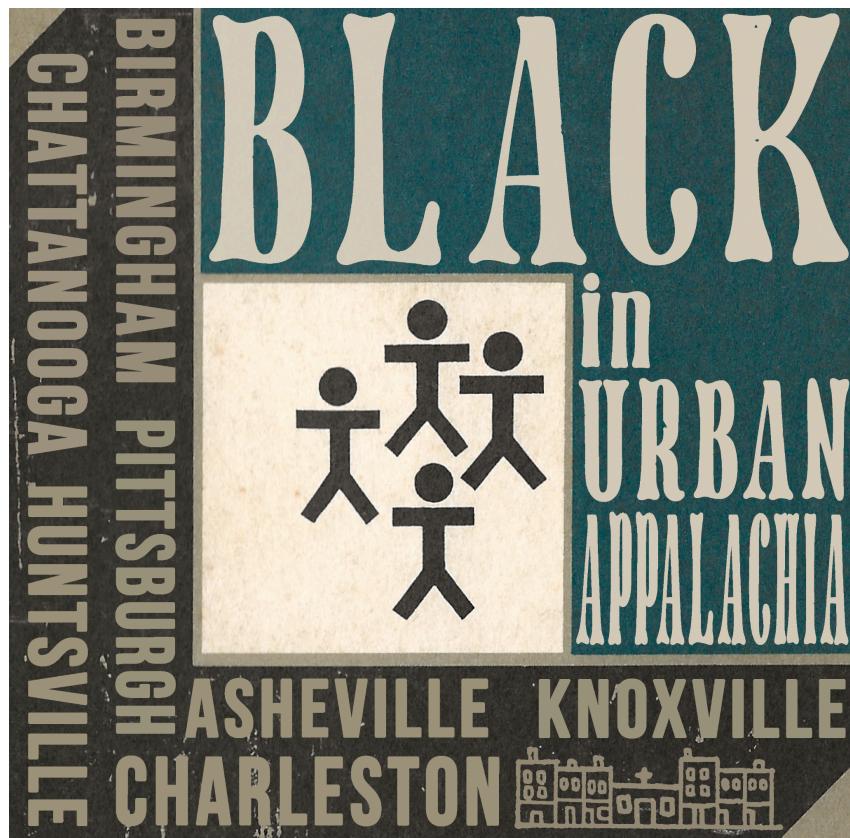


BLACK IN APPALACHIA

research, education and support

2025 annual report





*Unnamed Family of Musicians, Pendleton County, West Virginia
[courtesy: Linda Wright Anderson, Staunton, VA]*

Digging Deeper

“2025 was a year of construction projects at our Field Office & the bolstering of our Community History work with a particular focus on our homeplace. While we continued to expand our labor support to communities in West Virginia, this year’s work included greater relationship building closer to home with the fortification of efforts in the 5 Rivers Region, Southeastern Tennessee & the Bristol, VA/TN area. Going into 2026, we aim to continue those efforts toward the cultivation of longer roots & for the support of stronger branches.”

William Isom II, Director of Black in Appalachia

“

Evidence, whether interviews, government documents, private papers, or archeological remains, cannot speak for itself & never adds up to history until it is scrutinized, evaluated & ordered in light of other evidence.

Dr. Barbara J. Fields

Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life

”

WYBG 92.5 LPFM Black Appalachian Radio



With the conclusion of the Black in Appalachia Podcast, we began looking for additional mechanisms for sharing stories from the Mountain South. Luckily for us & with the support of the Prometheus Radio Project, we were able to secure a Low-power FM radio broadcast license. Now, with our own studio infrastructure, we've begun the production of a new podcast developed for radio; *Black in Appalachia Field Notes*.

This production focuses on the day-to-day research of Black in Appalachia & takes listeners along the “deer trails & minutia” of our work & the stories we encounter as we go. Slated for release in August of 2026, we hope that this very different type of show will be useful to those interested in our research methods & the, often, unexpected stories we encounter.





