

Tennessee State University and Metropolitan Historical Commission

25th Anniversary

Conference on

African-American History & Culture

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2006
FLOYD-PAYNE CAMPUS CENTER
TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

8:30 a.m. Registration Begins

Musical Prelude, The Greg Bryant Trio

9:00

Welcome

Dr. William D. Lawson, Dean, TSU College of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Reavis Mitchell, Conference Co-Chair
Mrs. Ann Roberts, Executive Director, Metropolitan Historical Commission

9:15

All in All, Sheer Joy: The Public Work of Artist Frances E. Thompson

Dr. Leslie N. Sharp, Research Professor, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

9:40

A Journey Through Songs: Celebrating the Contributions of African-American Composers

Musical Performance, Mrs. Diana Poe, Director, TSU Show Stoppers

10:00

The Local Conference on African-American History and Culture: Twenty-five Years of Celebrating Research and Accomplishments of African Americans in Tennessee

Dr. Yildiz Binkley, Director, Libraries and Media Centers, Tennessee State University

10:25

Break

10:45

Remarks

The Honorable Bill Purcell, Mayor, Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County (invited)
Dr. Melvin Johnson, President, Tennessee State University

11:15

Musical Performance, The Greg Bryant Trio

12:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:30

The State of Historic Preservation in the African American Community: A Georgia Perspective

Ms. Jeanne Cyriaque, African American Programs Coordinator, Georgia Historic Preservation Div.

2:00

Our Heritage Through Song

Musical Performance, Mrs. Audry Bowie, Director, Stratford High School Accapella Choir

2:30

Closing Remarks

Mrs. Linda T. Wynn, Conference Co-Chair

25th Anniversary TSU and MHC Conference on African-American History and Culture

REGISTRATION FEE:

\$15 (includes lunch, commemorative program, and two Profiles)

MAIL FORM AND CHECK PAYABLE TO:

TSU Foundation--TSU and MHC Conference
3000 Granny White Pike
Nashville, TN 37204

MAIL-IN REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

February 1, 2006
Checks must be RECEIVED by this date.

QUESTIONS?
(615) 862-7970

Preregistration is strongly encouraged.
Reservations cannot be accepted over the phone.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

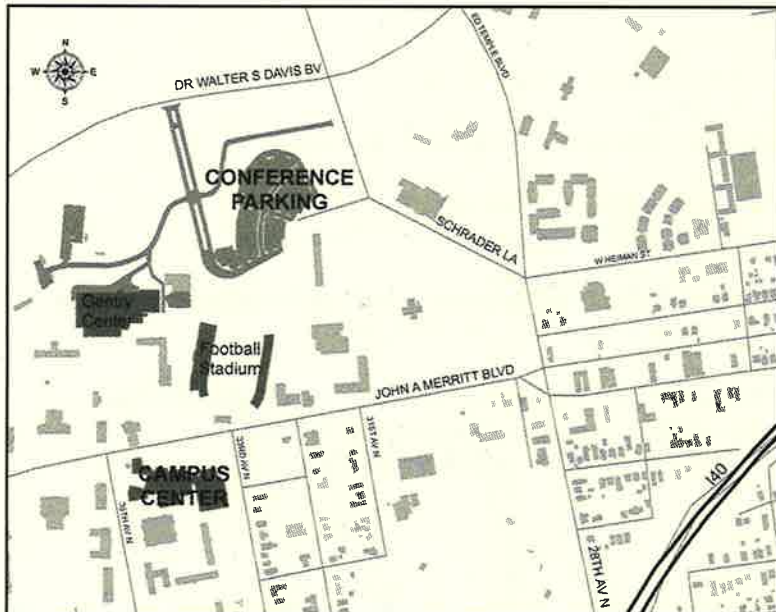
African-American History & Culture

Join Tennessee State University's College of Arts and Sciences and the Metropolitan Historical Commission in celebrating twenty-five years of research, publishing, and learning through the Conference on African-American History and Culture.

This year's anniversary edition of the conference will feature a retrospective look at the event's history, three musical performances of jazz and

song, and a change of venue to Tennessee State University's main campus. All conference registrants will also receive a special commemorative booklet, *Telling Our Stories: Twenty-Five Years of Celebrating and Documenting African-American History and Culture*.

Return your registration soon to make sure you are a part of this special anniversary celebration!



PARKING INFORMATION

Visitor parking on the TSU campus is very limited. Ample parking will be provided free of charge to conference participants at the Gentry Center lot, accessible off Dr. Walter S. Davis Boulevard. Buses will shuttle participants to the Floyd-Payne Campus Center.



Terri Johnson
Metro Historical Commission
862-7970

Tennessee State University and Metropolitan Historical Commission

25th Anniversary Conference on African-American History & Culture

9 AM- 3 PM, FEBRUARY 8, 2006
FLOYD-PAYNE CAMPUS CENTER
TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

PRESORT STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 2673
NASHVILLE, TN

Metropolitan Historical Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
3000 Granny White Pike
Nashville, TN 37204

MAYOR:

Twenty-five years ago, Nashvillians and visitors to our city could easily overlook a significant facet of our history—the contributions African Americans have made to the growth and vitality of Nashville and Tennessee. A group of historians set out to change that with the establishment of the Conference on African-American History and Culture in 1981.

This event represents a unique partnership between an academic institution and a Metro government agency to create a different kind of conference—one that combines the arts and entertainment with academic research. Unlike other more traditional academic conferences, this was envisioned as a community event, one that would draw a broad group of citizens of all ages. One participant noted that at this Conference, “anyone with a passion for history can present a paper for consideration . . . you realize you can share history even if you don’t have a college degree.”

The Conference was also created to stimulate future research on topics related to African-American history and culture in Nashville and the region and to provide an outlet for sharing that work with the public. Publications, including the *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee* series and the Metro Historical Commission’s African-American historic sites brochure, also resulted from the work of this group and continue to enrich and inform.

In twenty-five years, Nashville has made progress in preserving and interpreting its African-American history. Examples: Historical markers erected by MHC and Tennessee Historical Commission, Civil Rights Room at main library, plans for an African-American history museum, over a dozen nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for places in Davidson County associated with African-American history, even the creation of a redevelopment district for Jefferson Street to help recapture the central role that that street played in Nashville’s black community.

Today is exciting because it asks what we can accomplish in this regard during the next 25 years. As we look back we should also look forward and plan for how this history and these historic places can be better cared for, interpreted, and celebrated as the city moves into its third century.

