

Kentucky African American Authors, Musicians and Photographers



By Elisabeth (Lisa) Kone

Introduction

This research paper fulfills the requirement of the Library Fellowship for Undergraduate Students of Color for the 2021 spring semester. It is based on the lives of African American individuals from Kentucky and/or those who have spent several years of their lives in Kentucky. Many African Americans across the state of Kentucky have proven to be educated, skilled and talented. From the 1800s to the last generation, these people lived to become great in their specific domains such as literature writing in its different forms, music as well as photography. They have gone through different challenges to make history and be examples to the generations after them. This research includes 55 African Americans from Kentucky; 22 authors, 26 musicians including two groups of two and four individuals respectively and finally 7 photographers including a group made up of two individuals. This is a total of 50 bibliographies. The cover photograph incorporates some of the authors and musicians discussed in this paper; Lionel Hampton, bell hooks, Frank X Walker, Alice Allison Dunnigan, Valerie Coleman, Houston A. Baker Jr., Suzan-Lori Parks, Charles H. Wesley, Boyce D. Watkins, Crystal Wilkinson, Bobby William Austin, Lyman T. Johnson, Daniel Burley, W.C. Handy, Bryson Tiller and Gayl Jones.

AUTHORS FROM KENTUCKY

Adams, John Quincy

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY May 4, 1848

Deathplace and date: St. Paul, MN September 4, 1922

Parents: Reverend Henry Adams and Margaret Priscilla Adams

Education:

- Ohio's Oberlin College

Jobs/Career:

- Adams had a teaching career
- Clerk for the Arkansas Senate (1873)
- He served on the Republican Party's State and City Executive Committees
- Delegate to the Republican National Convention (1880)
- Granger and storekeeper in the U.S. Revenue Service for Kentucky's Fifth District
- First president of the first Colored Press Association of the United States
- Editor of the Western Appeal (1886)

Spouse: Ella Bell Smith (1892)

Children: Adina, Margaret, Edythella, John Jr.

Interesting Facts:

- He was the first president of the Colored Press Association of the United States

He wrote:

- The Bulletin (a weekly newspaper)

Austin, Bobby William

Birthplace and date: Bowling Green, KY December 29, 1944

Education:

- B.A. in sociology and economics from Western Kentucky University
- M.A. in sociology at Fisk University
- Ph.D. from McMaster University
- Diploma from the Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Honorary Doctorate for Public from Central Michigan University

Jobs/ Career:

- Campaign speech writer and issues director in mayoral campaign of Patricia Robert Harris and Sharon Pratt.
- Special Assistant to the Board of Trustees at the University of the District of Columbia
- Founding editor of the Urban League Review, the National research and policy journal of the National Urban League
- Program Officer at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (1990-1997)
- Executive director of the National Task Force on African American Men and Boys
- Former Chairman of the Planning Committee on the Status of African American Men
- Founding fellow of the National Endowment for the Public Trust and Director of its Justice Task Force.

Spouse: Joy Ford

Children: Ariana Austin

Interesting facts: He is Mahatma Gandhi Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Secondly, his daughter is married to an Ethiopian Prince.

He wrote:

- What a Piece of Work is Man (1992)
- Repairing the Breach: Key Ways to Support Family Life, Reclaim our Streets and Rebuild Civil Society in American Communities (1996)
- Wake up and Start to Live: an Analysis of a Gallop Poll and a Statistical Profile of African-American Men (1990-2000)
- Circus Clowns, Carnival Animals (2008)
- I'll Make Me a World: Bringing Wholeness to Fractured Lives after 9/11 (2008)
- Point Vierge, The Contemplative Intention In Community (2011)

Honors/Legacy:

- His work was honored at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

Baker Jr., Houston A.