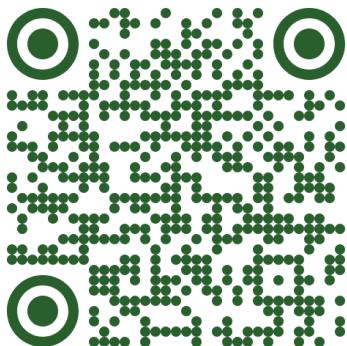
Field Office

WYBG 92.5 LP-FM

Throughout 2025, we finished the build out of the physical studio space for our new Low-power FM radio station. The work for 2026 will shift to the tech required to get on the air & populating our content. Our goal with this project is to provide a Black-owned, Humanities-based media outlet in service of Eastern Hamblen County, TN & Central Appalachia as a whole.

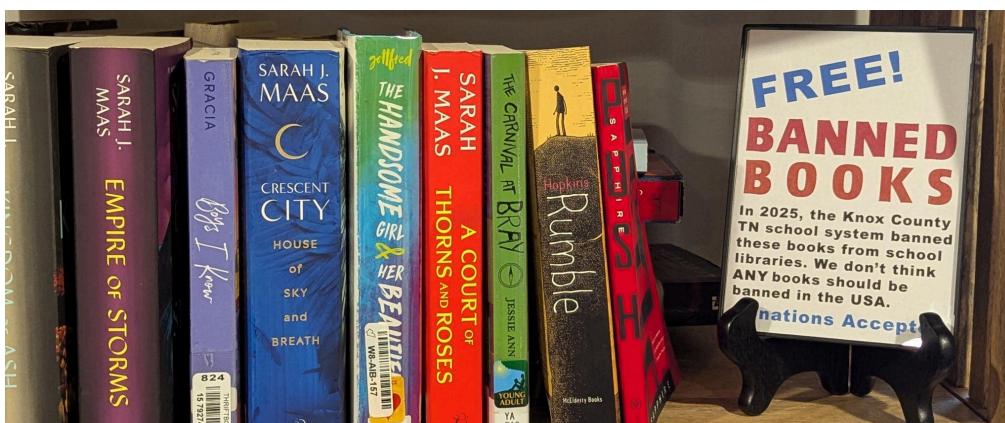
Listen to our live stream

here:



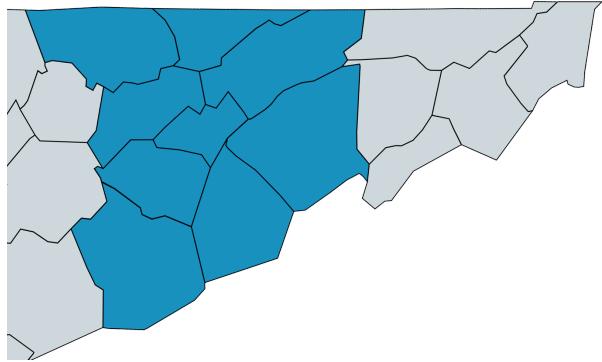
113 Books & Info Shop

For two years, high school student Kamora Hunt, working as our bookstore manager, did the job of getting our new & used books catalogued, searchable & available for purchase on eBay. On-line book sales changed the game & has now provided a steady stream of income for the organization. We would like to thank Ms. Hunt for her work & good luck with her studies at East Tennessee State University.



Research

Black School Records of the Five Rivers Region



In 2025, Black in Appalachia received funding support from the Mellon Foundation to build on the work we've already been doing for several years now; the digitization of Jim Crow Era Black school records. This two year project will focus on the East Tennessee counties of Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson & Sevier.

We've begun working closely with school systems & local archives in Claiborne, Hancock & Jefferson Counties. The excitement of the general public in regards to these gaps in available Black documentation in these rural mountain communities has been overwhelming. That excitement, we hope, will be reflected in the final products.

An important component of this labor is and continues to be our relationship with the University of Tennessee's School of Information Science Graduate Program.