VICE MAYOR:

Quick facts:

Conference founded in 1981 by Dr. Bobby L. Lovett (TSU), Lois C. McDougald (TSU), May Dean Eberling (Metro Historical Commission), and Linda T. Wynn (Tennessee Historical Commission).

Current Chairs: Linda T. Wynn (Tennessee Historical Commission and Fisk University) and Reavis L. Mitchell (Fisk University—currently serves on Metro Historical Commission)

Awards: Award of Merit from the American Association of State and Local History (1990) and Tennessee Historical Commission Certificate of Merit (2005)

Products: 198 presentations and 85 Profiles (short historical publications often focusing on Nashville subjects), *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee* book (Conference, 1996), “African American Historic Sites in Nashville, Tennessee” brochure (MHC, 1991), listing of Profiles on the TSU library website for public access and use.

This year the Metropolitan Council passed a resolution honoring the Conference and congratulating it on 25 years of research and outreach to the community. (Council Representative Brenda Gilmore will present the text of the resolution at the Conference on Feb. 8.)

TSU holds an important, central place in Nashville’s--and Tennessee’s—African-American heritage. It is fitting that the 25th anniversary of the conference comes to the historic main campus of the university, where history lives in the walls of the campus buildings but is also being created every day through student and faculty research. The partnership that began between TSU and Metro Historical Commission 25 years ago to create the event demonstrates another way in which Nashville’s historically black state university plays an active role in our civic life.

25th Annual Conference on
African-American History & Culture
Presents:

TELLING OUR STORIES:

Twenty-five Years of
Documenting and Celebrating African-American
History and Culture

Co-Sponsored by
Tennessee State University and
Metropolitan Historical Commission

9:00 AM—3:00 PM • Wednesday, February 8, 2006

Tennessee State University, Main Campus • Floyd-Payne Campus Center
3500 John A. Merritt Boulevard • Nashville, Tennessee 37209

Tennessee State University and Metropolitan Historical Commission

25th Anniversary

Conference on

African-American History & Culture

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2:30

Closing Remarks

Mrs. Linda T. Wynn, Conference Co-Chair

Conference on African-American History & Culture

February 8, 2006

Dear Conference Attendees:

This year, the award-winning Local Conference on African American Culture and History is celebrating its silver anniversary! We are immensely proud to celebrate this landmark achievement with our committed attendees, patrons, Nashville, and the wider Tennessee community.

For 25 years, the conference's planning committee has brought historical and cultural presentations to the citizens of Nashville and the State of Tennessee. Among its presenters have been academicians, artists, lay-historians, and students—each of whom brought informative, interesting and educational projects to the public's attention. Since its inception, a diverse audience of more than 300 persons has warmly received the conference's focus on the history, heritage, and culture of the state's African American populace annually.

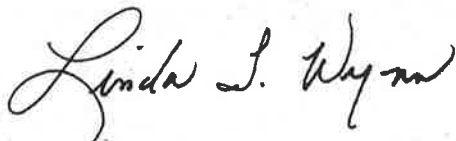
Our success has been a remarkable testament to the overwhelming support of our patrons as well as a moving example of the strength that our collaborative initiatives hold. For their part, we owe a debt of gratitude to several of the city's most noted institutions including Tennessee State University's College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of History, and the university's Martha Brown Memorial Library, and the Metropolitan Historical Commission. In addition to the collaborative efforts of Tennessee State University and the Metropolitan Historical Commission, members of Fisk University's History Department, the Tennessee Historical Commission, Middle Tennessee State University's Center for Historic Preservation and the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Areas, and the Tennessee General Assembly, have supported the conference.

To mark this significant milestone in the conference's history, the Planning Committee is honored to offer a Silver Anniversary Commemorative Brochure. It is our hope that you keep it as a token of our appreciation for your long-standing commitment to the conference.

We especially like to thank all of those who have provided financial assistance over the last 25 years. Without your generous support, the Local Conference would not have known the kind of success it has enjoyed for a quarter of a century. We also thank all committee members, both past and present, who diligently worked and continue to work to put on a conference that elevates the rich historical diversity within our community. As we look forward to the future, members of the planning committee remained supporters and preservers of the state's African American history.

Again, we thank you, the loyal attendees of the Local Conference on African American Culture and History for helping to make this endeavor one of the best attended and most successful history conferences held in Nashville.

Sincerely,



Linda T. Wynn
Conference Co-Chair



Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Conference Co-Chair



STATE OF TENNESSEE

PHIL BREDESEN
GOVERNOR

Welcome from the Governor

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the great State of Tennessee, I am pleased to extend a warm welcome to the participants and guests of the Local Conference on African-American Culture & History.

During the last 25 years, the Local Conference on African-American Culture & History has promoted historical and cultural projects and educational opportunities throughout Nashville. I am confident this year's conference will continue this proud tradition. May you find encouragement as you listen to speakers, participate in sessions, and interact with friends, colleagues, and other new acquaintances.

I sincerely hope you will accept this welcome, and I wish all participants and guests a great success.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phil Bredesen".

Phil Bredesen

WALTER T. DURHAM
State Historian
(615) 452-3201
FAX (615) 452-3251

State of Tennessee



Office of the State Historian
1010 Durham Drive
Gallatin, Tennessee 37066

October 27, 2005

Ms. Linda T. Wynn
Professor Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Conference Co-chairs
Local Conference on African-American Culture and History
Nashville, Tennessee 37208

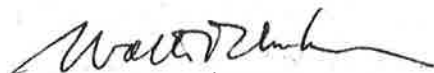
Dear Friends of History,

You know that I am enthusiastic about studying and sharing Tennessee history, but you may not expect that I insist there is no way to reach a true understanding of our history without a knowledge and understanding of the state's African-American culture and history.

During its twenty-five years, the Local Conference on African-American Culture and History has inspired public interest and support in a great way. Today it is regarded as an outstanding annual event attracting spirited representation from all parts of the community.

Please, accept my warmest congratulations for twenty-five years of unmatched service to the people of Tennessee. I am confident that during the next quarter century, all who truly care about shared goodwill and Tennessee history will continue to look forward to the annual conference.

Sincerely,


Walter T. Durham
State Historian



Bill Purcell Mayor

February 2006

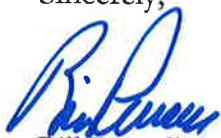
Dear Friends:

As Mayor of Nashville and Davidson County, I take great honor in congratulating you on the celebration of the Silver Anniversary for the Local Conference on African-American Culture and History. We look forward to the Forum being held on the campus of Tennessee State University on February 8, 2006.

