For Immediate Release

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**SAVE THE DATE! Nashville Conference on African American History and Culture to be held February 9, 2018**

NASHVILLE—January 12, 2018

On Friday, February 9, 2018 join Tennessee State University's College of Liberal Arts and the Metropolitan Historical Commission for a celebration of the contributions of African Americans to Nashville and Tennessee history. For over thirty-five years, this award-winning conference has brought together historians, students, educators, community leaders, and others interested in African American history and culture. This year's conference, entitled "A Panoramic View of African American History in Nashville and Tennessee," will examine the myriad ways African Americans have made an impact in Nashville and Tennessee, through history, story, and song.

This year's speakers include Vanderbilt history professor Dr. Jane Landers presenting on Nashville's early Black history; Hermitage assistant curator Dr. Ashley Bouknight using Black material culture as a lens to evaluate activism; and Vanderbilt history professor Dr. Brandon Byrd speaking on Toussaint L'Ouverture and his connection to Tennessee. In honor of the 50$^{th}$ anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., retired Vanderbilt professor Dr. Lewis V. Baldwin will examine Dr. King's legacy in the age of "Trumpism." Dr. Herbert Clark and Dr. Cynthia Bond Hopkins will both discuss the idea of "racial uplift;" Dr. Clark through the life of James Carroll Napier, and Dr. Bond Hopkins through the impact of HBCU-educated Africans Americans in rural communities. Continuing the conference's long-standing tradition in celebrating African-American music, TSU history professor Dr. K.T. Ewing will present on two jazz greats, Alberta Hunter and Lil Hardin Armstrong. As always, the conference will provide an opportunity for musical and artistic enlightenment, with a recitation of "The Witness Wall" by spoken word poets Gray Bulla and Constance Bynum of Southern Word, and a performance by the TSU Meistersingers.

Please make plans to join us for this exceptional program on Friday, February 9, 2018, at the Avon Williams Campus of Tennessee State University. The Conference will begin at 9:00 am and will conclude at 3:30 pm. Registration is $25, and includes admission to all speakers and performances, and additions to the *Profiles of African-Americans in Tennessee* series. Lunch and parking are also included. The full program registration brochure are available at [http://www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission/Events-and-Programs/Conference-on-African-American-History-and-Culture.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission/Events-and-Programs/Conference-on-African-American-History-and-Culture.aspx) or by calling 615-862-7970.

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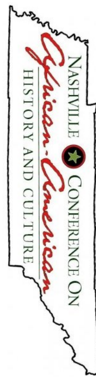


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present the

# 37th Annual

## A Panoramic View of the African American History of Nashville and Tennessee

Friday, February 9, 2018
8:30-4:00 pm

Tennessee State University
Avon Williams Campus
10th & Charlotte Ave.
Nashville, Tennessee

## Please Join Us!

On February 9, 2018, Tennessee State University's College of Liberal Arts and the Metropolitan Historical Commission will celebrate the contributions of African Americans to Nashville and Tennessee history. For thirty-seven years this award-winning conference has brought together historians, students, educators, community leaders, and others interested in African American history and culture.

This year's conference will celebrate the many ways African Americans have made an impact in Nashville and Tennessee. Dr. Jane Landers will present on Nashville's early Black history, Hermitage assistant curator Dr. Ashley Bouknight will use Black material culture as a lens to evaluate activism, and Vanderbilt history professor Dr. Brandon Byrd will speak on Toussaint L'Ouverture and his connection to Tennessee. Retired Vanderbilt professor Dr. Lewis V. Baldwin will examine Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy in the age of "Trumpism." Dr. Herbert Clark and Dr. Cynthia Bond Hopkins will both discuss the idea of "racial uplift;" Dr. Clark through the life of James Carroll Napier, and Dr. Bond Hopkins through the impact of HBCU-educated African Americans in rural communities. Continuing the conference's long-standing tradition in celebrating African-American music, TSU history professor Dr. K.T. Ewing will present on two jazz greats, Alberta Hunter and Lil Hardin Armstrong.

We are also pleased to welcome the TSU Meistersingers, directed by Dr. Susan Kelly, and poets Gray Bulla and Constance Bynum from Southern Word, as musical and artistic entertainment this year.

# Conference Registration

## February 9, 2018

**Registration fee is $25.00.**

Make checks payable to:
**TSU Foundation: TSU/MHC Conference**

Mail to:
**Metro Historical Commission**
**3000 Granny White Pike**
**Nashville, Tennessee 37204**

Registration form and fee MUST be received by January 19, 2018.

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Email Address (for confirmation)

Phone

Questions? Call us at 615-862-7970

Preregistration is strongly encouraged.

Registration cannot be taken over the phone.

