

## 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 initiative.

In 2025, 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 43rd *"In the Tradition..."* Annual National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference, November 19-23, 2025. Mid Atlantic Fellows receive travel and lodging to present at the 44th NABS Festival and Conference in Rhode Island in 2026.

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

### 2025 Fellows

#### *From the South Arts Region*

##### **Kentucky** **Hasan Davis**



Parents, Word Wizard Alice Lovelace, co-founder of the Southern Collective of African American Writers, and Charles "Jikki" Riley, revolutionary, rebel, and reggae singer, are the foundations of Hasan Davis' storytelling tradition. For 40 years, Hasan has lived, worked, and raised his two sons in Appalachia. Drawing on lived experience and ancestral anchors, he carries a legacy rooted in family. Storyteller, author, and living history interpreter, Hasan weaves stories of resilience, justice, and hope that honor unheard voices. From embodying York of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

to sharing his own journey from GED to JD, he bridges past and present to inspire communities. Hasan's storytelling is not simply a re-enactment but a deeply reflective exercise that fosters dialogue. By connecting historical events and figures with contemporary challenges, he encourages audiences to think critically about leadership, responsibility, and equity. Audiences are moved to question how far we have come and how far we still need to go in the pursuit of justice, making his performances a catalyst for social change.

## North Carolina

### DeWayne Barton



DeWayne Barton is a storyteller, artist, and community activist from Asheville, NC. Through his social enterprise Hood Tours, he preserves and shares the history, art, and resilience of Black Asheville while generating economic opportunities for local neighborhoods and businesses. Barton is founder of Hood Huggers creating initiatives that

merge art, environment, and social enterprise to strengthen community. His storytelling not only uplifts Black Appalachian voices but also drives cultural tourism as a tool for economic justice. At the heart of this work is the belief that storytelling thrives when rooted in place, and that our cultural landmarks must be protected, celebrated, and activated.

## Tennessee

### Jazmine LeBlanc



Jazmine LeBlanc is a storyteller and story sharer whose practice weaves folklife, community engagement, and the arts. As an Appalachian storyteller, her work honors tradition while amplifying new voices. Rooted in Tennessee, she weaves oral storytelling like fiber art, threading music and heritage into vibrant community narratives. She believes that everyone deserves to see themselves reflected in stories, and lives this belief daily as the Executive Director of ELLA Library, a community-based art and culture nonprofit in Chattanooga.

**2025 Fellows**  
***From the Mid Atlantic Region***

**Ohio**

**Trevellya "Tee" Fordahmed**



Trevellya "Tee" Fordahmed, PhD, shares stories multiple platforms—including print and digital publications, radio, public broadcasting, and live community events. She focuses on little-known and nearly forgotten history of Athens, Ohio. Tee produced the Black Wall Street Athens series (2024), the historic narrative film River of Hope (2020), as well as numerous shorts, including the NEA-funded Citizens Institute on Rural Design promo for the

Mount Zion Black Cultural Center of the Ohio River Valley. She has published in the USAID's Teaching through Radio Drama Guide and is a contributor to the cultural studies anthology "Generation to Generation, Maintaining Cultural Identity over Time," published in 2005 by Hampton Press. Other publications include "Building Diverse Communities, Applications of Communication Research" and "Nature of a Sistuh, Black Women's Lived Experiences in Contemporary Culture," published by Carolina Academic Press.

**West Virginia**

**Doris Fields**



Doris Fields (Lady D) known as West Virginia's First as Lady of Soul is a storyteller, singer song writer and actress. Her music and artistry blossomed out of the coalfields where she was born. Her storytelling began in 2003 with her original one-woman show, The Lady and the Empress, based on blues legend, Bessie Smith. Her video series, Those Who Came Before, tells

the stories of some of West Virginia's black contributors to arts and education. One of her biggest accomplishments, her song, "Go Higher" won best Obama inaugural song, which she performed with her band at the Obama For Change Inaugural Ball in Washington, DC in 2009. Passionate about making sure the next generation knows about their history. Lady D tells stories that show the heart of their town.

## Virginia

### Naomi Hodge Muse



I am a child of Appalachia. I was raised for the first 8 years of my life in a house without electricity. All the girls slept together on a feather tick. Our Great Grandparents were our babysitters. They were called affectionately Papa and Mama. They were the direct descendants of the formerly enslaved. Without TV all we had were stories told to us by these elders. They told of the patty rollers, and frightful tales of the boggie man. Our Great Grandfather George Washington Finney was a pastor, AME African Methodist Episcopal. He was extremely wise in his council. We were told during enslavement the patty rollers would hunt us at night. How you could be beaten for next to nothing. Stories and storytelling was the way wisdom was passed on. I can hear Papa say, 'I tell you this to tell you that.' In short listen to this tale and apply it to your situation. The wisdom of the elders lays in each story each tale woven together. I follow in their footsteps.

Naomi published her family's account in *The Tales of Koehler Hollow: An African American Family in Rural Appalachia*, an Independent Book Publishers Association Gold medal winner.

### Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows 2024

#### Southern Region

Jim Embry, Kentucky

Beverly Burnette, North Carolina

Felecia "Felecity Luv" Outsey, Tennessee

#### Mid Atlantic Region

Omope "Mama O" Carter Daboiku, Ohio

Janice Lynn Cooley, West Virginia

Eric "Monstalung" Jordan, West Virginia

### Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows 2023

#### Southern Region

Andrew Baskin, Kentucky

Ronnie W. Pepper, North Carolina

Kelle Jolly, Tennessee

#### Mid Atlantic Region

Lynn Ford, Ohio

Aristotle Jones, West Virginia

L. Renée, West Virginia



## **Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows 2022**

### **Southern Region**

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

### **MidAtlantic Region**

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