I am appreciative for your giving the citizens of Nashville and the State of Tennessee 25 years of historical and cultural presentations delivered by distinguished artists, students and scholars. I recognize your efforts in focusing on the history, heritage and culture of African-Americans in the State of Tennessee. We value your endeavor in working with local universities, churches, and historical organizations in bringing informative conferences and publishing educational materials for our multi-cultural population.

I extend my sincerest wishes for your continued success.

Sincerely,



Bill Purcell
Mayor

Office of the Mayor
Metro City Hall
225 Polk Avenue
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
Phone: 615.862.6000
Fax: 615.862.6040
mayor@nashville.gov

RESOLUTION NO. RS2006-1135

A resolution recognizing and honoring the Conference on African American History and Culture for twenty-five years of research, publishing, and educational outreach.

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Historical Commission and Tennessee State University organized the first Local Conference on Afro-American Culture and History in 1981; and

WHEREAS, the conference has educated Nashvillians of all ages about the diverse and significant contributions of African Americans to our state and local history; and

WHEREAS, over 170 performances and papers have been presented, and over eighty *Profiles of African-Americans in Nashville and Tennessee* have been published since the conference's inception; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Middle Tennessee State University, the Tennessee Historical Commission, Tennessee State University, and private supporters have contributed resources ensuring the success of the conference; and

WHEREAS, the Conference on African American History and Culture celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary on February 8, 2006; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council recognize the Conference on African American History and Culture for a quarter century of outstanding work in educating the public about the considerable contributions African Americans have made to Nashville and Davidson County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

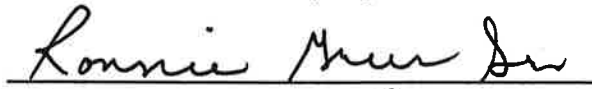
Section 1. That the Metropolitan County Council hereby recognizes and honors the Conference on African American History and Culture for twenty-five years of research, publishing, and educational outreach.

Section 2. The Metropolitan Council Office is directed to prepare a copy of this resolution to be presented to the Metropolitan Historical Commission and Tennessee State University for inclusion in the 2006 commemorative conference program.

Section 3. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

INTRODUCED BY:







Members of Council

History of the Conference

In 1981, a group of Nashville historians began discussing the possibility of holding an all-day conference for the purpose of presenting papers, projects, and activities related to local African-American culture and history. Although African Americans had been vital to the growth and development of Nashville, little information about their contributions was readily available to the public. The founding members of the planning committee-Bobby L. Lovett (Tennessee State University), Lois C. McDougald (Tennessee State University), May Dean Coop Eberling (Metropolitan Historical Commission), and Linda T. Wynn (Tennessee Historical Commission)-conceived the conference as a way of bringing these stories to light through an event that would have broad appeal for the community. Through their efforts, the annual Afro-American Culture and History Conference began on September 9, 1981.

The Conference is co-sponsored by the Metropolitan Historical Commission (MHC) and the College of Arts and Sciences at Tennessee State University (TSU). With strong administrative support from both the MHC and the TSU, the Conference planning committee has expanded to involve several other institutional partners, among them Fisk University, the Tennessee Historical Commission, and the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University. Dr. Bobby L. Lovett of Tennessee State University served as conference chair from 1981-2002. In 2003, Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., of Fisk University and Linda T. Wynn of the Tennessee Historical Commission and professor at Fisk University began their service as co-chairs.

"Speakers and topics decided by committee are excellent and inclusive. Keep up the excellent work. See you next year."

-from a 2003 conference evaluation

Renamed the Conference on African-American History and Culture in 2003, the Conference has continued to bring together historians, educators, students, and other individuals interested in how African Americans shaped the history of Nashville and Tennessee. Speakers come from all walks of life and include family historians, church historians, and high school teachers as well as college and university professors and graduate students. Each year's program blends information and enrichment with cultural entertainment.

For most of its history, the Conference has been held at the Avon N. Williams, Jr., Campus of Tennessee State University in downtown Nashville. In 2002, the newly completed Nashville Public Library at 615 Church Street served as the conference venue. Conference attendees had the opportunity to view the local history resources of the Nashville Room and artist Greg Ridley's copper panels on display in the library's main reading room. Tennessee State University's main campus serves as the site for the 25th anniversary conference in 2006.

The Conference differs from traditional academic gatherings in the way that cultural entertainment and art have always figured prominently in the program. Integrating cultural expressions of black history has involved students as performers from a variety of college and high school ensembles like the Fisk Jubilee Singers, the TSU Meistersingers, and the Whites Creek High School Marching Band. The conference has also hosted professional entertainers of national acclaim, including the Princely Players and the Fairfield Four. Tennessee State University has always had a strong art program and, through the efforts of several art



First conference, September 9, 1981

"Came to find out about USCT involvement as great-great-grandfather was in the unit—got contact names, directions to battle sites—very pleased."

—from a 2003 conference evaluation

professors and curators, the Conference has developed a special focus on visual arts. Over the years, Viola Woods, Jerry Waters, LiFran Fort, Nina Lovelace, Greg D. Ridley, Jr., and Michael McBride coordinated day-long exhibitions featuring the work of professional and student artists. Many of the conference profiles and presentations have featured notable artists such as William Edmonson, Aaron Douglas, Frances Thompson,

and Greg Ridley.

Drawing close to 150 people in its first years, attendance at the Conference has grown steadily. Throughout the last fifteen years, the Conference has drawn close to 400 individuals annually. From teenagers to seniors, the Conference's diverse audience represents high schools, colleges and universities, local and state government agencies, churches, businesses, and historical organizations. The popularity of the conference is due in part to the reasonable registration fee. Generous private and institutional donors who recognize the Conference's value to the city generously support the event year after year.

The Conference's successful format has received accolades from historical and preservation organizations including the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) and the Tennessee Historical Commission. In recognition of the Metropolitan Historical Commission and Tennessee State University's sponsorship of the Conference, AASLH awarded the Conference a Certificate of Commendation. The award, recognizing special projects throughout the United States, was announced at the association's annual meeting in Washington, DC, on September 8, 1990. The Conference was the only project in Tennessee to receive an award that year. In 2005, the Tennessee Historical Commission presented one of its Certificates of Merit to the Conference during Preservation Month.

A primary aim of the Conference is to encourage new research into local African-American history and make that research accessible to all. Twenty-five years of proceedings have produced over 180 "Profiles of African Americans in Nashville and Tennessee." Dr. Bobby L. Lovett and Linda T. Wynn edited a collection of 99 of these short publications for *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee*, a bicentennial book project of the Conference published in 1996. Profiles and other research resources are available on the TSU library website.