# Preliminary Program

| Time | Session |
|---|---|
| **9:00 am** | **Welcome**<br>Tim Walker, MHC Executive Director<br>Linda T. Wynn, Conference Co-Chair |
| **9:20 am** | **Researching and Preserving Nashville's Early Black History, from the Hermitage to Fort Negley**<br>Jane Landers, Ph.D. |
| **9:45 am** | **The Power in Preservation: Re-evaluating Activism through Black Material Culture**<br>Ashley Bouknight, Ph.D. |
| **10:10 am** | **Finding Toussaint L'Ouverture in Tennessee**<br>Brandon R. Byrd, Ph.D. |
| **10:30 am** | **Break** |
| **11:10 am** | **Remarks** |
| **11:30 am** | ***Witness Walls* by poets Gray Bulla and Constance Bynum**<br>Benjamin Smith, Executive Director, Southern Word |
| **Noon** | **Lunch (provided)** |
| **1:30 pm** | **Reclaiming Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Age of Trumpism: The Enduring Challenge**<br>Lewis V. Baldwin, Ph.D. |
| **1:50 pm** | **James Carroll Napier: Uplifting a Race, 1845-1940**<br>Herbert Clark, Ph.D. |
| **2:10 pm** | **The Impact of HBCU-Educated African Americans in Small Rural Communities: Lifting as They Climb to Improve Themselves and Us**<br>Cynthia Bond Hopson, Ph.D. |
| **2:30 pm** | **Musical Performance**<br>TSU Meistersingers<br>Susan Kelly, Ph.D., Director |
| **3:00 pm** | **When Tennessee Travels: The Music of Alberta Hunter and Lil Hardin Armstrong**<br>K.T. Ewing, Ph.D. |
| 3:30 pm | **Closing Remarks**<br>Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell,<br>Conference Co-Chair |

# Planning Committee

***Conference Co-Chairs***

Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
*Fisk University*

Linda T. Wynn
*Tennessee Historical Commission/Fisk University*

***Committee Members***

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Gloria McKissack, *Tennessee State University*
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*Tennessee State University College of Liberal Arts and Metropolitan Historical Commission*

"A Panoramic View of the African American History of Nashville and Tennessee"

Friday, February 9, 2018 — Tennessee State University, Avon Williams Campus

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|---|---|
| 8:30 am | Registration begins |
| 9:00 am | Welcome and Opening Remarks<br>Mr. Tim Walker, Executive Director, Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission<br>Prof. Linda Wynn, Conference Co-Chair |
| 9:20 am | Researching and Preserving Nashville's Early Black History:<br>From the Hermitage to Fort Negley<br>Jane Landers, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University |
| 9:45 am | The Power in Preservation: Re-evaluating Activism through Black Material Culture<br>Ashley Bouknight, Ph.D., Andrew Jackson's Hermitage |
| 10:10 am | Finding Toussaint L'Ouverture in Tennessee<br>Brandon R. Byrd, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University |
| 10:30 am | Break |
| 11:10 am | *Witness Walls* by Poets Gray Bulla and Constance Bynum<br>Benjamin Smith, Executive Director, Southern Word |
| 11:30 am | Remarks by Megan Barry, Mayor of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, and Dr. Glenda Glover, President of Tennessee State University |
| 12:00 | LUNCH |
| 1:30 pm | Reclaiming Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Age of Trumpism:<br>The Enduring Challenge<br>Lewis V. Baldwin, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, retired |
| 1:50 pm | James Carroll Napier: Uplifting a Race, 1845-1940<br>Herbert Clark, Ph.D. |
| 2:10 pm | The Impact of HBCU-Educated African Americans in Small Rural Communities:<br>Lifting as They Climb to Improve Themselves and Us<br>Cynthia Bond Hopson, Ph.D., The Black College Fund, The United Methodist Church |
| 2:30 pm | Musical Performance<br>TSU Meistersingers<br>Susan Kelly, Ph.D., Director |
| 3:00 pm | When Tennessee Travels: The Music of Alberta Hunter and Lil Hardin Armstrong<br>K. T. Ewing, Ph.D., Tennessee State University |
| 3:30 pm | Closing Remarks |

This year's *Profiles of African-Americans in Tennessee* are: Edgehill neighborhood, George Edmund Haynes, Nettie Langston Napier, Nashville and Davidson County Schools Named for African Americans, and Remembering the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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## EXHIBITION

African-Americans of Nashville

Jamaal B. Sheats, curator

# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

## Remembering the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther, Jr. (January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968)

*Hate is too great a burden to bear. It injures the hater more than it injures the hated.* ~ Coretta Scott King

On April 4, 2018, the nation will pause to remember the life and legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the most charismatic leaders of the modern Civil Rights Movement. A staunch advocate for the rights of African Americans, he used nonviolence and civil disobedience to bring the rights to fruition. Although he and his followers practiced nonviolence, it was violence that silenced his voice. King may be America's most honored political figure, commemorated in statues, celebrations, and street names throughout the globe. On the fiftieth anniversary of his assassination, the man who believed that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" is as acknowledged through public awareness as ever.

