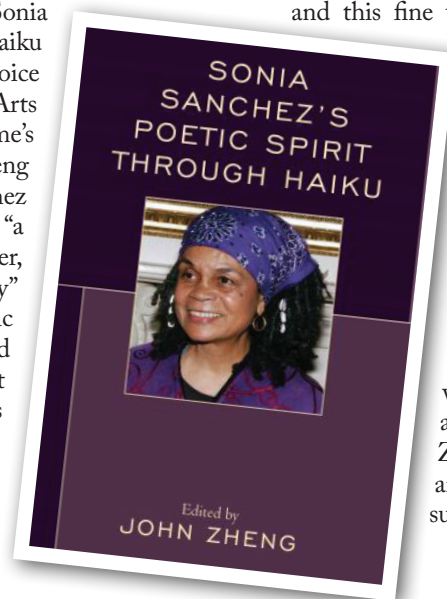
Dr. John Zheng, chair and professor of English at Mississippi Valley State University, has published his fifth edited book, *Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit through Haiku*, in June 2017 with Lexington Books. This collection of ten critical essays is the first scholarly criticism of haiku by Sonia Sanchez, who has exemplified herself for six decades as a major figure in the Black Arts Movement, a central activist in civil rights and women's movements, and an internationally-known writer in American literature. Sanchez's haiku, as an integral and prominent part of contemporary African American poetry, have expressed not only her ideas of nature, beauty, and harmony but also her aesthetic experience of music, culture, and love. Aesthetically, this experience reflects a poetic mind which has helped the poet to shape or reimagine her poetic spirit.

William Ferris, distinguished professor at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

and author of *Give My Poor Heart Ease: Voices of the Mississippi Blues* states that "Sonia Sanchez's Poetic Spirit through Haiku explores how Sonia Sanchez used haiku to empower her voice within the Black Arts Movement. The volume's editor John Zheng explains that Sanchez expressed herself as "a protest poet, a fighter, and a revolutionary" through haiku, a poetic form that originated as Japanese court poetry. Zheng notes that Sanchez, like Richard Wright, embraced haiku as a comfortable, familiar poetic structure. John

Zheng's pioneering work on haiku in Richard Wright in his earlier book *The Other World of Richard Wright: Perspectives on His Haiku* and this fine work on Sonia Sanchez offers the reader a fascinating new perspective on both writers."

Philip C. Kolin, distinguished scholar on Tennessee Williams and editor of *Southern Quarterly* at University of Southern Mississippi says that "John Zheng has assembled a distinguished group of contributors to study Sonia Sanchez's haiku in a volume that needs to be read and savored. The essays, plus Zheng's masterful introduction and own contribution, discuss such powerful topics as the



See "Book" page 5

# WALKER ANNOUNCES NEW WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COACHING STAFF

Mississippi Valley State women's basketball head coach Ashley Walker announced Josh Cooperwood and Joi Walker as assistant coaches for the Mississippi Valley State women's basketball program.

Josh Cooperwood joins the Mississippi Valley State University women's basketball staff as an assistant coach after serving in the same capacity at North Carolina Central University.

Prior to his arrival at NCCU, Cooperwood spent five years serving his alma mater, Tennessee State University, where he worked with the women's basketball program. During his first year on the staff (2011-2012), he served as the Director of Basketball Operations. In 2015, the Lady Tigers won the 2015 Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) Tournament and advanced to the NCAA Tournament, during that time Cooperwood was serving as an assistant coach and the recruiting coordinator.

He was also responsible for recruiting All-OVC players: Chelsea Hudson (2015), Imani Davis (2016), Jayda Johnson (2016) and Brianna Lawrence (2016). Lawrence was also named the

2015 OVC Tournament MVP. Cooperwood served as the defensive coordinator, which involved creating the defensive strategy for each opponent. Under his supervision, the team tallied an overall grade point average of 3.2 and a 100 percent graduation rate during his time at TSU.

