

BLACK IN APPALACHIA

research, education and support

2024 **annual report**



Bessie Woodson Yancey



Unnamed Railroad Workers, Hamblen County, Tennessee

[courtesy: Morris Sherles, Russellville, TN]

Sitting Still & Moving Mountains

“In 2024, we continued the work of the past two or so years to settle into our physical space here in Whitesburg, Tennessee. We’ve expanded our bookstore offerings with several truckloads of texts from the Highlander Center. Black in Appalachia also took on the role of collecting & distributing flood relief supplies & funding support in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. The amount of solidarity internal to the impacted region was heartening to witness, even in the midst of an atmosphere of poisoned public discourse. Regardless & in spite of the state & national events, we’ve taken solace in the beautiful & proactive work here in Hamblen & surrounding counties.”

William Isom II, Director of Black in Appalachia

“

Ever since we landed here, we've had to be forward thinking in regards to the idea of Home. We've always had to improvise ourselves. It's Jazz. It's not a leaving-of-everything-behind, we're remixing.

Dr. Karida Brown

”



Black in Appalachia Podcast

SEASON 5



When we started the Black in Appalachia podcast, we couldn't have imagined the national engagement that would consistently occur with this project. Now, with Dr. Enkeshi El-Amin's new role at Agnes Scott College, other team members have hopped into the production.

The podcast team has begun to re-edit previous episodes for airing on traditional community radio stations, such as WMMT in Whitesburg, Kentucky while continuing to provide content for our regular downloading audience. This season began with stories more rooted in our day-to-day field work and ended with a live recorded episode at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Going forward, you'll see more diversity in hosting & a greater focus on our current lines of research & methods.



Trey Wellington Band



Black in Appalachia Homecoming, Whitesburg, TN



Appalachian Studies Conference, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC



Mrs. Delphine Yeary Blevins, Toney's Chapel, Hamblen County, TN



Bewley's Chapel, Russellville, TN



Kelle Jolly & Ronnie Peppers Homecoming, Whitesburg, TN



Center for the Study of Southern Culture, Oxford, MS



AHERN Awards, Johnson City, TN



Bonner Congress, Oberlin College, Ohio



Southern Memory Workers Gathering, Highlander Center, New Market, TN



OAH Conference, New Orleans



IASA Conference, Valencia, Spain

Documentary Film

Liberated Landscapes: Black Appalachian Ohio

From over 5 years of documentation & interviews, interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, we were finally able to complete the film “Liberated Landscape”. This short documentary covers the history of Emancipation Day in Southeastern Ohio. The rural, Black, and Appalachian communities of Gallia and Lawrence Counties preserve and maintain complex narratives vital to understanding the Midwestern United States. From the oldest continually celebrated Emancipation Day in the US to the oldest still-functioning Black church, Liberated Landscape provides viewers with a short and concentrated glimpse of the rich history produced by a river, the mountains, and a desire for freedom.

Field Office

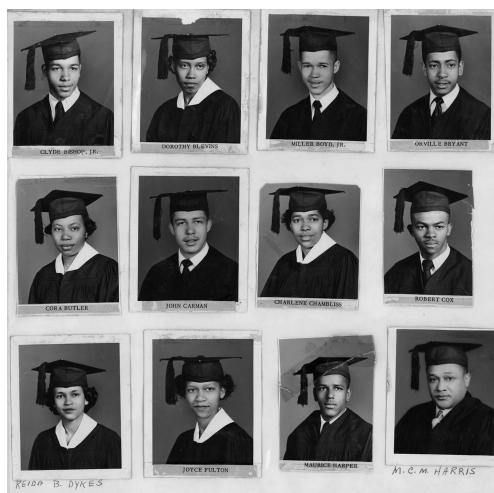
Whitesburg, Tennessee

The life & heartbeat of Black in Appalachia these days is certainly our building. This space as a point of public engagement with set open hours has proven to be continually edifying. In January, and with the help of Prometheus Radio Project, we were awarded a low-power FM radio license. 2025 will be the year that we actually begin building this new community-based communications tool. In the meantime, we’ve taken on the task of converting the old “Bait Shop” into a commercial grade kitchen. We envision this resource will not only be a more useful space for our fish fries, but a place that community members can produce value added products for selling.