The Conference has also raised awareness of historic sites associated with black history in Nashville through research on African-American businesses, institutions of higher learning, churches, and notable individuals and organizations. The Metropolitan Historical Commission, as the city's historic preservation agency, drew on this diverse body of information for a brochure about African American historic sites in Nashville. Developed by members of the conference planning committee with text written by Ophelia Paine and Bobby L. Lovett, the text includes a brief history of Nashville's African-American community and information about sixteen historic sites. Originally published in honor of the Conference's tenth anniversary in 1991, the brochure is still distributed widely through the Nashville Visitors Center and the Metropolitan Historical Commission office.

Twenty-five years later, Nashvillians are more aware of the vital role African Americans have played in the history of our city thanks to the historians, teachers, students, artists and community members who have contributed their knowledge and talents to the conference. To all, we, the members of the planning committee, thank you.

"Thanks for doing this conference and having the handouts available. Each year I have attended I learn something new."

—from a 2005 conference evaluation

Planning Committee

This conference would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of several individuals. Each year, the planning committee develops a program composed of paper presentations and featured entertainment. Committee members secure sponsorships, prepare printed materials, and publicize the event. The planning committee is assisted by Diane Scott and Marsha Merriman of Tennessee State University's College of Arts and Sciences and Terri Johnson of the Metropolitan Historical Commission.

James Baxter
Yildiz Binkley
Pamela Bobo
Gayle Brinkley-Johnson
Crystal A. deGregory
May Dean Coop Eberling *
David Ewing
Gloria C. Johnson, ex-officio
William D. Lawson, ex-officio
Nina Lovelace
Bobby L. Lovett *
Michael McBride
Lois C. McDougald * **
Gloria McKissack
Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
Anne-Leslie Owens

Ophelia T. Paine
Harriet A. Peterson
Vallie Pursley **
Gregory D. Ridley, Jr. **

Ann Reynolds Roberts
Blythe Semmer
Jessie C. Smith
Sharon Hull Smith
Pamela Smoot
Jerry Waters
Viola Wood **
Linda T. Wynn *

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
Tennessee State University
Tennessee State University
Tennessee State University
Vanderbilt University
Metropolitan Historical Commission
Nashville
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Tennessee State University
Tennessee Historical Commission
Fisk University

* Founding Member of the Planning Committee

** Deceased

Financial Supporters

Loyal financial support from many institutions, organizations, and individuals has ensured that registration costs are affordable for all. In addition, special financial support for particular years has made it possible to feature musical or dramatic performances. We especially thank our Sustaining Supporters for their long-term support of this conference.

Sustaining Supporters

Supporters for Twelve Years or More

Spruce Street Baptist Church
First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill
First Baptist Church, South Inglewood
J. W. Frierson Church of Christ Development Foundation
National Baptist Publishing Board
The AME Church Review
First Baptist Church, East Nashville
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

Schrader Lane Church of Christ
Tennessee State University Friends of the Library
Winston-Derek Booksellers
Jefferson Street Baptist Church
Alkebu-Lan Images
Tennessee Historical Society
Brenda Gilmore, Councilwoman, First District
Aramark Food Services
Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company
Pleasant Green Baptist Church
Woodcuts Frame Shop
Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church
Metro Nashville Arts Commission
The Hermitage, Home of President Andrew Jackson
Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area
Robert J. Young
AME Sunday School Union
Berean Baptist Church
Friendship Baptist Church
WSMV-TV
Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church
Victory Baptist Church
Dr. Emma D. Bragg
Davis Campbell-McClain Funeral Home
Fisk-Meharry Catholic Association
Tennessee Arts Commission
Tennessee State Catholic Association
National Endowment for the Humanities



First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill

Presentations

- 1981 Extended Teachers Institute in Afro-American History
- 1981 Youthgrant: Afro-American History of Nashville, 1870-1930
- 1981 The Harlem Renaissance Remembered and Images in Black Artifacts: Negative and Postive
- 1981 Black Sites Identification Project
- 1981 Cameron-Trimble Bottom Neighborhood Rehabilitation Project
- 1981 History of Civil Rights Movements in Tennessee, 1865-1975
- 1981 Jefferson Street Project
- 1981 Fort Negley Restoration
- 1981 Funding Sources for Historical Projects
- 1981 History of Education Panel
- 1981 Art and Culture Panel
- 1981 Church History Panel
- 1982 Black Newspaper in Nashville and Tennessee
- 1982 The Life of James Carroll Napier
- 1982 Samuel Lowery: Inventor and the Free Black Community
- 1982 The 1905 Black Streetcar Boycott in Nashville
- 1982 Preston Taylor and Greenwood Cemetery
- 1982 Teaching Afro-American Literature in Local Curricula
- 1982 Afro-American Art: Student Art Exhibition/Competition
- 1983 A History of Roger Williams University
- 1983 Themes in the Black Experience: Black Folk Culture
- 1983 The Early History of Tennessee State University Sports
- 1983 The History of Black Catholics in Nashville, 1954-1980
- 1983 Afro-Americans in Antebellum and Civil War Nashville
- 1983 The Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls: An Oral History
- 1983 The Monroe-Buena Vista Neighborhood Revitalization Project
- 1983 Blacks and the Tennessee Community Heritage Project
- 1985 Brother Marshall Keeble: Church of Christ Evangelist
- 1985 The History of Black Episcopalians in Nashville and Middle Tennessee
- 1985 The Early History of Sports at Tennessee Agricultural and Mechanical Normal State University
- 1985 Some Aspects and Characteristics of Black Leadership in Nashville History
- 1985 The History of Band and Instrumental Music Programs in Nashville's Negro Public Schools
- 1985 Presentation and Exhibition on Afro-American Art
- 1985 The Afro-American History of Nashville, 1779-1940: Slide and Lecture Presentation
- 1985 Exhibition of art by local black artists
- 1986 1890s Lynching in Tennessee-Nashville
- 1986 Bluff City, Tennessee: An Experience in Black Politics
- 1986 Meharry Medical College and the Movement Years
- 1986 A Report on the Lecture/Exhibit Series, I've Been to the Mountain Top: A Civil Rights Legacy
- 1986 The Dawning of a New Day: The Nashville Sit-Ins
- 1986 Reflections on the 1960 Lawson Case at Vanderbilt
- 1986 The Knoxville Sit-Ins: June-August, 1960
- 1986 Black Musicians in Music City USA--An Ethnographic Profile
- 1986 Exhibit of work by local African-American Artists
- 1987 St. John: The Mother Church in African Methodism in Tennessee
- 1987 A History of Afro-Americans in Chattanooga, 1880-1930
- 1987 The Geneaology of a Black Family