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY March 22, 1943

Parents: Houston Alfred Baker Sr. and Viola Elizabeth Smith Baker

Childhood: He was the second of three sons

Education:

- B.A. in English literature from Howard University (1965)
- M.A. in Victorian literature from the University of California at Los Angeles
- Doctoral Studies at the University of Edinburgh (1967 – 1968)
- Ph.D. in Victorian literature from the University California Los Angeles (1968)

Jobs/ Career:

- Professor at Yale University
- Faculty of the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Studies (1970)
- Director of the University of Pennsylvania's Afro-American Studies Program. (1974 – 1977)
- Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania (1977-1999)
- Albert M. Greenfield Professor of Human Relations (1982)
- Founder and Director of the university's Center for the Study of Black Literature and Culture (1987-1999)
- Delegate for the United States Delegation of Five to the First Conference on Literature and National Consciousness (1976 – 1978)
- Susan Fox and George D. Beischer Professor of English (1999 – 2006)
- Editor of American Literature at Duke University (2000)
- Distinguished University Professor at Vanderbilt University (2006)

Spouse: Charlotte Pierce Baker

Interesting facts: When he was younger, his parents gave him and his siblings a dime for every book they read and a quarter for each written book report.

He wrote:

- No Matter Where You Travel, You Still Be Black (1979)
- Spirit Run (1982)
- Blues Journeys Home (1985)
- Passing Over (2000)

Awards:

- Howard University Award scholarship (1961-1965)
- Kappa Delta Phi, Howard University (1965)
- John Hay Whitney Foundation Fellow (1965 – 1966)
- NDEA Fellow, UCA (1965 – 1968)
- Alfred Longueil Poetry Award (1966)
- Legion of Honor, Chapel of the Four Chaplains, Philadelphia Community Service Award (1981)
- Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation Award for Distinguished Teaching (1984)
- Alumni Award for Distinguished Achievement in Literature and the Humanities (1985)
- Outstanding Alumnus Award of Howard University (1985)
- Distinguished Writer of the Year (1986)
- Creative Scholarship Award (1988)
- Pennsylvania Governor's Award for Excellence in the Humanities (1990)

bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins)

Birthplace and date: Hopkinsville, KY September 25, 1952

Parents: Veodis Watkins and Rosa Bell Watkins

Childhood: She was one of six children; her father was a janitor and her mother worked as a maid in the homes of white families. During her whole childhood, she went to racially segregated public schools.

Education:

- Hopkinsville's Crispus Attucks High School
- Hopkinsville High School
- BA in English from Stanford University (1973)
- MA in English from University of Wisconsin – Madison (1976)
- Doctorate in literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz (1983)

Jobs/ Career:

- English Professor and senior lecturer in Ethnic Studies at the University of Southern California
- She taught post-secondary institutions including the University of California, Santa Cruz, San Francisco State University, Yale, Oberlin College and College of New York.
- Professor of African American Studies and English at Yale University
- Associate Professor of Women's Studies and American Literature at Oberlin College
- Distinguished Lecturer of English Literature at the City College of New York
- Distinguished Professor in residence of Berea College

Interesting facts: She adopted her maternal great-grandmother's name because her great-grandmother was known for having snappy and bold tongue. However, she put that name in lowercase in order to distinguish herself from her great-grandmother.

She wrote:

- And There We Wept (1978)
- Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism (1981)
- Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center (1984)
- Talking Back: Thinking feminist, thinking Black (1989)

- Killing rage: ending racism. (1995)
- Wounds of passion: a writing life (1997)
- Justice: childhood love lessons (2000)
- Where we stand: class matters (2000)
- Salvation: Black people and love (2001)
- Communion: the female search for love (2002)
- We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity (2004)

Awards:

- Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics: The American Book Awards/ Before Columbus Foundation Award (1991)
- Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism. "One of the twenty most influential women's books in the last 20 years" by Publishers Weekly (1992)
- bell hooks: The Writer's Award from the Lila Wallace – Reader's Digest Fund (1994)
- Happy to be Nappy: NAACP Image Award nominee (2001)
- Homemade Love: The Bank Street College Children's Book of the Year (2002)
- Salvation: Black People and Love: Hurston Wright Legacy Award nominee (2002)
- bell hooks: Utne Reader's "100 Visionaries Who Could Change Your Life"
- bell hooks: The Atlantic Monthly's "One of our nation's leading public intellectuals"

Brown, William Well

Birthplace and date: Lexington, KY 1814

Death place and date: Chelsea, MA November 6, 1884

Parents: Elizabeth (a slave; Native American and Black ancestry) and George W. Higgins

Childhood: Brown was of mixed race; his father was a white planter, and his cousin was Brown's master who formally acknowledged him as his son and promised to not sell him. However, he sold him with his mother. He was sold several times before the age of 19. He attempted to escape twice, and the second attempt worked in his favor. He learned to read and write in Cincinnati while working with an abolitionist named Elijah Parish Lovejoy.

