

# The Tuscaloosa Civil Rights Task Force

# William Bomar

Dr. Bill Bomar has been the Executive Director of The University of Alabama Museums since June 2014, overseeing a museum system that includes the Alabama Museum of Natural History, Moundville Archaeological Park, Gorgas House Museum, M.W. Warner Transportation Museum, Discovering Alabama television program, Office of Archaeological Research, and Department of Museum Research and Collections. He is also chair of a new interdisciplinary graduate museum studies certificate program at UA and an adjunct professor, having taught Museum Administration and Management for the last seven years.

From 1998-2014, Bomar was Director of Moundville Archaeological Park. At Moundville, Bomar oversaw the fundraising, design, planning and implementation of a \$5 million expansion and renovation of the Jones Archaeological Museum, a highly acclaimed project that won national and regional exhibition awards.

An Atlanta native, Bomar holds a B.A. in anthropology and history and a M.Ed. in secondary education/social science from Georgia Southern University. He also holds an M.A. in museum studies (emphasis in anthropology) from the University of Nebraska. In 2012, Bomar completed a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Alabama. Bomar has worked in a variety of museums and heritage sites over the last 29 years. Prior to coming to Moundville Archaeological Park, he was administrator of the Swan House mansion, a 1928 historic house museum at the Atlanta History Center. Additionally, Bomar has worked for the Georgia Southern University Museum, the Coastal Heritage Society (Georgia State Railroad Museum and Old Fort Jackson, Savannah), and the Museum of Nebraska History at the Nebraska State Historical Society.



# Scott Bridges

Musician, academic and social entrepreneur, I value the great American promise of a functioning democratic, pluralistic society. My mother was an immigrant. Scottish. I was raised with the admonition "get an education" recited to me daily. My father, an itinerant intellectual, butcher, salesman and skeptic of all things governmental. They produced values of fearful curiosity and independent behavior which gives me energy and courage most days.

Mary Jolley and I are co- collaborators in the formation of the TCRTF. Our relationship began 29 years ago on our first project : " Realizing the Dream", a now annual UA/Stillman/Shelton State tribute to the life work of Dr. King. James Earl Jones, Della Reese, Cicely Tyson, Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, William Warfield, Vivian Malone Jones, and Maya Angelou were our guests during those first years. I remember very well the answer Mr. Poitier gave to an inquiry by a young theatre student: " Mr. Poitier, at the recent Kennedy Center Awards, you closed your eyes for several seconds before you accepted the accolade. What were you doing ?" Sidney smiled. " I must tell you my father and mother were very poor, illiterate tomato farmers from the Bahamas. I believe that I share inherited visual cells from my parents and during that moment with my eyes closed we talked briefly about what we were about to see.....it was quite wonderful .."



# Nancy Callahan

Having grown up in eastern Tuscaloosa County, I openly expressed my passion for civil rights for all people as an adolescent in 1964, when my mother and I went downtown on a Sunday afternoon to witness a civil rights march leading up to “Bloody Tuesday.” We were not part of the march but felt that our presence symbolized our belief in the Civil Rights Movement in Tuscaloosa. In 1965, still in high school, I regretted that I could not be a part of the Selma to Montgomery March. With journalism background from The University of Alabama, I wrote a book, *The Freedom Quilting Bee* (UA Press, 1987, second printing, 2006) about a group of black females 40 miles from Selma, in Wilcox County, who, within the sphere of the civil rights movement, started a quilting cooperative in 1966. The co-op became nationally recognized and sparked a renaissance of the use of quilting in American interior décor. Only two to four generations from slavery, the quilters had marched with Dr. King and were jailed for advocating for their right to vote. In the aftermath of the 2011 tornado in Tuscaloosa, FEMA appointed me co-chair of an arts and heritage committee advising the federal agency of ways to rebuild the Holt school zone community. In that role, in December 2011, I produced a Christmas concert of Holt area choirs, the first such event bringing those black and white choirs together. In February 2012, through the FEMA committee, I put together a first-ever “Black History Month” program at Holt High School, with an array of black and white speakers sharing their experiences in segregation and integration. I presently am at work on a book manuscript about integration in Choctaw County, which slowly and painfully unfolded in the 1970s. I was a docent at the Westervelt-Warner Museum of American Art, and a member of the Bryce Hospital Historic Preservation Committee. Aside from my studies at UA, I did further study at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Huntingdon College, and Mississippi State University. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and do counseling work at a local private mental health facility.