Born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, to Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. (1899–1984) and Alberta Williams King (1904–1974, the younger King was introduced to the African-American social gospel tradition by his father and grandfather, both of whom pastored at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church and were affiliated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). King's father also led campaigns against racial discrimination that would later become a model for his son's political engagement. Despite his family's history of political and social activism, and King's apparent grooming for a similar life, as a teenager he was hesitant to pick up that mantle. That changed when he entered Atlanta's Morehouse College in 1944. King found new spiritual advisors in Morehouse president Benjamin E. Hays and religion professor George Kelsey, who encouraged him to view Christianity as a force for positive social change. King described his decision to enter the ministry as a response to an "inner urge" calling him to "serve humanity."

King's ordination took place during his last semester at Morehouse, and during his senior year, he was already traversing the path of political activism. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Morehouse College in 1948 and a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1951 from Crozer Theological Seminary, King entered Boston University's School of Theology. Two years later he married Coretta Scott, who was studying music at the New England Conservatory of Music. In 1954 he accepted the pastorate of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., a year before receiving his Ph.D. in Systematic Theology.

In December 1955, African American leaders formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) to protest the arrest of NAACP secretary Rosa Parks for refusing to render her bus seat to a white man. The MIA selected Dr. King to head the new group. As principal spokesperson of the year-long Montgomery Bus Boycott, King devised a protest strategy that included the recruitment and mobilization of African American churches. After the Supreme Court overturned Alabama's bus segregation laws in *Browder v. Gayle* (1956), King, C. K. Steele, Fred Shuttlesworth, and T.J. Jemison established the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). As president, King coordinated the struggle for civil rights throughout the South. His 1958 publication of *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* aided in catapulting him to the position of a national civil rights leader. Although he was busy writing, speaking, and gaining insights into the philosophy of nonviolence for the betterment of the movement's goals and objectives, during the late 1950s, the SCLC's lack of success made the movement appear relatively dormant. A 1959 trip to India also led King to become a staunch advocate of Mohandas Gandhi's nonviolence ethos, which he combined with the concepts of a Christian social gospel.

The southern civil rights movement gained new energy from the student-led lunch counter sit-in movement that caught the nation's attention on February 1, 1960, when the "Greensboro Four" from North Carolina A & T State University sat-in at the racially segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. Their action ignited the sit-in movement that spread throughout the South during 1960. The sit-ins brought into existence a new protest group, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). King's interaction with students, especially Nashville's James Bevel, Diane J. Nash, and John Lewis—whom Rev. James Lawson taught the philosophy and tactics of direct nonviolent protest tactics—often pushed King toward a greater assertiveness and militancy. In May of 1961, students under the leadership of Nash, Lewis, and others

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The author compiled the information. The Metropolitan Historical Commission edited and designed the materials.
Photo of Dr. King at Fisk University on May 3, 1964 courtesy of Harold Lowe Jr./ *The Tennessean*.

continued the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) Freedom Rides in Mississippi. Between 1961 and 1962, King's strategic differences with SNCC activists became apparent during the protest movement in Albany, Georgia. Arrested twice during the Albany protests, when King left jail and subsequently left Albany without attaining a successful victory, some activists questioned his leadership within the southern protest movement.

By 1963, King had reaffirmed his prominence within the movement through his leadership of the Birmingham campaign, where the most massive protests to date were taking place. The brutality of Birmingham officials and Alabama's governor George C. Wallace's refusal to allow the admission of black students at the University of Alabama motivated President Kennedy to introduce major civil rights legislation. In August, King's address at the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom* was the culmination of a wave of civil rights protest activity that extended to northern cities. In his *I Have a Dream* speech, King told America that its African American citizens came to Washington to "cash a check. . .that will give us on demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice." Less than a month later shock waves moved through the movement and the nation as dynamite blasted Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Carol Denise McNair. The Reverend Dr. King preached three of the girls' funerals. King was named Time magazine's 1963 "Man of the Year" in its January 1964 issue, becoming the first African American recipient of this honor.