Siblings: Solomon, Leander, Benjamin, Milford, Joe Brown, and Elizabeth.

Jobs/Career:

- He was an antislavery lecturer, novelist, playwright and historian.

Spouse: Elizabeth Schooner (1834 – died in 1851), Anna Elizabeth Gray (1860)

Children: Josephine Brown, Clarissa Brown, Henrietta Helen Brown, Williams Well Brown Jr., Clotelle Brown

Interesting fact:

- He is considered to be the first African American to publish a novel
- Brown helped many slaves to get their freedom by taking them to Buffalo, or Detroit, Michigan or across the lake to Canada on a boat
- Brown is the first published African American playwright

He wrote:

- Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave (1847)
- Clotel (1853)
- The Escape (1858)
- The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements (1863)
- The Negro in the American Rebellion (1867)

- The Rising Son (1873)
- My Southern Home (1880)

Legacy/Honors:

- Brown was among the first writers inducted to the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame
- There is an elementary school in Lexington, Kentucky named after him
- There is a historic marker marking the approximate location of his home in Buffalo, NY

Burley, Daniel Gardner

Birthplace and date: Lexington, KY November 7, 1907

Deathplace and date: Chicago, IL October 29, 1962

Parents: James Burley and Anna Seymour

Childhood: When Dan was three years old, he lost his father. His mother remarried in 1915. In high school, he was president of the school paper and was on the High School football league. He played basketball as well as the piano.

Education:

- Wendell Phillips High

Jobs/ Career:

- Sports editor for Daily Defender (1928-1931, 1935-1937)
- City editor, columnist and sport and theatrical editor for Chicago Sunday Bee (1932)
- Theatrical Editor of the Amsterdam News
- Managing Editor of the New York Age
- Editor of Ebony Magazine
- War correspondent during World War II
- Writer for Elijah Muhammad
- Managing Editor of Muhammad Speaks
- Boogie-Woogie Pianist
- Member of "Dan Burley and His Skiffle Boys"
- Appeared in five films

Spouse: Gustava McCurdy, Gladys Burley

Children: D'Anne Elizabeth Burley

Interesting facts: He became friends with Lionel Hampton, Milton Hinton, Louis Jordan and Langley Waller; they all later moved to New York City to work in the writing, music and entertainment industries. He was also friends with Malcolm X.

He wrote:

- Daniel Burley's Original Handbook of Harlem Jive (1944)
- Message to the Black Man

Cotter Sr., Joseph Seamon

Birthplace and date: Nelson County, KY February 2, 1861

Deathplace and date: Louisville, KY March 14, 1949

Parents: Michael J. Cotter and Martha Vaughn

Childhood: Cotter was born in a log cabin and when he turned 8 years old, he and his mother moved to Louisville. His mother taught him how to read at 4 years through stories and songs. In

the third grade, he had to quit school to help support his family. He worked as a manual laborer and eventually became a teamster.

Education: He entered night school at 22 years old.

Jobs/career:

- Teacher at Western Colored School (1889-1893)
- Principal of Dunbar School (1893-1911)
- Principal of Samuel Coleridge Taylor School (until retirement 1942)

Spouse: Maria F. Cox

Children: Joseph Cotter Jr., Leonidas, Florence, Olivia

Interesting facts: Cotter won the approval for the practice of naming schools in African American neighborhoods after famous African Americans.