# Katherine Edge

Katherine Edge is a native of Tuscaloosa. She attended The University of Alabama and graduated with honors majoring in Anthropology with an English minor. After UA, she went overseas to complete her Master's degree in Museum Studies at The University of Leicester in Leicester, England. The experience at Leicester was amazing and included the opportunity for an eight week internship with The Royal Collection. Katherine worked in the Decorative Arts Department at Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace. She also had the opportunity to meet Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (a true honor!) and handled many historical artifacts in preparation for the Summer Opening of Buckingham Palace. After completing her Master's, she returned to Tuscaloosa and worked at the Westervelt Warner Museum of American Art (now the Tuscaloosa Museum of Art) then spent six years as the executive director of the Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society. She is excited to be a part of The University of Alabama Museum Department as the director of the Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum and looks forward to the opportunity to use the museum to enhance the Tuscaloosa community.



# Billy Field

Billy Field is one of the last people on earth to see the meteor shoot across the sky on November 30, 1954, crash through Ann Hodges roof, bounce off her radio and hit her right on the rear-end, making her famous. Billy sold that story to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. He has written for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, Warner Brothers and the TV series FAME for MGM. He teaches screenwriting and documentary film production at The University of Alabama. His student's films, dealing with Alabama history and Alabama biography, are on their website at [LightsCameraAlabama.com](http://LightsCameraAlabama.com).



# John Giggie

Dr. John Giggie is Associate Professor of History and African American Studies and Director of the Summersell Center for the Study of the South at the University of Alabama. His research specializations include the American South, African American history, and American religious history. He has authored or edited eight books and is currently preparing a manuscript on “Bloody Tuesday,” a civil rights protest in June 1964 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, in which black protestors battled local law enforcement and KKK members on the steps of First African Baptist Church. Over 90 demonstrators were jailed and 30 more hospitalized in one of the bloodiest days in the movement. Dr. Giggie also edits the Religion and American Culture series for the University of Alabama Press. His research has been funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Louisville Center for the Study of American Religion, the Lilly Foundation, the Pew Foundation, the Center for the Study of American Religion at Princeton University, and the American Historical Association.

As an instructor at the University of Alabama, Dr. Giggie he has been named a Distinguished Fellow in Teaching and awarded the Excellence in Community Engagement Prize for his class on religion and Civil Rights in West Alabama, which was recognized as a national model for service learning. While previously teaching at the University of Texas at San Antonio, he won the Presidential Distinguished Achievement Award for Teaching.



# Hillary Green

Dr. Hilary N. Green is an Assistant Professor of History in the Department of Gender and Race Studies at the University of Alabama. She earned her B.A. in History with minors in

Africana Studies and Pre-Healing Arts from Franklin and Marshall College; M.A. in History from Tufts University; and Ph.D. in History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research and teaching interests include the intersections of race, class, and gender in African American history, the American Civil War, Reconstruction, Civil War Memory, the US South, 19th Century America, and the Black Atlantic. She is the author of *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (Fordham University Press, April 2016) as well as articles, book reviews, encyclopedia entries, and a book chapter in *The Urban South During the Civil War Era*, edited by Andrew L. Slap and Frank Towers, (University of Chicago Press, 2015).



# Mary Allen Jolley

A native of Sumter County and a 1951 graduate of The University of Alabama, Mary Jolley was an Alabama public school teacher before answering the call to serve in the Nation's capital. As a young staff member for legendary U.S. Congressman Carl A. Elliott, Sr., she was directly involved in the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Much of the economic growth our nation has experienced over the last half century is a result of its passage. America's first student loan program, the NDEA, opened the doors of higher education for millions who otherwise might not have had that opportunity.

During the Kennedy Administration, Mrs. Jolley served on a Presidential panel charged with evaluating national vocational education programs. Her efforts led to legislation that redirected training opportunities for America's workforce. She later assisted President Lyndon Johnson's National Commission on Libraries. Subsequently, Mrs. Jolley was Vice President for Development at Trident Technical College in Charleston, South Carolina. Her achievements included developing programs to educate women for non-traditional jobs and establishing an effective center for adult retraining.