In the devastation of Hurricane Helene, we were able to utilize our garage space as a relief supplies drop off location for the communities of Bybee, Parrottsville in Tennessee & Marshall, North Carolina.



Research



Morrystown College Graduation Photos, 1890 - 1951

In partnership with the Reunion of the Ages Alumni Association, we were able to digitize, catalog, index & make publicly available the Morrystown College & Morrystown College High School graduation photographs. This resource proved immediately useful as a cross reference tool to help identify & research the teachers produced by the school & their work in small Black schools, whose records we've previously digitized.

Oral Histories: Bristol, TN/VA

In 2024, we continued to assist in the gathering of oral histories associated with Black life in Bristol, Tennessee & Virginia. In support of the long running work of Tina McDaniel, this year, we also partnered with the Appalachian Studies Department at Virginia Tech. Those students provided increased capacity for recording & transcribing even more interviews with elders. We're looking forward to gathering even more oral histories in 2025, transcribing, indexing & making those available to the public.

Personal Collections, Russellville, Tennessee

As part of the work to renovate Bewley's Chapel Church in Russellville, we've begun the process of collecting oral histories & digitizing family materials & the history of the church itself. This work is being conducted in partnership with the Congregation of Bewley's, East Tennessee State University's Archives of Appalachia and Reece Museum. "Bewley's Chapel conveys a very powerful story that cannot be forgotten, of how freed people took the resources before them and built lasting community institutions that through faith, fellowship, and compassion would serve the members and their neighbors through the tough times of Jim Crow America. Its persistence today is

a living testimony to the importance of the church to rural African American communities.” Dr. Carol Van West, Tennessee State Historian

Support

Henderson Chapel & Bewley's Chapel

We continue to provide expanded support for the renovations of two historic churches in our region. At Henderson Chapel AME Zion in Rutledge, they were able to get the building up off of the ground & secure funding to move renovations forward.

The active congregation of Bewley's Chapel in Russellville have been amazing partners in fundraising, fish fries, oral history collections & associated materials digitization.

Unfortunately, the leader of the Henderson Chapel effort, Kenny Dailey, passed this year. All involved parties are now dedicated to seeing Kenny's dream come to fruition.



Black Appalachian Storytellers of Tennessee

Our co-worker & friend Kelle Jolly jumped in the deep end of organizing & supporting Black creatives across the region. A part of that work was getting a robust cohort of Black Appalachian Storytellers to the annual National Association of Black Storytellers gathering in Buffalo, New York. BIA was delighted to be able to provide some support toward their travel costs.

Slave Cemetery, Clay County, North Carolina

With funding provided by Asheville's Co-thinkk Collective, we were able to dedicate support for the on-going work to preserve & memorialize those formerly enslaved people at rest in a cemetery in rural Clay County, North Carolina. This work is in partnership with Fort Hembree Baptist Church & Rev. Holbrook.

George Clem Multicultural Alliance, Greeneville, Tennessee

This year we were delighted to be able to, thanks to the Weissberg Foundation, provide unrestricted support to our long-time partners

on-the-ground in Greene County. GCMA works across issues & sectors to maintain the health, history & culture of their community.

Education

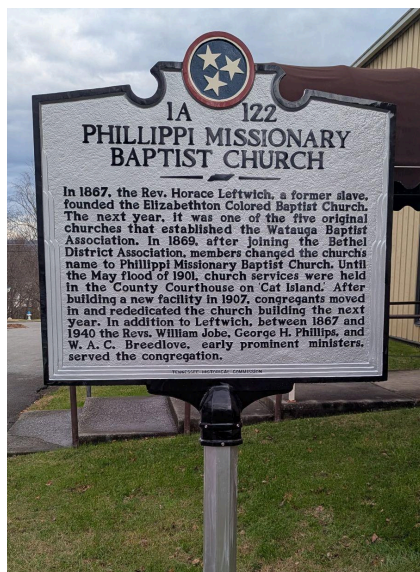
History Pin & Shift Collective

Through the networking & labor of Alona, Black in Appalachia has developed a great working relationship with the Shift Collective. Their mission is to create measurable and lasting social change by developing inclusive cultural memory experiences that give voice to unheard narratives and perspective. With them, Black in Appalachia began engaging with the HistoryPin platform as a tool for placing some of our research & community donated items on a map-based website. To-date our collection pages have hundreds of items from across the region.



