

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 2024, 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 an additional funding to apply toward travel and lodging to the *"In the Tradition..."* Annual National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference for two years, receiving the award in the first year and presenting in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

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

### 2024 Fellows

#### *From the South Arts Region*

#### **Kentucky**

#### **Jim Embry**



Jim Embry considers himself Stardust condensed in human form that represents billions of years of Earth's evolution. As an evolutionary being, his purpose is to contribute to a paradigm shift towards Sacred Earth consciousness. His African ancestors came primarily out of Nigeria where Griot traditions were part of his family's African cultural identity. According to family oral and written stories, his ancestors were brought across the Appalachian Mountains to Madison County Kentucky around 1800 from Culpeper County Virginia. His mother Jean was his primary mentor...a great storyteller known for "telling those lies" as her family stories were often and lovingly referred to. But other family, friends and activists in the Civil Rights Movement also served as mentors. As an agrarian, Jim has been storytelling internationally for the past 65 years with the central themes of social justice, family legacy and imagining a sustainable future with a focus on local food systems.

## North Carolina

### Beverly Fields Burnette



Born in Rocky Mount, NC, Burnette (the older of two children), grew up relishing hearing family stories, and loved eavesdropping on the talk of the grown folks around her. These family and community stories sealed Burnette's early storytelling interest, as well as her desire to pursue family genealogy. She has been a consistent *hunter* of her ancestors for over three decades, ~ especially her Asheville/Western NC)

heritage due to her father's early death when Burnette was only two (2) y/o. -As a published poet, she has interests in providing visuals and phrases/words that represent and verify the true story of Black Appalachia... who were they, who are they, and how they moved along with others and shared their worthy contributions in the scheme of NC Southern history!!! Burnette is a member of the National Association of Black Storytellers and a Founder and the President of the North Carolina Association of Black Storytellers. In 2018 Burnette received the North Carolina Governors Award.

## Tennessee

### Felecia Outsey



Felecia Outsey, aka Sista Felecity LUV is a native of Birmingham, AL and Alumni of Berea College. She is founder and Executive Director of Divine Expressions in Knoxville, TN specializing in developing, nurturing, and promoting the "God Gifted" talents of Appalachian youth and young adults via their Cultural Arts N Dance Productions and selected "Love is the Answer" Community led events geared toward motivating minds and healing hearts of youth and families overcoming trauma and violence. Felicity's grassroots efforts in her village engages contemporary Black Appalachian storytelling to motivate grieving mothers and fathers to share their stories of pain, passion and purpose to M.O.V.E. She truly believes Love is the Answer. Outsey is a Black Appalachian Storyteller,

Interpretive dancer, author, motivational poet, cultural organizer, arts activist, distinguished community awards winner, including 2023 Knoxville Black History Award, 2021 Black Excellence Award and an installation of Love is Answer mural. Felicity Luv is a proud mother of 5 talented children who occasionally perform with her.

2024 Fellows  
*From the Mid Atlantic Region*

**Ohio**

**Omope Carter Daboiku**



Family genealogy rooted Omope in Black Appalachian storytelling; she was expected to learn her maternal and paternal agricultural lineages. She learned timing by listening to elders tell family stories at death wakes, preachers deliver sermons, and winos reciting longform poetry before it was called "spoken word." As a performer, producer, teaching artist writer and agriculturalist, she has shared Black Appalachian folkways internationally, lecturing on quilt traditions (Germany) and storytelling with tandem translation (Turkey, US State Dept). Her first short story, "The Power of Water Baptism" (*Anthology of Appalachian Writers*) was a Pushcart Prize nominee and her video about Lawrence County, Ohio's UGRR activity--*History Keeper*--is on [YouTube](#). A member of the Appalachian Studies Association and the Dayton Africana Elders Council, her writing is published in regional journals like *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel* and *Women of Appalachia Speak*. Mama O is a community producer for WYSO (91.3fm NPR) and teaches Afro-Indigenous regenerative agriculture and plant medicine as modeled by family ancestors.

**West Virginia**

**Janice Lynn Cooley**



Janice Cooley, a native of Lewisburg, WV is the past President and current board member of the Greenbrier County Historical Society. Janice has curated a series of Black Appalachian exhibits. *Invisible Roots and Legends* was presented to the public through "stories" that provided an opportunity to not only observe but to be "drawn-in" to clearly understand the lives and lifestyles of individuals and how they contributed and impacted the growth and development of the (Greenbrier County) community through different perspectives. *Echoes of Slavery; A photographic View of African American History and Stories in the Greenbrier Valley* presented how remnants of slavery still exist in society today - witnessed through our penal system, voter suppression, and education practices. Ms. Cooley received the Human and Civil Rights Award from West Virginia Governor, Earl Ray Tomblin and the Martin Luther King Jr. State Holiday Commission in 2017 and has been featured in numerous media publications. She is also an active board member of the Greenbrier Community School, NAACP and an active member of her church Mt. Tabor Baptist.

## West Virginia Eric Jordan



Eric Monstlung Jordan was born in Cleveland, Ohio but raised in Ansted and Morgantown, West Virginia. He has been creating and releasing hip-hop music since 1990 but has been performing since age 7 with his father, Norman Jordan, one of the leading African American poet and playwright from the Black Arts Movement. In June of 2024, Monstlung released his album “An Appalachian Hip Hop Story Pt.1”, and in August was featured on the Appalachian Hip Hop compilation album “No

Options” executive produced by Dr. Ted Olson and Dr. William Turner, which is distributed on Appalshop Records. He is also the creative director for the Norman Jordan African American Arts & Heritage Academy, a summer camp that focuses on teaching youth the different forms of black arts. He is currently the Program Coordinator for the Center for Black Culture at West Virginia University. Monstlung also recently hosted a 100 Days in Appalachia email newsletter.

### Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows 2023

#### Southern Region

Andrew Baskin, Kentucky

Ronnie W. Pepper, North Carolina

Kelle Jolly, Tennessee

#### Mid Atlantic Region

Lyn Ford, Ohio

L. Renée, Virginia

Aristotle Jones, West Virginia

### Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows 2022

#### Southern Region

Alicetyne Turley, Kentucky

Raymond Christian, North Carolina

Sparky Rucker, Tennessee

#### Mid Atlantic Region

David Butcher, Ohio

Crystal Good, West Virginia

Ruby Daniels, West Virginia