In 1984 Mary Jolley was named Director of Economic and Community Affairs for The University of Alabama. At the Capstone she created individualized outreach programs for towns and cities across the state, helping them recruit industry, retain existing businesses, and prepare a qualified workforce to meet emerging needs. Through her efforts, community based family resource centers were developed, paving the way for an improved quality of life for children and adults. Her advocacy skills and boundless energy became powerful tools for progress that helped vault Alabama to international stature in economic development during the early 1990's.

Retiring from the University in 1994, Mrs. Jolley has continued to invest her talents generously for the betterment of her fellow citizens. Through the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers, she assists communities, particularly in the Black Belt, on issues related to children and families, health, education, literacy, and job creation. Among honors and recognition, she is the recipient of an Honorary Degree from The University of Alabama; chosen by The University of Alabama Alumni Association to receive Distinguished Alumna Award; the Martin Luther King Realizing the Dream Founders Award, and named the Alabama Entrepreneur Institute's Social Entrepreneur of the Year in 2009. In 2015 she was named a Pillar of West Alabama. Mrs. Jolley currently serves as a Senior Fellow of The UA Education Policy Center. She makes her home at Capstone Village.



# Tina Jones

Tina began her career in the Hospitality & Tourism Industry in 1983 in Huntsville, AL. as a Desk Clerk at the Sheraton Inn after completing her Associates Degree. She fell in love with the industry and continued to move up, furthering her education in business along with dedicated hospitality courses. She is a graduate of Marriott Global Sales School, and is a Marriott Certified Wedding Planner. Her love for the industry took her from hotels to Tourism in 2012 when she was hired by TTS. She is passionate about promoting Tuscaloosa & West Alabama and helping her community and State economically through Tourism.





# Tim Lewis

A great connector of potential, resources and technology, Tim Lewis' storied career began in 1987.

Originally the only employee of the appropriately named T.A. Lewis and Associates, today "the really good engineer who can talk" is now President and CEO of TALA Professional Services, an international technology and business management firm with a global clientele. TALA's notable client roster includes Honda, Mercedes-Benz USA International, IBM Global Services, Rosser international (USA Army base — Italy) and The Telecommunications & Technology Services Consortium (representing Bose, Paul, the Gillette Company, Waters, Polaroid and St. Gobain) among many others.

An outspoken proponent of technomics (the power of technology to drive economic prosperity), Tim conceived and leads the Connected Community Program, currently improving cities across the United States. Connected Communities have potential to positively and profoundly impact entire communities.

Tim's combination of capitalistic and altruistic values have made him a much sought after speaker, trainer and advisor in a variety of sectors. Distinguished honors he has received include the Blue-Chip Enterprise Initiative Award, Small Business Person of the Year, Minority Business Leadership Award and serving as a delegate to the 1995 White House Conference on Small Business. Additionally, Tim currently serves on the boards of Junior Achievement, Salvation Army, UAB Health System, UA Health Services Foundation, Birmingham Business Alliance, Tech Birmingham, and Lawson State Community College Foundation.





# Rebecca Todd Minder

Rebecca Todd Minder is the Digital Media Editor for Alabama Heritage magazine, our state's history magazine that is co-published by The University of Alabama, UAB, and the Alabama Department of Archives and History. She coordinates all social media, special online sales and subscriptions, website content, and the magazine's digitization efforts. Rebecca earned a Master of Arts degree in American studies with a focus on Southern popular culture and her Bachelor of Arts in public relations, both from The University of Alabama. Before joining Alabama Heritage, Rebecca was the publicist for The University of Alabama Press, and a managing editor at Randall-Reilly Publishing for two of its construction industry magazines. In between, Rebecca found time to be an English/Language Arts teacher for middle school at Holy Spirit Catholic Regional School.

At both UA Press and Alabama Heritage, Rebecca has and continues to work with some of the Southeast's most distinguished and impactful authors, specializing in civil rights, Alabama history, and social justice such as Frye Gaillard, Wayne Flynt, Guy Hubbs, Rick Bragg, Lila Weaver, BJ Hollars, and Ben Windham. She helped coordinate and facilitated a civil rights bus tour, which encompassed four cities in three days. Rebecca also worked with Bernice King, daughter of Martin and Coretta Scott King, on a book tour for Desert Rose, a book about Coretta and written by Coretta's sister, Edith Bagley.