Cooperwood's collegiate career at Tennessee State was highlighted by a 2003 All-OVC Second team selection and a career high 32-points against #7 University of Kentucky (Wildcats). While enrolled as a student-athlete at Chattanooga State Community College, Cooperwood was named to the 2001 TJCAA First team, 2001 TJCAA Player of the Year and a 2001 NJCAA All-American.

He played professionally for eight years (2003-2011). While many dream of traveling extensively, Cooperwood had the opportunity to live that dream and play the game he loves. He played in the Euroleague, which took him to Windsor Drive (Canada), Maccabbi Netanya (Israel), Antranik Club (Lebanon), Union Zacatecas (Mexico), Arena Club (Jordan), SL IAT Leotar (Croatia), Sporting Club (Kuwait) and Saba Caspian Mehr (Iran).

A native of Nashville, Cooperwood graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Liberal Arts from Tennessee State and holds an Associate

of Science degree in Communications from Chattanooga State Community College.

Cooperwood is a member of the Women's Basketball Coaches Association and is the father of two, Amiyah and Joshua, Jr.



"I am extremely excited to have Josh on staff. He comes to us from North Carolina Central, which is in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC). Prior to NCCU, he worked in the OVC at his Alma Mater, Tennessee State. Josh also played overseas, so his knowledge and passion for the game is immense. With Josh being from the Nashville area, he will be able to assist with bringing high school students to Mississippi Valley," said Coach A. Walker.

Joi Walker joins the Mississippi Valley State University women's basketball program after two years as an assistant coach at Moberly Area Community College, having previously served as a volunteer assistant coach at Harris Stowe State University in St. Louis during the 2011-2012 season.

See "Coaching" page 5

## TWO MVSU PLAYERS SELECTED FOR NBPA TOP 50 CAMP

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — The list of players from each institution has been finalized in anticipation of the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Top 50 Basketball Camp, will take place, July 20-22 at the Clark Atlanta University Center in Atlanta, GA.

Isaac Williams, 6-4, 181-pound, guard from Lake Charles, La. along with Marcus Romain, 6-2, 174-pound guard from Brooklyn, N.Y. have been chosen for the camp.

The NBPA, in conjunction with the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC), and the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) will hold the inaugural camp, which

will feature 25 of the best players from each conference. Modeled after the NBPA's Top 100 Camp, players will receive skill development sessions on the court from current and retired NBA players and participate in leadership and life skills development sessions off the court.

The list of potential coaches for the event with a NBA playing career background includes New York Knicks forward Kyle O'Quinn (Norfolk State alum), Philadelphia 76ers forward Robert Covington (Tennessee State alum), Utah Jazz forward Derrick Favors (Atlanta native), former Atlanta Hawk guard Gary Neal, Chicago Bulls guard Anthony Morrow, Utah Jazz guard Shelvin Mack and retired 12-year NBA veteran George Lynch.



COOPERWOOD

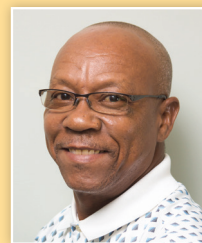


WILLIAMS



ROMAIN

## WELCOME ABOARD



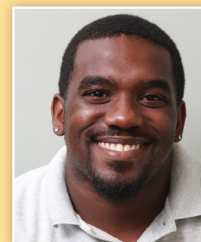
**Kenneth Davis**  
Public Education Coordinator  
Teacher Education