On March 7, 1965, state police under orders from Governor George Wallace, confronted protesters with tear gas and clubs, stopping a march from Selma to Montgomery and forcing them back across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Following the marches on March 7 and 9, King postponed the Selma to Montgomery march until he received court approval. After receiving such, thousands of black and white civil rights sympathizers from across the country joined the voting rights march. On March 25, King addressed the protesters from the steps of the capitol in Montgomery, and on August 6, the 89th U. S. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In December 1967 King announced the Poor People's Campaign, a crusade designed to improve government antipoverty efforts. This effort was in its early stages when James Lawson asked King to come to Memphis, Tenn. on behalf of sanitation workers striking against unfair treatment and wages. On March 28, 1968 King led thousands of sanitation workers and sympathizers on a march through downtown Memphis. He returned to Memphis for the last time in early April 1968. Addressing an audience at Bishop Charles J. Mason Temple on April 3rd, King seemed hopeful in the face of the "difficult days" that lay ahead. He asserted "But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop [and] I've seen the Promised Land." Continuing in the cadence of a Baptist preacher, he declared, "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land." The following evening while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, James Earl Ray forever silenced the voice of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with a single bullet. Four days later, an estimated 42,000 people led by Coretta Scott King, SCLC, and union leaders silently marched through Memphis in honor of King and demanded that Mayor Henry Loeb III give in to the union's requests. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) pledged support for the workers until "we have justice".

Dr. King remained unwavering in his resolve to revolutionize the American social order through nonviolent activism until his death. He was one of the most identifiable leaders of the modern Civil Rights Movement, yet fifty years after his assassination, many do not recognize that King's radicalism underscored his revolutionary vision, his unapologetic opposition to the Vietnam War, and his crusade against global imperialism. In his 1969 posthumously published essay, "A Testament of Hope", King averred that "White America must recognize that justice for black people cannot be achieved without radical changes in the structure of our society". The "black revolution" was more than a civil rights movement, he insisted. "It is forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws─ racism, poverty, militarism and materialism."

**-- Linda T. Wynn**

**Sources Used:**


Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, and Penny A. Russel. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume 1: Called to Serve, January 1929 - June 1951*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

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Michael K. Honey. *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007.

Martin Luther King, Jr. *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1958.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and James Melvin Washington. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* San Francesco: Harper Collins, 1991.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Cornel West. *The Radical King.* Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2015.

Linda T. Wynn "Beyond Patriarchy: The Meaning of Martin Luther King, Jr. for the Women of the World," in Lewis Baldwin and Paul Dekar, eds. *In An Inescapable Network of Mutuality*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2013.

# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

## Edgehill

Generations of African Americans have lived in the part of Nashville now known as Edgehill since the first half of the nineteenth century. The neighborhood traces its beginnings to approximately 1830, when residences and farms were established on and around Meridian Hill, now the location of E.S. Rose Park, south of the city corporation line. The presence of enslaved African Americans on these estates is documented in census records and in a detailed description of the manor and grounds of Robert Brownlee Currey at the summit of the hill. Currey was a former mayor and postmaster of Nashville, for whom Meridian Hill later came to be known as "Currey's Hill."

The Union occupation and defense of Nashville during the Civil War brought dramatic changes to the area, including the physical transformation of the landscape and vastly increased numbers of African American residents. Because of their elevation and their location along the Franklin Turnpike, Meridian Hill, Kirkpatrick Hill, and St. Cloud Hill became the sites of Fort Morton (initially "Fort Confiscation"), Fort Casino, and Fort Negley respectively. A large contraband camp in the area housed thousands of conscripted African Americans, who labored in the construction of these fortifications and other war-related tasks under extreme and often fatal conditions of coercion and privation.

In spite of persisting harsh conditions, African Americans began building neighborhood institutions immediately after the war. "New Bethel" and "Rocktown" appear in postwar newspaper sources as the names of early communities. The oldest churches in the Edgehill neighborhood date from broadly the same period, including Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (1866) and New Hope Missionary Baptist Church (1885), which is still at its original location. Edgehill's Carter-Lawrence Elementary School is a 1940 merger of two schools from the post-Civil War decades: the William Penn School, renamed in honor of Judge John Lawrence in 1889, and the Granny White School, renamed in honor of the African American educator Howard C. Carter in 1896.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Edgehill developed into an economically diverse African American neighborhood adjoining the railroad and warehouse district now known as the Gulch to the north and segregated white "streetcar suburbs" to the east, west, and south. These decades feature prominently and positively in the public memory of the neighborhood as a time characterized by the strength of community institutions, the vitality of local businesses, and the recognized professional and cultural achievements of residents.

Moses McKissack III and Calvin McKissack, founders of the country's first architectural firm owned by African Americans, both resided on Edgehill Avenue during this era. Two state historical markers in the neighborhood also honor individuals active during these years: internationally acclaimed sculptor William Edmonson and DeFord Bailey, the first African American Opry musician. The iconic polar bear sculptures that became the symbol for the Edgehill neighborhood date from the period as well. The two surviving sculptures stood for many years at the residence of Elder Zema W. Hill on

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The author compiled the information. The Metropolitan Historical Commission edited and designed the materials.
Image courtesy of the Edgehill Neighborhood Coalition.