Clark Family, Robert Clark Lynching Memorial, Bristol, VA

Marker Re-installation, Elizabethton, TN



Lumbeeland Screening, Knoxville, TN

Outreach

This past year, Black in Appalachia worked to hone in on some really specific tabling and outreach events, with a particular focus on places we hadn't visited in a while. Those events included:

- Appalachian Studies Conference, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC
 - 8th of August, Greeneville, TN
 - 8th of August, Pennington Gap, VA
 - FunFest, Kingsport, Tennessee
- Bonners Congress, Oberlin College, OH
- 5th Annual Heritage Fair, Jonesborough

Presentations, Workshops & Panels

- *Black in Appalachia*, Sociology of Appalachia, Maryville College, Maryville, TN
 - *Black in Appalachia*, Southern Memory Workers Gathering, Highlander Center, New Market, TN
 - *Community-led Archives*, Center for Folklore Studies, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
 - *Black in Appalachia* Podcast, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
 - *MLK Jr. Day*, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Abingdon, VA
 - *Black in Appalachia*, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS
 - *Black in Appalachia*, Organization of American Historians Conference, New Orleans, LA
 - *Uncovering, Sharing and Preserving Black Stories in Southern Appalachia*, International Association of Sound & Audiovisual Archivists, Valencia, Spain
 - *From the Grassroots Roundtable*, East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville, TN
 - *Black in Appalachia*, Shift Collective, Mescalero, NM
 - *Black Teachers & Rural Schools*, Carter G. Woodson Center, Berea, KY
 - *Black WNC*, Appalachian Studies Conference, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC
 - *Black Chesnutts*, Civil War Symposium, East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville, TN
 - *Screening, Liberated Landscape*, Big Ears, Knoxville, TN
 - *Screening, Liberated Landscape*, Bonner Congress, Oberlin College, OH
 - *Black Businesses of McMinn County*, McMinn Heritage Center, Athens, TN
-

Community Partners



2024 Numbers

Income

Foundational Support: \$289,049

Reimbursements: \$8,992

Program Revenue: \$8,874

\$306,915 - Total Income

Expenses (*Research, Education & Support*)

Labor: \$85,108

Support (Other Orgs): \$58,790

Building & Utilities: \$23,629

Travel: \$30,024

Materials/Equipment: \$30,036

Digital Services: \$7,980

\$235,567 - Total Expenses

SUPPORTING FUNDERS & FOUNDATIONS



BLACK IN APPALACHIA

We work to highlight the history & contributions of African Americans in the development of the Mountain South & its culture. We do that through research, local narratives, public engagement & exhibition. Black in Appalachia is a community service for Appalachian residents and families with roots in & through the region.

Team Members



Alona Norwood, Community Archivist
 Amira Sakalla, Transcriptions
 Bill McCabe, Board Member
 C. Lee Smith, Director of Production Development
 Chris Aluka Berry, Videographer
 Cathy Wilson, Treasurer/Secretary
 Dr. Enkeshi El-Amin, Podcast Co-Host & Producer
 Elijah Lundin, Podcast Editor
 Fredrick Watkins, Podcast Editor
 Jaime Bagwell, Board Chair
 Joy Loving, Writer
 Kamora Hunt, Bookstore Manager
 Kelle Jolly, Cultural Organizer
 Malcolm Bamba, Social Media
 Nina Richards, Digital Archivist
 Precious Brown, SE Tennessee Researcher
 Rev. Roger Mills, Board Member
 Ron Carson, Board Member
 William Isom II, Director

Podcast Studio
 East Tennessee PBS
 1611 East Magnolia Avenue
 Knoxville, TN 37917
 865.595.0220

Field Office & Research Room
 8400 E. Andrew Johnson Highway
 PO Box 37
 Whitesburg, TN 37891
 423-277-7162

Info@BlackInAppalachia.org
 www.BlackInAppalachia.org | www.BlackInAppalachia.Omeka.net