Rebecca serves as a board member for the Alabama Historical Association, a member of the Arts & Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa, the vice president of communications for the Public Relations Council of West Alabama, and a member of the Southern Public Relations Federation.

Rebecca and her husband, Gary, are charter members of the newly formed social-justice-minded Grace Presbyterian Church, which was founded based on the merger of Covenant and University Presbyterian Churches, and is a place where all are welcome to worship, regardless of race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin. Rebecca and Gary reside in Tuscaloosa, where they both are proud graduates of Central High School's Class of 1984, which was one of the first classes to graduate from the new school that was formed because of federal-ordered desegregation. They are the parents of five children and an 85-pound, overly lovable chocolate lab.



# Gina Simpson

Gina Simpson is the CEO of Tuscaloosa Tourism & Sports (TTS), a 501 c(6) non-profit organization funded by the City of Tuscaloosa & the Tuscaloosa County Commission. The primary purpose of TTS is to enhance economic development through destination promotion. In 2014 under Simpson's leadership, TTS created a \$42 million economic impact, invested \$430,000 back into the community and generated over 23,000 room nights leading to unprecedented growth in lodging tax revenue. Gina is a native of Alabama, resident of Tuscaloosa, and a multiple graduate of The University of Alabama with a B.S. in Management and a M.S. in Marketing.

She has spent her career as a serial entrepreneur, consultant and professor, which has given her extensive experience in local economic development and small business growth. Gina and her husband Mark began their entrepreneurial journey in the field of construction and have founded five businesses over the last 15 years. Currently, Gina serves as President of Regina Holdings, LLC, a private consulting and investment firm she founded in 2010. Additionally, Gina spent time as adjunct professor for The University of Alabama and Shelton State Community College in the areas of Entrepreneurship and Leadership. She is a graduate of Leadership Tuscaloosa and is very active in the community, serving on several boards. Gina and Mark have been married for 16 years and have a 6-year-old daughter, Della.



# Samyra Snoddy

Samyra Snoddy graduated from the University of Alabama with a BS in Corporate Finance Investment Management and Human Resource Management. She received her MS in Management from the University of Phoenix. Samyra was employed for 10 years at Stillman College and is currently employed with the City of Tuscaloosa in the Accounting and Finance department.

A native of Tuscaloosa, Samyra was first exposed to and gained a passion for equality and justice through her parents Mr. & Mrs. Sam and Mary Snoddy. He was a business owner and she is a retired teacher's aide. While working at Stillman, she developed a passion for educating youth on the importance of voter education, civil rights, and politics. She assisted hundreds of students to register to vote.

Samyra helped organized several programs aimed at mentoring and developing young black leaders in the community. In 2014, following the death of Travon Martin, she worked with her sorority to collaborate with the Tuscaloosa City Board of Education and organized "Empowering Students on Rights and Responsibilities". In 2015, for the MLK March "Still Marching for Justice for All" she collaborated with the local Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and organized a memorial tribute using youth to speak to honor those who lost their lives to senseless violence. In the fall of 2015, she organized "Youth In Leadership and Politics" forum.

She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc and a member Bethel Baptist Church. She serves on United Way of West Alabama Campaign Cabinets and on the board of directors for Temporary Emergency Service and Tuscaloosa Tourism & Sports.



# Danny Ray Steele

Danny R. Steele was born in 1949 to the late Charlie and Eleanor Steele in Tuscaloosa, AL. He is a 1967 graduate of the mighty Druid Dragons of Druid High School. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree from Mississippi Valley State College in Itta Bena, MS in 1971.

In 1972 he graduated from the National Executive Institute in Mendham, NJ, and in 1984 graduated from Jefferson State Community College of Birmingham, AL, where he earned an Associate Degree in Funeral Service Education. He presently holds the title of National License Funeral Director and Embalmer and is a former Eye Enucleation Technician of the Alabama Eye Bank. He is currently a member of Bailey Tabernacle C.M.E. Church in Tuscaloosa, AL, where he serves as the Adult Sunday School Superintendent and the worship service greeter.