**Karl Delaney**  
General Service Person  
Facilities Management



**Lila Grooms**  
Advisor/Learning Specialist  
Athletics



**Diernisio Moore**  
General Service Person  
Facilities Management

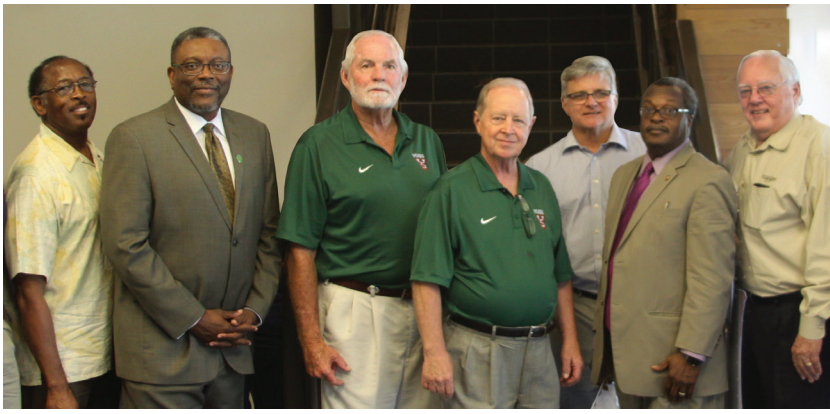




*Farewell Reception*  
in honor of  
**DR. WILLIAM B. BYNUM, JR.,**  
*7<sup>th</sup> President of Mississippi Valley State University.*







# LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC PROPERTY TOUR

## HIGHLIGHTS



### Vision *continued from cover page*

With his background in enrollment management, Briggs has been vocal about the push to increase enrollment with it being the institutions primary goal.

“We have been able to have enrollment growth over the past three years and we want that trend to continue. Although the work of recruiting is coordinated in one office it ultimately is everyone’s responsibility,” said Briggs.

“It is everyone’s job to speak positively about the university to ensure that as we are talking to potential students they understand the good things happening at the university,” said Briggs.

In addition to Valley, Central State and Lincoln University, Briggs has also held positions at Clark Atlanta University, the College of William and Mary, Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign.

Briggs is also a former military man having served six years in the Marines reserves stationed in New Orleans.

As a child Briggs enjoyed many things, but one thing he loved a great deal was music.

“I played the French horn from the sixth grade to college. I also played the mellophone in high school,” said Briggs.

Although Briggs grew up in New Orleans, he was born in Chicago and moved to the south when he was between five and six-years-old.

Briggs said his passion is higher education and he has known that most of his adult life.

“I am a prime example of having your life focus around higher education. Once I found out what my true calling was after graduating college I started to work in it. I have never had a professional job outside of the university environment and it has been a blessing to me,” said Briggs.



# MY VALLEY STORY: VALLEY'S IMPACT ON FAIR IS GREAT

In 2001, when Bradford Fair, '05 crossed the graduation stage of Clarksdale High School he knew without a shadow of a doubt where he would attend college.

Mississippi Valley State University was the place for him, much like it had been for his brother Byron, and their father, Marshall, who attended the university when it was known as Mississippi Vocational College.

"Valley was the place for me. I wanted to be at an HBCU and I wanted to be close to home. That narrowed the search to a very small number of one," said Fair.

From Valley, Fair received a full band scholarship that he maintained and allowed him to march in the band for four years, he served as Mr. MCIS (Mathematics, Computer and Information Sciences) his freshman year and also became a part of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

Because he is skilled in piano, percussion and organ he was able to serve as the pianist for the MVSU Jazz Band. He also performed at events which featured B.B. King, Isaac Hayes, Coretta Scott King, Vanessa Bell Armstrong, as well as other notable university events.

"Being here at Mississippi Valley was special for me," said Fair. "I thrived and became the man I am today. The professors and the family atmosphere at The Valley is second to none."

After graduating from MVSU with a bachelor of science degree in computer science, Fair



decided to return home to Clarksdale. He began to manage his family's business - Royal Funeral Home.

He has held computer technician roles in the Coahoma County and Clarksdale Municipal school districts. Currently, he is an IT specialist for the Desoto County School District, which is the second largest school district in the state of Mississippi.

Following the death of his father in 2008 and his mother, Bobbie in 2016, Fair became CEO of Royal Funeral Home.

"With all that I have lost I have also gained a great deal. I have a wonderful son in B.J. (Bradford Jr.), I love my community and God

has blessed me to run my family's business while also doing what I love."

As a student at Valley, Fair was involved with a lot of activities he said that experience was the foundation to how he is able to juggle so much now.

"I was in everything I could (join) and now, everything I do is like second nature," said Fair. I'm not afraid of any challenge, and when you are a Valley grad, you have to tackle the world with fearlessness.