He wrote:

- A Rhyming (1895)
- Links of Friendship (1898)
- A White Song and a Black One (1909)
- Negro Tales (1912)
- Collected Poems (1938)
- Sequel to the "Pied Piper of Hamlim" and Other Poems (1939)
- Caleb and Degenerate: A play in Four Acts – A Study of the Types, Customs and Needs of the American Negro (1940)

Dunnigan, Alice Allison

Birthplace and date: Russellville, KY April 27, 1906

Death place and date: Washington, D.C, May 6, 1983

Parents: Willie and Lena Pittman Allison

Siblings: Russell

Education:

- Knob City High School
- Kentucky Normal and Industrial Institute which is now Kentucky State University
- Howard University

Jobs/Career:

- She began her journalism at 13 years old writing for the local Owensboro Enterprise newspaper
- She taught Kentucky History in the Todd County School (1924 – 1942)
- She was Federal Government employee from 1942 - 1946
- She was a Washington Correspondent for The Chicago Defender (1946)
- She was named bureau chief of the Associate Negro Press (1947 – 1961)
- She worked as an information specialist for the Department of Labor and an editorial assistant for Presidential Council of Youth Opportunity (1966 – 1967)

Spouse: Walter Dickenson (1926 – 1930) Charles Dunnigan (1932 - 1953)

Children: Robert William

Interesting fact:

- She was the first black journalist to cover the White House
- She received more than 50 journalism awards and two years after her death was inducted into the Black Journalist Hall of Fame.

She wrote:

- The fascinating story of Black Kentuckians, 1982
- A Black Woman's Experience: From Schoolhouse to White House, 1974
- Interview with Alice Dunnigan, 1979
- Alone Atop the Hill, 2015

Jallayu, Lawfield G.

Birthplace and date: Abidjan, Ivory coast May 1st, 2000

Childhood: He grew up in Louisville, KY with his family.

Education: He is currently a junior majoring in Exercise Science at Northern Kentucky University.

Jobs/Career:

- Generational Camp – Bridge Kids International

He wrote: "Sincerely, a Broken Heart" (December 23, 2019)

Johnson, Lyman T.

Birthplace and date: Columbia, TN June 12, 1906

Deathplace and date: Louisville, KY October 3, 1997

Parents: Mary Dew and Robert Graves Johnson

Childhood: Johnson was the eighth of nine children. He had an educated father who was a graduate of Roger Williams University of Nashville and principal College Hill School in Columbia.

Education:

- Knoxville College - high school diploma (1926)
- Virginia Union University - bachelor's degree in Greek (1930)
- University of Michigan – master's degree in history (1931)

Jobs/ Career:

- Economics and Mathematics professor at Louisville's Central High School (1933 – 1966)
- President of the Louisville Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (1939 – 1941)
- Assistant Principal in the Jefferson County Public Schools and Flaget High School in Louisville.
- Member of the Jefferson County Board of Education (1978- 1982)
- Head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Spouse: Juanita Morrell (1936 – 1977)

Children: Yvonne Johnson Hutchins and Lyman Morrell Johnson

Interesting facts:

- He served during World War II.
- He won a campaign to end racially based inequalities in the pay of Louisville's teachers.
- Johnson was the plaintiff in a lawsuit that opened the University of Kentucky's graduate program to African American students.

He wrote:

- The Rest of the Dream (1988)

Awards/Legacy:

- Honorary Doctor of Letters degree (1979)

- The University of Kentucky offers a fellowship programs in his name.
- The Lyman T. Johnson Middle School was named in his honor

Jones, Gayl

Birthplace and date: Lexington, KY November 23, 1949

Parents: Franklin and Lucille Jones

Childhood: Gayle grew up in Speigle Heights; her father was a restaurant cook and her mum was a stay-at-home mother. Her grandmother wrote plays for her church and her mother entertained the children with stories.

Education:

- Henry Clay High School
- Bachelor of Arts degree in English at the Connecticut College (1971)
- Master of Arts at Brown University (1973)
- Doctor of Arts (1975)

Jobs/ Career:

- Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan

Spouse: Bob Higgins

She wrote:

- Corregidora (1975)
- Eva's Man (1976)
- Die Vogelfaengerin (1983)
- Xarque and Other Poems
- The Healing (1998)
- Mosquito (1999)

Awards:

- Frances Steloff Award for Fiction
- National Book Award finalist

Parks, Suzan-Lori

Birthplace and date: Knox. KY May 10, 1963

Childhood: Parks grew up with two siblings in a military family and they moved frequently.