Edgehill Avenue along with others at his funeral home business on South Street.

Urban renewal radically altered Edgehill from the 1950s through the early 1970s, beginning with the construction of "Edgehill Homes," at the corner of 12th and Edgehill Avenues, and eventually expanding to encompass a vast "Edgehill Project Area" of over 1,000 acres, extending from Division Street to Bradford Avenue and from Villa Place to the eastern side of Fort Negley. The promised benefits of urban renewal, where realized, came at an enormous cost to Edgehill in the demolition of homes, displacement of families, relocation or loss of businesses and churches, damage to the historical street grid of the neighborhood, and the reinforcement of segregation. The construction of I-40, I-65, and Wedgewood Avenue cut off the neighborhood to the north, east, and south, with its western border spared only by the failure of a proposed Music City Boulevard that was finally abandoned in the early 1970s.

An ironic legacy of the urban renewal period was the definitive naming of Edgehill. Since the late 1800s "Edgehill" had referred to the home of Charles A.R. Thompson on the Hillsboro Turnpike, to Edgehill Avenue, and to a small, segregated African American park between its intersections with 11th and 12th Avenues. Both the designers of urban renewal and civil rights groups working to preserve and protect the community from the program's abuses adopted and applied the name "Edgehill" more broadly. The racially integrated Edgehill United Methodist Church was established in 1966; the Organized Neighbors of Edgehill formed the following year; and the South Street Community Center, founded on the old Lawrence School site in 1942 and moved to Edgehill Avenue in 1971, became the Edgehill Community Center in 1990. By the early twenty-first century, the name "Edgehill" had increasingly come to assert a neighborhood identity grounded in the area's African American history and a determination to continue its legacy of solidarity and resilience.

**-- Joel Dark**
**Tennessee State University**

**Suggested Further Reading:**

Bobby L. Lovett, "From Plantation to City: William Edmonson and the African-American Community," in *The Art of William Edmonson*. Nashville: Cheekwood Museum of Art; Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.

David C. Morton and Charles K. Wolfe. *DeFord Bailey: A Black Star in Early Country Music.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

## George Edmund Haynes, 1880-1960

George Edmund Haynes was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas in 1880. Haynes attended Fisk University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1903 and a Master of Arts Degree in 1904. While studying at the University of Chicago during the summer of 1906-1907, his naturally questioning mind became interested in the social problems of African Americans migrating from the south to the north and how they might be supported. This interest and an attempt to find the solution led him to study at the New York School of Philanthropy, from which he graduated in 1910.

Two years later George Edmund Haynes received the Doctoral Degree in Philosophy from Columbia University. The Columbia University Press would later publish his doctoral dissertation entitled "The Negro at Work in New York City." The National Association of Social Workers in its series Social Work Pioneers identified Haynes as a Social Worker, Educator, and proudly claimed him as the Co-Founder and the first Executive Director of the National Urban League.

Haynes would come to Fisk in 1910 to establish a Social Science Department and a Training Center for Social Workers. The Dept. of Social Science co-operated with the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, in conducting a settlement house in Nashville. Fisk Senior Sociology Students were required to give four hours of field work at the settlement house each week. These Fisk students ministered to an average of 350 families. Fisk had always emphasized community service, but its fame of training social workers began with George Edmund Haynes, who became an international expert on racial affairs.

In March of 1916 a fire in East Nashville left over 2,500 people destitute. The aid for African Americans was made possible by the endeavors of Haynes and the Fisk Senior Class in cooperation with other black colleges. According to Dr. Haynes, the fire had laid the foundation in Nashville, Tennessee, for greater cooperation in meeting the problems of Public Welfare.

Soon after the fire, a conference of both races met to organize a Public Welfare League for Nashville, Tennessee. Dr. Haynes was called to Washington, D.C. to head the newly created Division of Negro Economics in the Dept. of Labor. He was to advise the department on ways to improve working conditions for African Americans and methods for serving their entire corporation in the war production effort for World War I.

Dr. Haynes also became involved in the activities of the American Association for the Protection of Colored Women, the Committee for the Improving the Industrial Conditions of Negros in New York, and the Committee on Urban Condition Among Negros. He was instrumental in merging these groups into one organization named the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negros, which is known today as the National Urban League. He served as its Executive Director from 1911-1918.