McMinn County, Tennessee

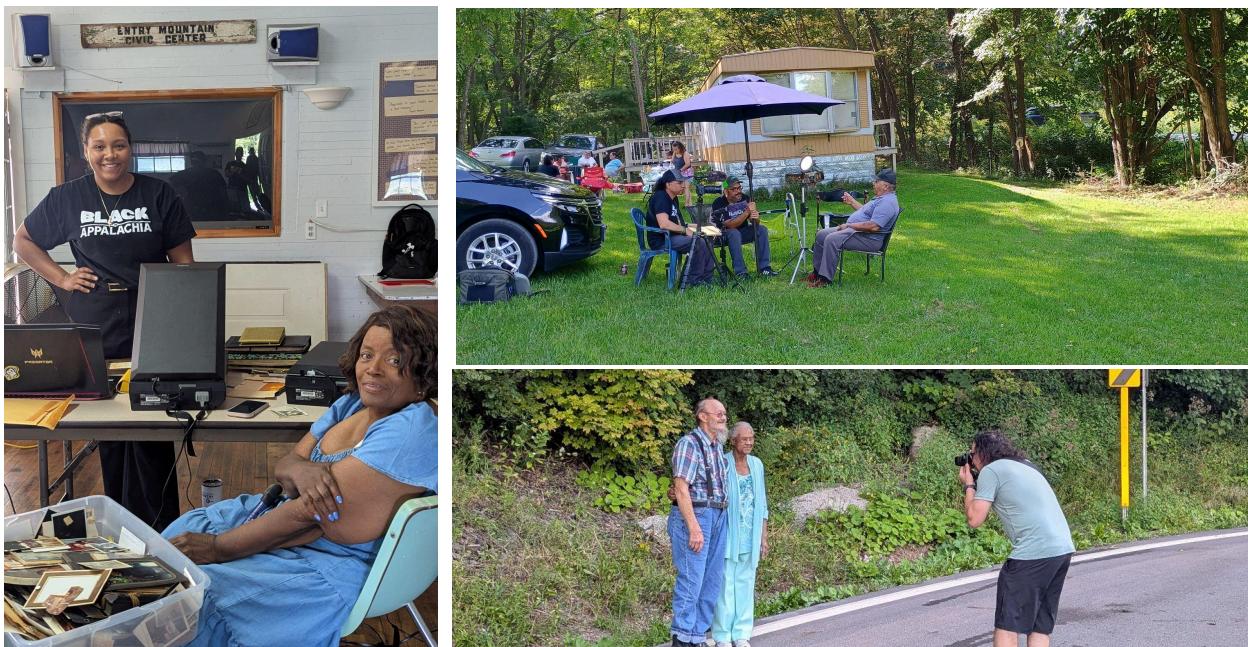
Bottomlined by Precious Brown, the task of researching, documenting & making available the Black narratives of SE Tennessee requires a diversity of tactics. Through history day events, mapping, oral history collection & good old fashioned community organizing, Ms. Brown continued & expanded her long-term work in her homeplace. Those efforts are currently being conducted in partnership with her neighbors & the county's public museums & is slated to continue at least through 2026.

Last year, we conducted a Community History Day in the rural Calhoun community with the Kimpson & Brown families & even expanded our research into neighboring Polk County, Tennessee & North Georgia. Stay tuned & keep your eyes out for the public facing components associated with this project.



Support Pendleton County, West Virginia

Last year, we received an invitation to assist the two Black communities of Moatstown & Entry Mountain in their efforts to document & make available their long histories in the landscape. Founded before the US Civil War, these Free & often Mixed families established for themselves strong communities engaged in horsemanship, logging, farming, faith & hardwork. You can view our weeks of collective work with these families here: www.blackinappalachia.org/pendleton-wv



Whittico Memorial Presbyterian Church, Keystone, West Virginia

Carlotta Young & We Are the Teachers (WATT), a community-based organization in McDowell County, WV, got possession of what was, at one point, the only Black Presbyterian Church in the whole state. Named after the local Black newspaper publisher, M.T. Whittico (1866-1939), this historic structure is now one of the last standing structures in the once bustling community. W.A.T.T. is working to renovate the church for use as a much needed community center for their Youth programming. Thus far, they've repaired the roof, replaced the front door, cleaned out the basement & have begun renovation of the interior of the chapel. Black in Appalachia is committed to supporting this important community development effort in an important place.