Roger Williams University

- 1987 Scrapbook: Some Family Reminiscences of a Nashville Septuagenarian
- 1987 Blue Triangle YWCA, An Oral History
- 1987 Archaeology of Slavery: Some Tennessee Examples
- 1987 The 14th Amendment and Black Americans: A Matter of Interpretation
- 1987 The Afro-American Art of Aaron Douglas
- 1987 Art Exhibition: The Art Works of Aaron Douglas
- 1988 Black History in Nashville, 1825-1860
- 1988 Rise and Demise of Bryant's Grove Baptist Church, Hermitage, Tennessee
- 1988 A History of Jazz: A Musical Presentation
- 1988 Artists of the Harlem Renaissance
- 1988 Some Aspects of Black Religious Music History, An Audio Visual Presentation
- 1988 Southern Soul Food
- 1988 A History of Capers C.M.E. Memorial Church
- 1988 Exhibit of Afro-American Art Works
- 1989 Oral History: A Conversation with Mrs. James A. Meyers, Former Director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers
- 1989 Good Jelly Jones: Black Entrepreneur and Grassroots Politician
- 1989 Black Gospel Music, The Fairfield Four
- 1989 Influence on Food from Slavery Until Now
- 1989 Rare Film Footage of Nashville During the 1950s
- 1989 Black Historical Markers in Tennessee
- 1989 Art Exhibition: Sculptures by local Afro-American Artists
- 1990 The Collection of Kelly Miller Smith Papers
- 1990 Storytelling in the African-American Tradition
- 1990 Septima Clark and the Highlander School
- 1990 Negro Spirituals: The African-American Experience, TSU Meistersingers
- 1990 The Literary Metamorphosis of Sutton E. Griggs
- 1990 The Greater Fisk Herald and Transformations in Culture, 1925-1931
- 1990 Will Edmonson: Nashville's Famous Black Sculptor
- 1990 Art Exhibition
- 1991 Josephine Holloway: Founder of Black Middle Tennessee Girl Scouts
- 1991 The Negro Baseball Leagues in Nashville and America
- 1991 A Portrait of Charles Allen Rawls: Black Entrepreneur in Brownsville, Tennessee
- 1991 Haywood County's Black Education History: Striving to Teach the Children
- 1991 A Gospel Music Concert, the Fireside Singers
- 1991 African American Historical Markers in Tennessee
- 1991 Slave Archaeology at The Hermitage
- 1991 History of the Conference on Afro-Americans
- 1991 Art Exhibition
- 1992 Part I: History of Women's Track and Field and the Tigerbelles at Tennessee State University
- 1992 Life of James Fisher: Former Slave, Actors' Playhouse of Nashville, Inc.
- 1992 Thomas Talley, Black Folklorist: The Nashville Connection
- 1992 Background on Art Exhibit
- 1992 Performance, the Fisk Jubilee Singers
- 1992 Black Architectural History: Renovations at Fisk University
- 1992 History of the Napier-Looby Bar Association in Middle Tennessee
- 1992 Art Exhibition
- 1993 Part II: History of Women's Track and Field, the Tigerbelles at Tennessee State University
- 1993 The Life of DeFord Bailey: Black Grand Ole Opry Star
- 1993 Profiles of Selected African-American Women in Tennessee

- 1993 The Drama of Black History, The Princely Players
- 1993 Fort Negley: Blacks in Nashville's Civil War History
- 1993 The History of Jewell Academy and Seminary, 1948-1962
- 1993 Art Exhibition: Photographs by Local African-American Artists
- 1994 The Search for My African Ancestry in Robertson County
- 1994 World War I Goldstar Records: A Source of Afro-American History
- 1994 The Bradley Academy in Murfreesboro's Black Community
- 1994 Harlem Voices, American Negro Playwright Theatre
- 1994 The Blues Music in Nashville
- 1994 African-American Art and Art Collections in Nashville
- 1994 Workshop for Metro School Teachers and Interested Persons
- 1994 Art Exhibition: The Permanent Collections
- 1995 African Americans in the Country Music Business
- 1995 Arbors to Bricks: African American Education in Rutherford County, 1880-1996
- 1995 The African-American Experience: A Mini Drama, African Affair Repertory Group, Stratford High School
- 1995 A Medley of Music, TSU Meistersingers
- 1995 200 Years of Black Culture in Knoxville
- 1995 The Wonders of Education, Helping my Children to Learn: Negro Dolls
- 1995 Black Bottom, A Time Past: Downtown Nashville's Former Black Neighborhood
- 1995 Art Exhibition: Art Works of Local Schoolteachers and Students
- 1996 Aaron Douglas: Harlem Renaissance Artist in Nashville
- 1996 Davidson County Chancery Records in Antebellum Times: Sources on Local Black History
- 1996 African American Church History and Archives in Nashville
- 1996 The Culture and the History of Blacks in Knoxville
- 1996 A Medley of Music, TSU New Show Choir
- 1996 The Black History Book Committee in Wilson County
- 1996 The African American Heritage Society of Franklin and Williamson County
- 1996 The African American Genealogy and Historical Society of Nashville-Davidson: Promoting Black Family History
- 1996 Panel Group Discussions on Local Black History Projects
- 1996 Art Exhibition
- 1997 A Historical Sketch of the Ewing Family in African American Nashville
- 1997 History of Haynes High School for African Americans in Davidson County
- 1997 History of African American Builders in Sevier County, Tennessee
- 1997 Powerful African American Women in History
- 1997 A Mini Concert, TSU Meistersingers
- 1997 Nashville's Negro Carnegie Library
- 1997 African Americans in the Tennessee Centennial Exposition of 1897
- 1997 Art Exhibition
- 1998 The Great '97: Underground Railroad Tour
- 1998 Profiles of Civil Rights Leaders in Nashville, Tennessee
- 1998 Ida B. Wells, Tennaissance Theatre Company
- 1998 The Civil War Reenactment: Black Union Army Soldiers
- 1998 Performance, TSU Jazz Band
- 1998 Archaeological Results: The Negro Cemetery on Ewing Lane
- 1998 The Tennessee Rural African American Church Project
- 1998 Art Exhibition
- 1999 The African Diaspora's Country Music Heritage
- 1999 African-American Culture and History and the *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*