Always looking for ways to impact his community, Fair created Divine Outreach Ministries in 2008. Because he is a cancer survivor, diagnosed when he was merely eight months, he started the ministry as a way to expose his community to something he felt would uplift them.

Divine Outreach Ministries, which is a ministry set aside to expose the Mississippi Delta to artist who can bring a positive spirit to the area through the ministry of speaking, singing and other talents. Fair has brought to the Clarksdale area national recording artist Marvin Sapp, Tamela & David Mann also known as Cora and Brown from Tyler Perry's Meet the Browns, Rance Allen, Tyga Graham who played Bobby in Tyler Perry's I Can Do Bad All By Myself and the Gospel recording quartet, The Walls Group.

"It is my desire to continue to plant good seeds in the good ground of Clarksdale much like Mississippi Valley State planted good seeds into me."

## Coaching *continued from page 2*

A native of St. Louis, where she graduated from Miller Career Academy, Walker went on to attend Shelton State Community College in Alabama where she was named first team All-Alabama Community College Conference as both a freshman and sophomore. She helped lead the Lady Bucs to two conference championships and two NJCAA National Tournament appearances as Shelton State finished 6th during Walker's freshman campaign and followed that up with a 7th place showing during her sophomore season.

Walker continued her playing career at NCAA Division I South Carolina State University, where she was second on the

team in rebounding and fourth in scoring as a junior. The Lady Bulldogs finished as runners up in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Tournament during the 2010 season.



Walker earned her Bachelor of Science in Accounting from South Carolina State and Master of Arts in Accounting from Clark Atlanta University.

A. Walker stated, "Joi is originally from St. Louis. She attended junior college before transferring to South Carolina State, that's where our ties are. My former coach was also her head coach. She knows how to win and I am aware of the teachings that she received at South Carolina. I am excited to bring Joi on."

## Book *continued from cover page*



ZHENG

origins and development of the African American haiku, racial memory and representation in Sanchez's haiku, and the way she was influenced by and incorporates the blues, civil rights, and ethnographic celebration into her poems. Zheng and his contributors deserve kudos for building

bridges between ancient poetic traditions and one of the today's most prolific and gifted African American poets."

Dr. Zheng appreciates Professor Sanchez for her generous support of this book project, the publisher for their support of academic research, Mississippi Valley State University for the opportunity to best represent the institution in its intellectual enrichment, and the J.H. White Library for their tireless help.



Two  
Minutes  
with...

# Dawn Whitfield

*Administrative Assistant*

## *Tell us a little about yourself and your background.*

I am a native of Fort Smith, Ark. I moved to the Mississippi Delta in 2002 and became a resident of Indianola in 2004. I am most proud of becoming a mother. I have two children Jordan and Julien. Jordan is a senior at the University of Southern Mississippi and Julien a sophomore at the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff. In rearing them I received "Parent of the Year" twice from Indianola School District. During that time I attended Delta State University where I received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Since earning my degree I've exhibited my work consisting of dolls, paintings and fabric designs at art shows, galleries and festivals. My most recent exhibit was a dual show with MVSU art faculty Sodam Lee at the B. B. King Museum.

## *How do you approach providing service?*

I have been employed at MVSU for five years in the Fine Arts Department as the art and music lab supervisor and the administrative assistant. I aid 13 faculty

and assist music and art majors with their daily tasks. Even in the mist of work challenges I have to make sure I am always approachable. I have learned to pay it forward. My helpful spirit is undergirded by the encouragement of many helpful people. I see our department as a surrogate family for many of our students. My parents instilled in me that I should always work hard and give back with kindness. I find it rewarding knowing I have helped students in their college journey, while getting a firsthand view of student successes.

## *Where are we most likely to find you when you are not at work?*

I am most likely at home with my loveable dog "Mac" working, and creating art projects or working in the community of Indianola.

## *What is something we would be surprised to learn about you?*

I grew up as a military brat in the United States Air Force and was fortunate to live all over the world.



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**New Hashtag: #GOMVSU**

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