He supervised field placements of League fellows at the New York School and was Professor of Economics and Sociology at Fisk University. On leave from Fisk from 1918-1921, he served as Director of Negro Economics in the United States

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Photo of Mr. Haynes provided courtesy of the "Columbia University and Slavery" project at Columbia University.

of Dept. of Labor. As a special assistant to the Secretary of Labor he was involved in matters of racial conflict in employment, housing, and recreation. He continued his earlier studies of exclusion of black workers from certain trade unions, interracial conditions in the workplace, and child labor. These studies resulted in numerous scholarly works. One of the most significant was 'The Negro at Work During the World War and During Reconstruction.' The work's wide spread and profound impact resulted in Haynes' appointment as a member of the President's Appointment Conference in 1921.

Earlier, while still a graduate student, he had been Secretary of the Colored Men's Department of the International Committee of the YMCA, during which time he visited black colleges and encouraged students to achieve scholastic excellence and to help black colleges set high academic standards. His work lead to the establishment of the Association of Negro Colleges and Secondary Schools, and Dr. Haynes served that organization as Secretary from 1910-1918. He also helped the New York School of Philanthropy in its collaborative planning that lead to the establishment of the first Social Work Training Center for black graduate students at Fisk, and he directed the center from 1910-1918.

In 1930 George Edmund Haynes did a survey of the work of the YMCA in South Africa, and in 1947 he conducted a similar study of the organizations activities in other African nations. These efforts resulted in his being chosen as Consultant on Africa by the World Committee of YMCA'S. His book, Trend of the Races- 1922, reflected his belief in the union of all people.

For the last nine years of his life, Dr. George Edmund Haynes taught at the City College of New York, and served as an officer of the American Committee on Africa. Dr. George Edmund Haynes died in New York City on January 8, 1960.

**-- Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.**
**Fisk University**

**Source:**

Joe M. Richardson, *A History of Fisk University, 1865-1946,* University of Alabama Press, 1980.

# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

## Nettie Langston Napier

Nettie Langston Napier, former chair of the National Association of Colored Women, historic preservationist, president of Nashville's Day Home Club, and noted civic and social activist, was born in Oberlin, Ohio, on June 17, 1861. Born the daughter of John Mercer and Carrie Wall Langston, Nettie grew up in one of the most prestigious African American families in the United States, an upbringing that exposed her to the central tenets of civic engagement and the struggle for black equality in the North. Growing up in the Langston household had a tremendous effect on her activism during the decades of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

At the age of 18, while enrolled at Oberlin College, she met, was wooed by, and consented to marry the up and coming Nashville businessman and politician, James Caroll Napier. In what can be described as the African American "Wedding of the Century" during the period immediately following Reconstruction, their nuptials received acclaim from blacks and whites throughout the United States. Her wedding dresses—one a dress created by the famed African American White House modiste, Madame Elizabeth Keckley, and the other a gown that was reported by observers to reflect "various hues of the rainbow" under certain lighting—made the wedding an event that showcased the wealth and potential of African Americans as freed persons.

It was Napier's residency in Nashville, however, that initiated the activism that would define her life and provide her both national and international acclaim. Shortly after her arrival in the city, she became involved in Nashville's Women's Club movement. Arguably, her crowning achievement was the success of the city's Day Home Club, an institution that she had first imagined while enrolled at Oberlin. The Day Home Club, first located at 618 4th Avenue South, was created to provide a place for working mothers who had jobs that required them to leave home early or return late to drop off their children while they worked. While at the Day Home Club, the staff provided childcare, meals, education, healthcare, and shelter at no cost to the women or their families.

The Day Home Club's operation depended largely on private donations and volunteers from the Nashville community, and its overall success came as a result of Napier's skills as an organizer and fundraiser. As leader of the Day Home Club, she appointed vice presidents for each of Nashville's city wards, making them responsible for raising money and soliciting donations for the home and its children. Donations came into the house from all segments of the city's African American population, with private donations ranging from fifty cents to $5. At her request, Preston Taylor, prominent Nashville African American undertaker and founder of the popular Greenwood Park and Cemetery, completely furnished one of the rooms, while Castner Knotts' Dry Goods had quilts, sheets, and other goods delivered to the location.

While her exemplary work with the Day Home Club gave rise to her growing acclaim in Nashville's social circles as someone with a deep and abiding interest in the well-being of the city's underclass, it was her work as a member of

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the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) that brought her national fame. Organized in Washington, DC, in 1895, the NACW became the first national black organization in the United States. Operating under the slogan, "Lifting as We Climb," this group, spearheaded by middle to upper-middle class African American women like herself, sought to provide much-needed social services to the African American community. The NACW's vital tasks included providing childcare, medical care, job training, and education for black women and their children.