- 1999 African-Americans in Sumner County During the Early Years
- 1999 From Winter to Winter: The Afro-American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1910-1930
- 1999 Medley of Gospel Songs, TSU New Directions Gospel Show Choir
- 1999 Performance, TSU Show Stoppers
- 1999 The Annual Commemoration of African Americans in the Battle of Nashville
- 1999 Art Exhibition
- 2000 Church Women and Their Role in Improving Race Relations in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 1960s
- 2000 Patti Julia Malone, a Fisk Jubilee Singer from Athens, Alabama
- 2000 In Their Own Voices: An Account of the Presence of African American in Wilson County, Tennessee
- 2000 Research Opportunities in Special Collections at Fisk University
- 2000 Research Opportunities in Special Collections at TSU
- 2000 Performance, TSU Jazz Band
- 2000 Performance, TSU Show Stoppers
- 2000 Craig's Chapel AME Zion Church: An Underground Railroad Connection
- 2000 Art Exhibition: The African-American Jockey
- 2001 Women in the Negro Streetcar Boycott of 1905-1907 and the Formation of the Union Transportation Company
- 2001 Disenfranchisement of African Americans in Haywood County, Tennessee
- 2001 Williamson County in Black and White
- 2001 Early Slave Cultures: Learning and Teaching Through Historic Sites
- 2001 African-American Hairstyles: A History of the Tennessee Beauticians Association
- 2001 Performance, Fisk University Jazz Ensemble
- 2001 Community Heroes in the Sculpture of William Edmondson
- 2002 Free Women of Color in 19th Century Memphis
- 2002 Down by the Riverside, 1850-1950: The Chattanooga African-American Museum
- 2002 Perpetuating the Legacy of an African-American Family Through History
- 2002 The James Gilliland Home and History Resource Center
- 2002 Early Marching Bands in African-American Nashville
- 2002 A Journey Down Historic Jefferson Street, Metro Senior Dance Troupe
- 2002 Nashville in History: Panels in the Downtown Library Reading Room
- 2003 African Americans in the Battle of Nashville and the Civil War
- 2003 The Underground Railroad at Fort Donelson
- 2003 Performance, McDonald Craig
- 2003 History of Pearl High School
- 2003 The Significance of Race: Tennessee's African-American Historic Places and the National Register
- 2003 Performance, Fisk University Black Mass Choir
- 2004 African-American Veterans in Tennessee
- 2004 Civil Rights Collections at the Nashville Public Library
- 2004 The African-American Presence in Middle Tennessee's Iron Industry, 1800-1870
- 2004 Performance, Stratford High School Acappella Choir
- 2004 Ain't Misbehavin', Fisk University Stagecrafters
- 2004 History of Cameron High School
- 2005 Exhibition Venues for African-American Artists in the Early Twentieth Century
- 2005 From Sorrow to Song: The Life and Lessons of Original Fisk Jubilee Singer Ella Sheppard Moore, 1851-1914
- 2005 Missionary Activities of Early Fisk Students in Africa
- 2005 Performance, TSU Show Stoppers
- 2005 Panel Discussion: 45th Anniversary of the Nashville Sit-Ins

- 2005 Songs of the Movement, Joy Leonard
- 2006 All in All, Sheer Joy: The Public Work of Artist Frances E. Thompson
- 2006 A Journey Through Songs: Celebrating the Contributions of African-American Composers, Diana Poe
- 2006 The Local Conference on African-American History and Culture: Twenty-Five Years of Celebrating Research and Accomplishments of African Americans in Tennessee
- 2006 Performance, Greg Bryant Trio
- 2006 The State of Historic Preservation in the African American Community: A Georgia Perspective
- 2006 Our Heritage Through Song, Audry Bowie

Profiles

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1983 Richard Henry Boyd | Lois C. McDougald |
| 1983 Nelson G. Merry | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1983 James C. Napier | Herbert Clark |
| 1983 Preston Taylor | Joe E. McClure |
| 1984 Fisk University | Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr., and Haywood Farrar |
| 1984 John Wesley Frierson | Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. |
| 1984 Sutton E. Griggs | Helen R. Houston |
| 1984 Z. Alexander Looby | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1984 Samuel Lowery | David Mills and Bobby L. Lovett |
| 1984 Roger Williams University | Bobby L. Lovett |
| 1984 Tennessee State University | Lois C. McDougald and Bobby L. Lovett |
| 1984 Arthur Melvin Townsend | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1985 Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1985 First Colored Baptist Church | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1985 McKissack and McKissack | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1985 Frankie J. Pierce and the
Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls | Virginia Edmondson |
| 1985 Walden University | Bobby L. Lovett |
| 1985 Avon Nyanza Williams, Jr. | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1986 William Edmonson | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1986 National Baptist Publishing Board | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1986 Kelly Miller Smith, Sr. | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1986 Union Transportation Company | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1987 Henry Allen Boyd | Bobby L. Lovett |
| 1987 Capers Memorial CME Church | Carmelia D. Gregory |
| 1987 William Jasper Hale | Vallie P. Pursley |
| 1987 Ella Sheppard (Moore) | Beth Howse |
| 1987 John W. Work, III | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1988 Blue Triangle YWCA | Carrie R. Hull and Linda T. Wynn |
| 1988 First Baptist Church East Nashville | Bobby L. Lovett |
| 1988 Charles S. Johnson | Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. |
| 1988 St. John AME Church | Jamye C. Williams |
| 1988 Willa Ann Hadley Townsend | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1989 Deford Bailey | Linda T. Wynn |
| 1989 Meredith William Day | Lois C. McDougald |
| 1989 William Daniel Hawkins | Mary Evans Hawkins Barnes |
| 1989 Carrie John Richardson White | Emma White Bragg |
| 1989 Randall B. Vandavall | Bobby L. Lovett |
| 1990 Elder Zema W. Hill | Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr. |