Education:

- The John Carroll School
- BA in English and German literature from Mt. Holyoke College (1985)

Jobs/Career: She teaches playwrighting at Tisch School of Arts

Spouse: Paul Oscher (2001 – divorced 2010), Christian Konokpa

Interesting fact: Parks was the first African American to win a Pulitzer Prize for Drama

She wrote:

- The Sinner's Place (1984)
- The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World A.K.A The Negro Book Of The Dead (1989 -1992)
- The America Play (1994)
- Venus (1996)
- Girl 6 (1996)

- In The Blood (1999)
- Topdog/ Underdog (1999)
- Getting Mother's Body: A Novel (2003)
- Their Eyes Were Watching God (2005)
- Porgy and Bess (2011)
- White Noise (2019)
- Native Son (2019)
- The Unites States vs Billie Holiday (2021)

Awards/Honors:

- Whiting Award (1992)
- Guggenheim Fellowship Playwriting (2000)
- MacArthur Foundation 'Genius' Grant (2001)
- Pulitzer Prize for Drama Topdog/ Underdog (2002)
- Academy of Achievement Golden Plate Award (2007)
- NAACP Theatre Award (2008)
- Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize (2015)
- PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Awards for Master American Dramatist (2017)
- Windham – Campbell Literature Prize in Drama (2018)
- Outer Critics Circle Award (2019)

Peyton, Atholene Mary

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY 1880

Deathplace and date: Louisville, KY April 26, 1951

Parents: Dr. William and Mary Peyton

Education:

- Central High School (1898)

Jobs/career:

- Louisville editor of the Columbia
- Domestic science teacher at the Neighborhood Home and Training School for Colored Boys and Girls in Louisville
- Summer session teacher at the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington

She wrote:

- Peytonia Cook Book (1906)

Powell, Ruth Marie

Birthplace and date: Madisonville, KY February 4, 1912

Deathplace and date: Flint, MI 2000

Parents: John S. and Louise Davidson

Childhood: Powell's father was a coal miner from North Carolina who moved with his family to Providence, Kentucky. There he owned a funeral home business, and his wife Louise became a teacher.

Education:

- Paducah's West Kentucky Industrial College
- AB degree from Johnson C. Smith University (1940)
- MS degree from Tennessee State University (1953)

Jobs/Career:

- Assistant professor in education

Spouse: Rev. John Lewis Powell (1935)

She wrote:

- Lights and Shadows: The Story of American Baptist Theological Seminary (1964)
- Ventures in Education with Black Baptists in Tennessee (1981)

Powers, Georgia Montgomery Davis

Birthplace and date: Springfield, KY October 19, 1923

Deathplace and date: Louisville, KY January 30, 2016

Parents: Frances Walker and Ben Gore Montgomery

Childhood: Georgia was the second of nine children and the only girl. Her family moved to Louisville in 1925 and there, she received most of her education.

Siblings: Joseph Ben, Robert, John Albert, Phillip, Lawrence Franklin, James Isaac, Rudolph, Carl

Education:

- Virginia Avenue Elementary School (1929 – 1934)
- Madison Junior High School (1934 – 1937)
- Central High School (1937 -1940)
- Louisville municipal College (1940 – 1942)

Jobs/ Career:

- Georgia began her political career in 1962 by training volunteers for Wilson Wyatt's U.S. Senate campaign.
- She led campaigns for candidates for governor of Kentucky, mayor of Louisville, the U.S. House and Senate as well as U.S. president
- She participated in many civil rights activities
- Secretary of the Democratic Caucus
- Chair of the Health and Welfare Committee (1970 – 1976)
- Member of the Rules Committee (1978 -1988)

Spouse: Norman F. Davis (1943 – 1968), James L. Powers (1973)

Children: William Davis

Interesting facts:

- She was the first African American elected to the Kentucky State Senate

She wrote:

- I Shared the Dream: The Pride, Passion and Politics of the First Black Woman Senator from Kentucky (1995)
- The Adventures of the Book of Revelation (1998)
- Celia's Land (2004)

Smith, Effie Waller

Birthplace and date: Pikeville, KY January 6, 1879

Deathplace and date: Neenah, WI January 2, 1960

Parents: Frank Waller and Sibbie Ratliff

Childhood: Effie was raised along with three siblings; she had a strong educational and religious background.