Mr. Steele is a former District Executive of the Detroit Area Council Boy Scouts of America in Detroit, MI, where he lived for eight years and a former board member of the Arts Council of Tuscaloosa, AL. He was appointed to the Alabama Board of Funeral Services by former Governor Jim Folsom and reappointed by former Governor Fob James. He is the co-owner of Van Hoose and Steele Funeral Home and Cremation Services, Inc., the oldest funeral home and the oldest African American business in Tuscaloosa, AL.

He served as a former chairman of Maude L. Whatley Health Center and is currently Chairman of McDonald Hughes Community Center and a member of the Downtown Redevelopment Committee of Tuscaloosa. Mr. Steele hosts a 30 minute radio program on five gospel stations every Sunday morning where he touch the lives of listening audiences with gospel music, funeral announcements, pre-need information, Black Biblical Heritage and community Church announcements. He is a foot soldier and participant in the Civil Rights Movement in Tuscaloosa, including Bloody Tuesday, June 9, 1964. He was the Chairman of Alabama Mississippi Blues Production/Festival; Chairman of Knight Sound Production; Chairman of Steele/Range Group.

He is a member of AFDMA (Alabama Funeral Directors & Mortician Association, Inc.), NFDMA (National Funeral Directors & Mortician Association, Inc.) and a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.

Mr. Steele and his lovely wife Regina are the proud parents of two beautiful daughters; Danielle Steele Williams (Keith) in Tuscaloosa, AL, and Stephanie Steele-Wheeler (Rodney) in East Point, GA. They have three precious grandchildren; Kennadi Elise, Kendall Mekhi and Ty Logan. For relaxation he enjoys spending time with his grandchildren; watching sports; and listening to music. He also has a love for training dogs.



# Harrison Taylor

Mr. Harrison Taylor was born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He is married to Verdelle H. Taylor and they have two sons, one daughter and six grandchildren. Councilman Taylor was educated in the Tuscaloosa Public Schools, graduating from Druid High School and Shelton State Community College (C. A. Fredd Campus). He is retired from the United States Postal Service as a letter carrier after 34 years of service. Councilman Taylor has served as City Councilman for District 2 since August, 1993, running unopposed in 2009 and 2013. During his previous term, Mr. Taylor served as President Pro-Tem of the City Council, Chairman of the Community Development Council Committee, Vice Chairman of the Finance Council Committee and was a member of the Administration Council Committee. |





# Willie Mae Ike Wells

Mrs. Willie Mae Ike Wells, a trailblazer, a civil rights and political activist, was born into a segregated society in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, in the early 1940's. Her mother was a domestic worker, and her father worked for the railroad. She attended a segregated elementary and high school. She graduated from Druid High School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama with a scholarship to attend Stillman College. Ms. Wells graduated in 1965 where she received a B.A. degree in Business Education with a minor in English. In 1964, while still enrolled at Stillman, she answered a call to join forces for the GREATER CAUSE of FREEDOM, JUSTICE and EQUALITY for all, and became a FOOT SOLDIER in a Non- Violent Movement called the Civil Rights Movement in Tuscaloosa. A distinguish activist for racial equality, Ms. Wells attended mass meetings and assumed an active role in marching against racial injustices. She served as Secretary to Rev. Dr. T. Y. Rogers, Jr, leader of the Civil Rights Movement in Tuscaloosa, for one year. Mrs. Wells shares her experiences of brutal racial discrimination by serving on civil rights panels, recording oral history, and serving as a prominent speaker in schools, colleges, churches, and civil rights programs.

Mrs. Wells thanks God for the many miles she walked, the time she spent in jail, and for the sacrifice of time and service to a cause that was greater than she. She proudly says, as Maya Angelou so eloquently pinned and said, "I know why the caged bird sings". "For he whom God has set free is free indeed."



# Tom Wilson

Tom is currently the Associate Dean for Branch Libraries and Digital Student Services at the University of Alabama Libraries. As such, he oversees three branch libraries (Business, Education, and Science and Engineering), the Sanford Media Center, and the Alabama Digital Humanities Center, along with other administrative duties. He has over 30 years of experience in developing, implementing, maintaining, and retiring information technology in libraries and higher education. At UA Tom was the original architect of the Acumen digital archive software and in 2010 instrumental in establishing and leading the Alabama Digital Humanities Center. As a trained facilitator, he enjoys building communities and solutions.