It was while serving as the custodian of funds for the Douglass Memorial Historical Association that Nettie Langston Napier was involved in perhaps her greatest accomplishment, the saving of the Frederick Douglass Home in Anacostia, Washington, DC. Between July 1916 and July 1922, the NACW collected more than $18,000 in donations on behalf of the site, a figure sufficient to pay off the home's remaining mortgage, begin renovations, and beautify the grounds. Under her watch, Frederick Douglass's Cedar Hill home became a "museum for generations unborn," and it stands today as a monument to Napier's activism.

Although her work with the NACW and Douglass Home kept her on the road for much of her career, Napier remained very active in the Nashville community. An accomplished pianist, she could often be found playing and raising her contralto voice at public and private musical programs throughout the city. She was also a source of relief for many needy young adults who came to the city seeking an education, and often offered assistance to them at the local black colleges. During World War I, she was selected by the Red Cross to assist in its campaign to send comfort items such as hand-knitted socks, sweaters, razors, and surgical dressings to Allied troops and civilians in Europe.

As America entered into the throes of the Great Depression, Napier's health began to decline, causing her to remain under a physician's care for the last years of her life. In August 1938, her condition took a turn for the worse, and her physicians moved her from her home at 120 15th Avenue North to Hubbard Hospital where she succumbed to congestive heart failure on September 27, 1938. Upon her death, Nashville lost one of its most outstanding citizens. During her lifetime, Nettie Langston Napier's grace and empathy for the plight of the marginalized and forgotten in American society made her one of the most extraordinary African Americans in Nashville's past.

**-- Learotha Williams, Jr., Ph.D.**

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# Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

## Nashville and Davidson County Public Schools Named for African Americans

Many students, both former and present, graduated from or go to public schools in Nashville and Davidson County that are named for African Americans. However, many of these students may not have known or know for whom these schools are named. According to Debbie Oeser Cox, two years after the Civil War ended, "The City Council called upon the Board of Education to select locations and provide suitable buildings for the accommodation of the colored scholastic population of Nashville and to bring the colored children of the city under the provisions of the existing city laws that related to the Public schools". Cox compiled a listing of some 50 traditional African American schools that included such schools as Ashcraft, Belle View School, Carter School, Hadley School, Merry School, Mt. Pisgah School, Peebles School, and Trimble Bottom to name a few. Yet, the quest to educate and be educated among African Americans began in antebellum Nashville before the formalization of public education.

Some African Americans in Nashville began receiving underground schooling in 1833 when Alphonso M. Sumner, an African-American barber, opened a school for free African American students. The school experienced rapid growth and within three years served approximately 200 students. Sumner hired Daniel Wadkins as a teacher for the growing number of students. Later, as noted in Wadkins' *Origin and Progress Before Emancipation*, officials accused Sumner of writing and sending letters that aided the efforts of those trying to escape the institution of enslavement, compelling him to flee Tennessee. His forced departure from the city caused his school to remain closed until 1838, when John Yandle, a white man from Wilson County, taught at the school. Wadkins, as well as Sarah Porter Player, also a free black, assisted Yandle. In 1841, Player continued instruction by opening a school in her home and hiring Wadkins as her assistant. The following year she moved the school to the home of a supporter. In 1842 Daniel Wadkins opened his own school on Water Street and for the next fourteen years it operated at various locations to avoid public scrutiny. Fearing insurrections among African Americans in 1856, although as historian Bobby L. Lovett states "no real evidence existed of insurrectionary plots despite rumors and reactions," Nashville's governing body established unyielding constraints on its African-American population and closed the instructional facilities established by both Player and Wadkins.

Antebellum schools in Nashville for African Americans ceased operation until federal troops took control of the city in 1862. It was then that Wadkins, assisted by J.M. Shelton and his wife, resurrected his school in the First Colored Baptist Church. Eighteen months later Wadkins moved his school to High Street. The following year, white United Presbyterian Church of North America minister Joseph G. McKee with missionary funding opened Nashville's first free colored school. Following McKee's free school for African Americans, in December of 1865 the American Missionary Association opened the Fisk Free Colored School (dedicated on January 9, 1866), the progenitor of Fisk University. The Tennessee General Assembly established a system of public education in 1867 for both white and African American children. In 1871, a compilation of the school board's Annual Report listed the two schools for African Americans. Belleview School, located at 305 North Summer Street was a two-story brick structure that housed grades one through six with six teachers. Mr. G. W. Hubbard served as the Principal. Trimble School, a two-story brick building given to the city by John Trimble, Esq., was located at 524 South Market Street.

In 1976 the Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Public Schools under the auspices of the Bicentennial Committee, the Department of Public Information and Publications and the Department of Audiovisual Services published A Bicentennial Chronicle of those schools existing during the 1975-1976 academic year. Many in Nashville are familiar with the following schools but may not know for whom these schools received their appellations.