1990 Fisk Jubilee Singers
 1990 Sampson W. Keeble
 1990 Benjamin "Pap" Singleton
 1990 The Stone Sisters
 1991 Ernest Raymond Alexander
 1991 Josephine Groves Holloway
 1991 Georgia Gordon Taylor
 1992 Susanna McGavock Carter
 1992 Nashville Sit-Ins
 1992 Mother Mary Magdalena L. Tate
 1993 Meredith G. Ferguson
 1993 Fort Negley
 1993 Robert Emmitt Lillard
 1993 Pearl School
 1994 Robert Reed Church, Sr.
 1994 Coyness L. Ennix, Sr.
 1994 Hulda Margaret Lyttle-Frazier
 1995 Freedman's Bank
 1995 Mount Ararat and Greenwood Cemeteries
 1995 Nashville's 1905 Streetcar Boycott
 1995 Blacks in Union Army of Tennessee
 1996 Jubilee Hall Fisk University
 1996 Knoxville College
 1996 LeMoyne-Owen College
 1996 Spruce Street Baptist Church
 1996 Wessyngton Plantation
 1997 Negro Branch of Carnegie Library
 1997 Wilma Rudolph and the TSU Tigerbelles
 1997 Tennessee Centennial Exposition
 1998 African-American Builders of Sevier County
 1998 Aaron Douglas
 1998 Harold M. Love
 1998 Theodore "Ted" Rhodes
 1999 Jefferson Street
 1999 Peoples Savings Bank and Trust Company
 2000 Luther Plato Carmichael
 2000 Marshall Keeble
 2000 Patti Julia Malone
 2001 Tennessee Rural African-American
 Church Project: Craig's Chapel
 AME Zion Church, Loudon County
 2001 Eva Lowery Bowman
 2001 Vivien T. Thomas
 2004 Clinton High School Desegregation Case
 2005 Curlie McGruder
 2005 Southeastern Conference Desegregation
 2005 Economic Withdrawal during the
 Nashville Sit-Ins
 2005 Frances Euphemia Thompson
 2006 Gregory D. Ridley, Jr.
 2006 Nashville Student Activists
 and the 1961 Freedom Rides

Kay Beasley
 Linda T. Wynn
 Bobby L. Lovett
 Emma White Bragg
 H. Henryne D. White
 Harriette Allen Insignares
 Emma White Bragg
 Emma White Bragg
 Linda T. Wynn
 F. Dovie Shuford
 Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
 Bobby L. Lovett
 Linda T. Wynn
 Linda T. Wynn
 Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
 Bobby L. Lovett and Lois C. McDougald
 Linda T. Wynn
 Bobby L. Lovett
 Bobby L. Lovett
 Linda T. Wynn
 Bobby L. Lovett
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 Robert J. Booker
 Perre M. Magness
 Linda T. Wynn
 John Baker
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 Bobby L. Lovett
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 Robbie D. Jones
 Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
 Pamela Smoot
 Linda T. Wynn
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 Linda T. Wynn
 Linda T. Wynn
 Mary Glenn Hearne

Caneta Skelley Hankins
 Linda T. Wynn
 Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.
 Linda T. Wynn
 Pamela Lane-Bobo
 Linda T. Wynn

Linda T. Wynn
 Leslie N. Sharp
 Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.

Linda T. Wynn

Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee



GREGORY D. RIDLEY, JR. (1925-2004)

"From the Hands of a Master" was the title of Greg Ridley's survey exhibition (1951—2003) mounted in the summer of 2003 to honor the master artist in the Nashville Public Library Art Gallery. Five years earlier, Ridley had been commissioned to create public art for the library's Grand Reading Room. The commission resulted in "A Story of Nashville," eighty hammered-copper panels in bas relief or repoussé, installed to form a continuous, room-sized horizontal frieze above the book stacks. When the library opened in 2001, Ridley's series of signature panels interpreting the history of Nashville was the focal point of public acclaim. Thus, when the exhibition of selected creations during Ridley's long career was displayed at the library gallery in 2003, the master artist had come full circle from his student-mentor days begun in 1945 at Fisk University under the tutelage of painter and muralist Aaron Douglas (1899—1979) to fulfill and surpass the creative promise seen by his mentor and friend over thirty-four years.

The journey had been a long and laborious one for Gregory David Leon Ridley, Jr. Born July 18, 1925, in Smyrna, Rutherford County, Tennessee, he was the son of Gregory D. L. Ridley, Sr., a minister, and Lucile Elder Ridley, a domestic worker and crafts artist. His mother was his first influence in visual art, as young Greg Ridley accompanied her to club exhibits, where she displayed her crafts, quilts, and appliqués, and to various showings of Appalachian art and crafts. In 1936, the Ridley family moved to Nashville, Davidson County, and Greg was educated in local public schools, being graduated in 1944 from Pearl High School. He served a year as Apprentice Seaman in the U. S. Navy during World War Two and, after being honorably discharged, entered Fisk University in Nashville in 1945 and was graduated in 1949. The four years spent studying with Fisk's professor of art Aaron Douglas, one of

the most prominent artists of the 1916-1940 Harlem Renaissance, set Ridley's feet on the artistic path he would pursue and refine over the following fifty-four years.

In 1951, Ridley earned an undergraduate degree in art education from Tennessee State University, Nashville, and in 1955, after studying with Ulfert Wilke, Justus Bier, Walter Creese, and Creighton Gilbert, earned a master's degree in fine arts from the University of Louisville—the first person to receive this degree from Kentucky's U. of L. His first academic position, 1951-1958, was as instructor of art at Alabama State University. Following tenures included concurrent appointments as assistant professor of art at Grambling State University and Elizabeth City State College, 1958-1962, followed by professor of art at Tennessee State University and visiting lecturer and sculptor at Fisk University, 1966-1971. During 1971-1975, he served as studio artist, lecturer, professor of art, and museum coordinator at C.U.N.Y., then returned to Tennessee State University as associate professor and art gallery curator, 1975-1981. The next decade saw his return to Fisk University, where he served as associate professor of art, 1981-1985; art consultant to President Henry Ponder, 1989-1991; and acting curator at Van Vechten Gallery, 1991-1995. After a year as artist-in-residence at Morehouse College, Atlanta, 1995-1996, Ridley retired and returned to Nashville to serve as adjunct associate professor of art at Tennessee State University and professor of art at Fisk University.

Throughout his academic career, Ridley was first and foremost a working artist. Over the years his work, utilizing myriad techniques in painting and sculpture, has appeared in major exhibitions across the nation and is included in numerous collections held by museums, corporations, art galleries, and private citizens.

Among his major commissions was one for Fisk University to memorialize the history of the Carl Van Vechten Gallery of Fine Arts, resulting in Ridley's pair of copper repoussé sculpted panels adorning the entrance doors to the gallery. His "N'gere Mask Series" in oil paintings are displayed in Fisk's library, where also hang six completed copper panels of his "History of Fisk University." Among his local exhibitions were "Visions of My People: African-American Artists in Tennessee" at the Tennessee State Museum, and Ridley's one-man shows have been mounted at Cheekwood Fine Arts Center and the Nashville Artists' Guild Gallery, among numerous other venues. At Tennessee State University his work is part of the permanent collection in the Brown-Daniel Library and the Hiram Van Gordon Art Gallery. Examples of Ridley's work have been included in fourteen visual-art publications, including *American Negro Art*, *Prizewinning Art in America*, and *Two Centuries of Black American Art*.

