

Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows

The Black Appalachian Storytellers Fellowship honors, celebrates, and supports Black storytellers representing the Appalachian counties (as designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission) of Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina. This is a partnership between the National Association of Black Storytellers, Mid Atlantic Arts, and South Arts. The Black Appalachian Storytellers Fellowship is administered by the National Association of Black Storytellers.

The NABS Black Appalachian Storytellers Fellowship is funded in part by Mid Atlantic Arts' Central Appalachia Living Traditions Program and South Arts' In These Mountains, Central Appalachian Folk Arts & Culture initiatives.

In 2026, NABS Black Appalachian Storytellers Fellowships provides six (6) \$5,000 awards to support experienced practitioners and culture bearers with opportunities to examine, research, develop, perform, and/or document the Black Appalachian storytelling tradition. Fellowships are awarded to represent each of the six eligible states.

Fellows receive additional funding to apply toward travel and lodging to the 44th *"In the Tradition..."* Annual National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference, November 3-8, 2026 in Providence, Rhode Island.

Fellows will receive a one- year membership to the National Association of Black Storytellers.

2026 Fellows

From the South Arts Region

Kentucky

Leanna T. Luney, PhD



LeAnna T. Luney, PhD is an author, educational ethnographer, and assistant professor of African American Studies at Berea College (Madison County, KY), and Director of The FREE Zion Project (Meade County, KY). Of Appalachian heritage, LeAnna learned about her Melungeon roots, and what life was like in North Carolina's tobacco fields and West Virginia's coalmines before her family moved to Kentucky. Her family oftentimes shared their stories over art, such as woodcarving, crocheting, and dollmaking.

LeAnna now relies on the oral and artistic storytelling practices that her family passed down to create spaces of educational empowerment for Black Americans in rural Kentucky. She carries Black storytelling traditions that create space for people to speak truth to power, reclaim their dignity, and build platforms where Black rural Kentuckians and Appalachians are at the center. Dr. Luney's most recent work honors Black storytelling through an intergenerational approach that preserves folk's school stories through community archiving, lively Black history classes and programming, and liberatory learning strategies at the Zion Freedom School.

North Carolina

Lucretia VanDyke



Lucretia VanDyke is a Black Appalachian storyteller, author, herbalist, educator, grief and death doula, and community healer with more than 30 years of experience preserving and sharing traditional healing and cultural practices. Born and raised in the Appalachian Mountains, Lucretia's storytelling is rooted in the voices, traditions, foodways, folklore, healing practices, and lived experiences of Black Appalachian communities.

Her journey began on her grandparents' farm, where she learned to work with herbs, roots, food, and the knowledge passed through generations. As a young person, she began collecting stories and researching the history and traditions of people of African descent, a practice that became the foundation of her work as a storyteller, writer, and culture bearer. She authored *African American Herbalism: A Practical Guide to Plants and Folk Traditions*, which documents African American contributions to herbal medicine and folk traditions. Through Grief Cafés, community healing circles, workshops, and storytelling gatherings, she creates spaces where people can share stories of loss, ancestry, resilience, and place.

Tennessee

Rita Lorraine Hubbard



Rita Lorraine Hubbard is an award-winning author, historian, educator, and Black Appalachian storyteller from Chattanooga, Tennessee. For more than 25 years, she has gathered and shared stories of Black people whose lives and contributions have too often been overlooked. Her books include *The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read*, *Hammering for*

Freedom, *African Americans of Chattanooga: A History of Unsung Heroes*, and her newest book, *It's Possible: The Story of Ronald McNair*. She has shared stories orally in schools, libraries, churches, summer programs, writers' conferences, historical societies, and community programs, including the Bessie Smith Cultural Center, the Historical Society of Franklin, Tennessee, and the Medal of Honor Museum. Through writing, research, teaching, and storytelling, Hubbard works to preserve the past, pass its stories forward, and leave no ancestor behind.

2026 Fellows
From the Mid Atlantic Region

Ohio

Maureen Cadogan



Maureen Cadogan is a dedicated cultural preservationist, storyteller, and community leader rooted in Portsmouth, Ohio. Affectionately known as a "Flame Keeper" of the Black Appalachian tradition, Maureen is a volunteer Black history and multicultural educator who brings history to life through her multi-sensory storytelling. She is the creator and curator of the Black History Mobile Museum, which featured a landmark exhibition at the Southern Ohio Museum.