Education:

- Kentucky Normal School for Colored Persons, 1900 – 1901

Jobs/Career: Her verses appeared in local papers and her first collection was published in 1904 containing 110 poems.

Spouse: Lyss Cockrell (1904 – divorced 1905), Deputy Sheriff Charles Smith (1908 -1911)

Children: Ruth (adopted)

Interesting fact:

- Smith was a passionate gardener who constructed a large garden that was open to visitors.

She wrote:

- Songs of the Month (1904)
- Rhymes from the Cumberland (1909)
- Rosemary and Pansies (1909)
- Autumn Winds (1917)

Walker, Frank X

Birthplace and date: Danville, KY June 11, 1961

Childhood: Walker was the second of ten children. He was a nerd and an athlete in his teenage years. He played football and was twice elected as class president.

Education:

- Toliver Elementary
- Danville High School
- University of Kentucky
- Master of fine arts in writing from Spalding University (2003)

Jobs/ Career:

- Founding member of the Affrilachian Poets
- Writer in residence and English Lecturer at Northern Kentucky University
- Professor in the English Department of the University of Kentucky
- Founder and Executive Director of the Bluegrass Black Arts Consortium
- Program Coordinator of the university of Kentucky's King Cultural Center
- Assistant Director of Purdue University's Black Cultural Center
- Director of the African American and Africana studies Program

Interesting facts: Walker was the first African American name Kentucky poet laureate

He wrote:

- Affrilachia (2000)
- Black Box (2000)
- Buffalo Dance: The Journey of York (2003)
- When Winter Come: The Ascension of York (2008)
- Isaac Murphy: I Dedicate This Ride (2010)
- Turn Me Loose: The Unghosting of Medgar Evers (2013)
- About Flight (2015)

Awards/Honors/Legacy:

- Lillian Smith Book Award (2004)
- Thomas D. Clark Literary Award for Excellence, Actors Theatre's Keeper of the Chronicle Award (2006)
- Kentucky Arts Council Al Smith Fellowship recipient
- Recipient of a \$75000 Lannan Literary Fellowship in Poetry (2005)
- NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work (2014)
- Honorary doctorates from the University of Kentucky and Transylvania University

Watkins, Boyce D.

Birthplace and date: Louisville KY, June 20, 1971

Parents: Robin Couch and Larry Watkins (adoptive father)

Childhood: Watkins was born to a teen mother and shortly after his birth, his biological father left. When he was three years old, his mum got married to Larry Watkins a Vietnam veteran from Louisville who adopted Boyce. Watkins struggled in school and was eventually placed in special education and was told that he was not smart enough for college.

Education:

- University of Kentucky
- University of Rochester
- Ohio State University (Ph.D.)

Jobs/ Career:

- Finance Expert
- Media Commentator
- Activist

Partner(s): Dr. Alicia

Interesting facts: He finished with a triple major in Finance, Economics as well Business Management.

He wrote:

- Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About College – A Guide for Minority Students (2004)
- What if George Bush were a Black Man? (2004)

Wesley, Charles H.

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY December 2, 1891

Deathplace and date: District of Columbia August 16, 1987

Parents: Matilda and Charles Snowden Wesley

Childhood: Wesley was an only child. He attended local schools in his childhood.

Education:

- Bachelors from Fisk University (1911)
- Masters at Yale University (1913)
- PhD from Harvard University (1925)

Jobs/ Career:

- Ordained minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)
- President of Wilberforce University

- Founder of Central State University
- Director of Research and Publications for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History
- Director of the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum in Philadelphia
- National Historian

Spouse: Louise Johnson (1973), Dorothy B. Porter (1977 – 1987)

Children: Louise J. Wesley and Charlotte Wesley Holloman

Awards:

- Guggenheim Fellowship (1930/ 1931)
- Phi Beta Kappa Key (1953)
- Scottish Rite Gold Medal Award (1957)
- Amistad Award (1972)
- Honorary doctorates from Wilberforce University