At the height of his creativity and acclaim, Gregory Ridley died January 10, 2004, at his home. He is survived by one of his two sons, Cecil Kelley Greenidge; daughters, Jeanene Ridley, Clarette Ridley, Ronica Ridley-Martin, Gloria L. Ridley II, and Crystal Brooks Ridley; five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren; numerous kith and kin; and his wife of forty-one years, Gloria Louise Brooks Ridley. To his supportive wife he had dedicated the exhibition, "From the Hands of a Master," mounted June 13 through September 13, 2003, at the Nashville Public Library: "This exhibition is dedicated to my beautiful wife Gloria Louise Brooks Ridley, who has been an inspiration to me and to many other artists, a knowing collector of our art, and a strong nurturer of the creative spirit."

Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.

Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee

RIDING FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE: NASHVILLE STUDENT ACTIVISTS AND THE 1961 FREEDOM RIDES

On May 17, 2006, the Freedom Riders from Nashville and those cognizant of the modern Civil Rights movement timeline will pause to remember and commemorate the forty-fifth anniversary of the Nashville student activists' entrance into the Freedom Rides of 1961. Because of their heroic actions and refusal to relent to the demands of government officials, the Kennedy administration ultimately directed the Interstate Commerce Commission to issue regulations prohibiting racial segregation in all transportation facilities. The Freedom Rides were not a new tactic of the 1960s Civil Rights struggle. Fourteen years earlier, in 1947, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) organized and implemented the interracial Journey of Reconciliation throughout the upper South to test the United States Supreme Court decision in the *Morgan v. Virginia* (38 U.S. 373 [1946]) case, which mandated interstate bus desegregation.

As in 1947, the May 1961 Freedom Rides tested another Supreme Court decision, *Boynton v. Virginia* (364 U.S. 454 [1960]), which extended the Court's 1946 directive to all interstate transportation facilities, including terminals, waiting rooms, restaurants, and other amenities. The Court's decision made it unconstitutional to racially segregate waiting rooms, restrooms, and lunch counters. The South, known for its racial rigidity, often dismissed Supreme Court decisions as they related to racial desegregation. James Farmer and CORE were determined to make sure that both the South and the new Kennedy administration recognized that the Court's decision in *Boynton v. Virginia* could not be disregarded. While the 1947 and the 1961 rides were comparable in that they both tested decisions handed down by the nation's highest court, John Lewis asserts that the 1961 rides had been designed to be more cogent, bolder, and to move further into the deep

South in his *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*. Lewis states, "It would be a bolder title as well—nothing so tame and accommodating as 'reconciliation'—which is how Farmer came up with the phrase 'Freedom Ride.' There was a tone of demand in that phrase, a sense of proclamation, of no more waiting."

Although not the progenitors of the Freedom Rides of the 1960s, Nashville's student activists, under the leadership of Diane Judith Nash, became their driving force. On May 4, 1961, CORE sent two buses and an assembly of 13 Freedom Riders (seven black men, three white men, and three white women) on what was supposed to be a two-week trip, traveling through the deep South from Washington, D. C., to New Orleans, to test their right to intermingle blacks and whites in the region's bus stations. CORE officials notified the United States Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of their schedule, which was also transmitted to local police forces in Alabama and through them to the Ku Klux Klan. The interracial group encountered only a few problems during their first week of travel. However, when they reached Anniston, Alabama, on that fateful May 14, the Freedom Riders met a vicious horde of more than 100 angry whites, who brutally beat them and fire bombed the bus. In Birmingham, a mob toting iron pipes and other weapons greeted the riders where they were battered, knocked unconscious, and hospitalized. While the violence garnered national and international attention, it also caused Farmer to terminate the ride.

Despite the Kennedy administration's prodding them to abort their plans to ride to New Orleans, Nash and the Nashville student contingent moved into action upon hearing the news about the assault on Freedom Riders. They felt the ride must continue. In their opinion, the movement's future was at stake. If the rides were terminated, as Diane Nash said, "it would prove that vio-

lence could overcome nonviolence.” The students comprehended the importance of continuing the Freedom Rides after the Alabama attacks and that the Klan could not be left triumphant to claim control of the streets. On May 17, 1961, recruits left Nashville for Birmingham, Alabama, on the seventh anniversary of the Supreme Court’s unanimous *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

When the Nashville contingent of students arrived in Birmingham, Theophilus Eugene “Bull” Conner, the city’s racially intolerant chief of police, ordered the new Freedom Riders taken to the Birmingham jail. The following night, he released them at the Tennessee-Alabama state line. Within days, they regrouped and rejoined the route at Montgomery, undeterred by the mob violence in Birmingham or the threat of it that mounted as they approached Montgomery, when the law enforcement presence that had accompanied their trip suddenly fell away at the city line. It was in Montgomery, the “Cradle of the Confederacy,” that the Freedom Riders rode into the national and international consciousness as the media broadcast the mayhem perpetrated upon them by a mob of Klan members and other angry whites. These merciless attacks on those riding for freedom and justice forced the national government to act.

As stated in Mary L. Dudziak’s, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, “President Kennedy was angered by the Freedom Riders’ persistence.” In *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*, Richard Reeves asserts that he was disconcerted

in some measure because the viciousness against the Freedom Riders was “exactly the kind of the thing the Communists used to make the United States look bad around the world.” Embarrassed by the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, Kennedy was preparing to meet Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of the Soviet Union for the first time at summit conference in Vienna. It was his hope to draw attention away from the Bay of Pigs and establish himself as a global leader. The Freedom Riders obstructed these aims. According to Harris Wofford’s, *Of Kennedy and Kings: Making Sense of the Sixties*, Kennedy “supported every American’s right to stand up or sit down for his rights—but not to ride for them in the spring of 1961.”

The students’ single-mindedness to carry on the Freedom Rides had major consequences for the southern Civil Rights movement. The Freedom Rides continued for the next four months with student activists in the forefront. While segregationists’ vindictive show of aggression only served to make the tightly-knit group of trained student activists more resolute to bring down the nation’s bastions of racial segregation, it also forced the federal government into action. On September 22, 1961, in response to the Freedom Rides and under pressure from the Kennedy administration, the Interstate Commerce Commission promulgated regulations eliminating racial segregation in train and bus terminals. These regulations went into effect on November 1, 1961.

Linda T. Wynn



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