**Cameron** bears the name of Lt. Henry A. Cameron, a former school instructor of science at Pearl High School, who lost his life in the Battle of Argonne Forest, France on October 30th, 1918, two weeks before World War I ended. **Carter-Lawrence Elementary School** is the combination of two schools. Carter School was an early African-American educational institution named for Howard C. Carter, an early African-American educator, who died in 1895. Lawrence School carried the name of Judge John Lawrence, a member of the Board of Education of the Nashville City Schools. **Carter-**

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Photo of Washington Junior High School (1949) courtesy of Nashville Public Library.

**Lawrence** opened in 1940 and today is known as **Carter-Lawrence Math and Science Magnet Elementary School**. Built in 1940 **Ford Greene** was named for Ashcroft School principal Ford N. Greene. Opened from 1906 to 1932 for many years Ashcroft was the only elementary school for African Americans in Northwest Nashville. **Haynes School**, which began as an elementary school in 1931, was named for William Haynes, a local African American who made the land available on which the school was built. Prior to the 1962 merger of city and county governments, the only high school for African Americans in Davidson County began at Haynes in 1935 when the ninth grade was added. The last senior class graduated in 1967 and the junior high school program closed in 1970. Established in 1997, **Hull-Jackson Montessori School** was named for John C. Hull, a renowned Nashville educator and former principal of Cameron and Pearl High Schools and Oscar R. Jackson, who followed Hull as principal of Cameron. Opened in Fall 2006, **Creswell Middle School of the Arts** is named for Isiah T. Creswell, a Nashville businessman and Fisk University comptroller, who served on the Metro Board of Education. **Johnson Elementary School** (known now as Johnson Alternative Learning Center and MNPS Middle School) opened in September 1955 and was named for Hugh J. Johnson, who taught at Pearl High School then became principal at Cameron in 1929. Johnson was one of Cameron's longest serving principals, remaining in the position until his death in August 1949. Named on November 30, 2004, **Robert E. Lillard Elementary Design Center School** was given that appellation for Attorney and Circuit Court Judge Robert E. Lillard, who in 1950, was one of two African Americans elected to serve on the Nashville City Council since 1911. A former fireman with engine Company No. 11 on 12th Avenue North and Jefferson Street, in 1967 he became the first African-American to serve as vice mayor *pro tem*. **Moses McKissack Elementary School** was named for architect Moses McKissack and opened in August 1954. Built to replace the old Clifton Elementary School on 40th Avenue North, Moses and his brother and architect Calvin McKissack owned the land on which McKissack School was built. Originally planning to use the land for residential development, they sold the property to the Nashville Board of Education. Opened on March 10, 1958 **Murrell Elementary School** was named in honor of Professor Braxton R. Murrell, formerly the chair of the Math Department at Pearl Senior High School where he also served as director of the school's orchestra. A former student and the 1909 class valedictorian, Murrell also composed the Pearl's *Alma Mater*. **Napier Elementary School** opened in 1898 and was named for Henry Alonzo Napier, brother of John Carroll Napier. Alonzo Napier was the second African-American man to be admitted into West Point. He became a schoolteacher after leaving West Point in 1872. **Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet Elementary School** opened in 2010 at the former site of Wharton School (named for Confederate naval hero and educator Arthur Dickson Wharton). Nashville's first museum magnet school, it was named for Robert Churchwell, Sr., a graduate of Pearl High School and Fisk University. He became the first African-American journalist employed at a white-owned metropolitan newspaper in the South. Joining the Nashville Banner in 1950, Churchwell was forced to work from home when Banner executives prohibited him from meetings and barred him from the newsroom until 1955. **Rose Park Math/Science Middle Magnet School**, formerly known as Rose Park Junior High School opened in the fall of 1963, with Richard Harris, a former physics teacher and assistant principal at Pearl High School. Rose Park was named in honor of the Reverend E. S. Rose (now deceased) pastor of Bethel A. M. E. Church and an active and effective leader in the community. Opening in September of 1928 for students in grades seven through nine, **Washington Junior High School** was named for George E. Washington, a prominent African American educator and former principal of Pearl High School. J.A. Galloway served as the Washington's first principal. Additions to the school were made throughout the 1940s and 1960s. Other principals of the school were Braxton R. Murrell, Isaiah Suggs, and Clarence Austin. Washington Junior High School as well as Ford Greene was demolished in the mid-1980s to make room for the newly consolidated Pearl-Cohn Entertainment Magnet School built in 1986.

These schools named for African Americans are a testament to those who mostly labored in Nashville's vineyard of education. They understood the power of education and saw it as "the universal passport to human development." Insisting that their students perform to the best of their intellect, these African-American educators provided their students a visual representation of achievement that they too could replicate.

**-- Linda T. Wynn**

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