Education

Souls of Bristol's Black Bottom, Bristol, VA

Over the past five years or so, Bristol native Tina McDaniel has been working to make publicly available the Black narratives of Bristol, Virginia & Tennessee. In 2025, she secured funding support to expand her research & public education around Black Bottom, the late Black business district that once operated on the Virginia side of downtown.



Now, with support from the Worrell Foundation & Virginia Humanities, she's set to dedicate 2026 to the creation & installation of public signage detailing Black Bottom's rich history.

Mysterious Ten Cemetery

In 2025, Hancock County's Aaron Collins & our own William Isom, realized they both had been learning & thinking about the condition of the Mysterious Ten Cemetery located & abandoned in the historic Oakland community. From that initial conversation, some support from neighbors & others, Black in Appalachia was encouraged to sponsor the effort to restore, research, recognize those buried there & conduct public education around this space. Since that time, there have been 3 or 4 public clean-ups & several rounds of professional tree removal. Into 2016, the work of clearing brush will continue with the goals of resetting fallen tombstones, installing permanent signage, conducting public talks & ultimately handing the long term care off to another entity.



Presentations, Workshops & Panels

- *Down on the River: Isom & Simpson Families*, Mooresburg Community Center, Mooresburg, TN
- *Stronger Together: The Power of Collaboration*, West Virginia Association of Museums Conference, Huntington, WV
- *Introductions*, African American Health Education Religion News Banquet, Johnson City, TN
- *Facilitation*, Historic Henderson Chapel Community Forum, Rutledge, TN
- *Exploring Black Appalachia*, International African American Museum, Charleston, SC
- *Black in Appalachia*, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS
- *Participating Organization*, Appalachian Black Community Developers Gathering, Beckley, WV
- *Panelist, How to Sue the Klan*, Friendship Baptist Church, Greeneville, TN
- *Between the Vernacular & the Records*, East Tennessee Roots & Resources Conference, East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville, TN
- *Black in Appalachia*, Class Discussion, Agnes Scott College, Decatur, GA
- *Film Screening: Eastern KY Social Club*, Appalachian Heritage Week, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC
- *Film Screening: Eastern KY Social Club*, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA
- *Black in Appalachia*, Tennessee Folklife Institute, Humanities Tennessee, Cookeville, TN
- *Panelist*, Tennessee Association of Museums Annual Conference, Knoxville, TN
- *Black in Appalachia*, Class Discussion, Glenville State, Glenville, WV
- *Funddrive Co-host*, WMMT 88.7fm, Whitesburg, TN

Community Partners



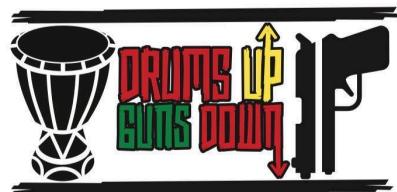
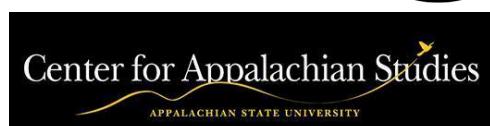
BLUE RIDGE
PUBLIC RADIO



VIRGINIA TECH



APPALACHIAN
STUDIES
PROGRAM



2025 Numbers

Income

Foundational Support: \$446,066

Reimbursements: \$6,870

Program Revenue: \$11,604

\$464,540 – Total Income

Expenses (Research, Education & Support)

Labor: \$153,907

Support (Other Orgs): \$41,522

Building & Utilities: \$27,836

Travel: \$26,186

Materials/Equipment: \$42,918

Digital Services: \$12,771

\$305,140 – Total Expenses

SUPPORTING FUNDERS & FOUNDATIONS



Mellon
Foundation



Anne & Gene
Worrell
Foundation



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
Bill McCabe, Board Member
Chris Aluka Berry, Videographer
Cathy Wilson, Treasurer/Secretary
Fredrick Watkins, Audio Editor
Jaime Bagwell, Board Chair
Kamora Hunt, Bookstore Manager
Kelle Jolly, Cultural Organizer/W North Carlonia
Malcolm Bamba, Social Media
Precious Brown, SE Tennessee/North GA
Rev. Roger Mills, Board Member
Ron Carson, Board Member
Tina McDaniel, NE Tennessee/SW Virginia
William Isom II, Director

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