Her expertise in narrative preservation was utilized by The Ohio State University Folklore Field School, where her history in regional oral history collection was documented. Her creative background also includes a successful career as a professional gospel singer and serving as a team and cast member for the award-winning documentary *Peerless City*. Maureen loves the Lord with all her heart and is devoted to her family. Guided by her daily mantra, "If I can help somebody as I pass along this way... then my living will not be in vain," she continues to ensure that the vital history of Black Appalachia remains visible, vocal, and celebrated.

West Virginia

Ron Scott, Jr

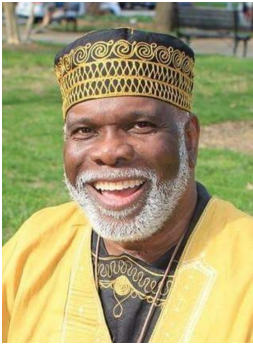


Ron Scott Jr. was born in Wheeling WV. His love for community, justice, and creativity has led him to Chairman of the Wheeling MLK Celebration Committee, former President and VP of the Upper Ohio Valley NAACP, former Vice Chairman of the Wheeling Human Rights Commission, founder of the Ohio Valley African American Students Association(OVAASA) and founder of Men of Change. Scott believes storytelling is essential to expressing cultural competence, unity, and diversity.

He wrote and performed *Wheeling's 20th Man* and produced *A History of Black Music in America* and *Hip-Hop: A Black Tie Affair*. These Black Appalachian events weave together stories, folklore, rituals, and shared experiences. As a cultural preservationist, he believes the power of storytelling lies in the fact that everyone has a story. In his role as Cultural Diversity & Community Outreach Director at the YWCA in Wheeling, Ron uses storytelling to build awareness of shared experiences and connect people across cultures and communities.

Virginia

Lorenzo "Baba-C" Calender II



Lorenzo Calender is a third generation Black Appalachian storyteller known throughout the storytelling world as "The Honorable Baba-C, GMS." He is a Griot and Master Storyteller whose career spans more than four decades. Celebrated as Washington, D.C.'s foremost interactive Griot, Baba-C blends storytelling with theatre, weaving African and African American folktales, narratives, history, and wisdom into performances built on call-and-response and audience participation.

He has represented the art of the Griot on the world stage, participating in a Guinness World Record for the longest continuous storytelling event at the Marrakesh International Storytelling Festival and has hosted four radio programs, including *Can You Imagine* and *Under the Story Tree* on WPFW. As a long-standing youth advocate he has created literary and apprenticeship programs. Performances include appearances at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall, the Kennedy Center, the Historic Lincoln Theatre, and the opening celebration of the National Museum of African American History. Baba-C adapted the Griot tradition for the screen, continuing a legacy that carried him to more than fifty countries via a Voice of America television and radio simulcast under the honorary title "The Griot heard around the world."

Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows 2025

"In These Mountains"...Southern Region

Hasan Davis, Kentucky
DeWayne Barton, North Carolina
Jazmine LeBlanc, Tennessee

"Central Appalachia Living Traditions"...Mid Atlantic Region

Trevellyya "Tee"Ford, Ohio
Doris "Lady D" Fields, West Virginia
Naomi Hodge Muse, Virginia

Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows 2024

"In These Mountains"...Southern Region

Jim Embry, Kentucky
Beverly Burnette, North Carolina
Felecia "Felicity Luv" Outsey, Tennessee

Central Appalachia Living Traditions...Mid Atlantic Region

Omope "Mama O" Carter Daboiku, Ohio
Janice Lynn Cooley, West Virginia
Eric "Monstalung" Jordan, West Virginia

Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows 2023

"In These Mountains"...Southern Region

Andrew Baskin, Kentucky
Ronnie W. Pepper, North Carolina
Kelle Jolly, Tennessee

Central Appalachia Living Traditions...Mid Atlantic Region

Lynn Ford, Ohio
Aristotle Jones, West Virginia
L. Renée, Virginia

Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows 2022

"In These Mountains"...Southern Region

Alicetyne Turley, Kentucky
Raymond Christian, North Carolina
Sparky Rucker, Tennessee

"Central Appalachia Living Traditions"...Mid Atlantic Region

David Butcher, Ohio
Crystal Good, West Virginia
Ruby Daniels, West Virginia