Interesting facts: He was the fourth African American to receive a PhD from Harvard

He wrote:

- Negro Labor in the United States (1927)
- Richard Allen, Apostle of Freedom (1935)
- Collapse of Confederacy (1937)
- The Negro in the Americas (1940)
- Negro Makers of History (1958)
- The Story of the Negro Retold with Carter G. Woodson (1959)
- Ohio Negroes in the Civil War (1962)
- Neglected History: Essays in Negro History (1965)
- Negro Americans in the Civil War: From Slavery to Citizenship (1967)
- International Library of Negro Life and History (1967)
- In Freedom's Footsteps: From the African Background to the Civil War (1968)
- The Fifteenth Amendment and Black America (1970)
- Women Builders with Sadie lola Daniel and Thelma D. Perry (1970)

Wilkinson, Crystal

Birthplace and date: Hamilton, OH 1962

Parents: She was brought up by her grandparents, Silas and Christine Wilkinson

Childhood: When she was six weeks old, she came to Indian Creek, Kentucky (near Middleburg, KY) to live with her grandparents. She grew up on a farm and learned to love country life.

Education:

- Eastern Kentucky University, B.A in Journalism, 1985
- Spalding University, master's in fine arts degree for Creative Writing, 2003

Jobs/Career:

- Public Information Officer and Community Relations Manager for the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government
- Writer at The Affrilachian Poets
- Writer-in-Residence at Berea College
- Teacher at Spaulding University
- Teacher at the University of Kentucky

Interesting fact: At one time she owned with her partner the Wild Fig Books and Coffee in Lexington, KY, one of the few Black-owned bookstores in the United States.

She wrote:

- "Dreams and reality," *Obsidian II: Black Literature in Review*, 1995
 - "Deviled Eggs," *Southern Exposure*, 1997
 - "Women's Secrets," *The Briar Cliff Review*, 1999
 - *Blackberries, Blackberries*, London: The Toby Press, 2000
 - Winner of the Chaffin Award for Appalachian Literature
 - A collection of short stories about rural life in Kentucky.
 - *Water Street*, London: Toby Press, 2002
 - Finalist for United Kingdom's Orange Prize for Fiction
 - Finalist for Hurston/Write Legacy Award
 - A story that tells events in the lives of the residents of Water Street in a small Kentucky town.
 - *The Birds of Opulence*, Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2016
 - Winner of the 2016 Ernest J. Gaines for Literary Excellence
 - A novel about a family struggling with mental illnesses, illegitimacy, and other difficult relationships.
- Perfect Black, forthcoming in August 2021, Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.

Awards:

- She is a 2020 USA Fellow of Creative Writing
- 2008 Denny Plattner Award in Poetry from Appalachian Heritage Magazine
- Sally Bingham Award from the Kentucky Foundation for Women

Williams, Frances Harriet

Birthplace and date: Danville, KY 1898

Deathplace and date: Newton, MA March 15, 1992

Parents: Frank L. and Fannie (Miller) Williams

Childhood: Williams was raised in St. Louis by her two parents

Education:

- Summer High School
- University of Cincinnati
- BA in economics and sociology at Mt. Holyoke College (1919)
- MA in social work New York School of Social Work
- MA in political science from the University of Chicago (1931)

Jobs/Career:

- Research assistant in the Political Science department of the University of Chicago
- Interracial Education secretary for the national YWCA (1935 – 1940)
- Race Relations advisor for the Office of Pride Administration (1944)
- Assistant to the executive secretary of President Harry S. Truman's Committee on Civil Rights (1947)
- Consultant for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for United Nation Affairs in the State Department (1950)
- Legislative assistant to Senator Herbert H. Lehman

Interesting Fact:

- She was given a position as the only female Legislative assistant to Senator Herbert Lehman
- Williams was a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the YMCA, the Editorial Board of the American Society for Public Administration, and the Citizens Committee for the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses.

She wrote:

- Negro Community Works in Behalf of Its Families (1942)
- Minority Groups and OPA (1947)

Legacy:

- The Frances Williams Harriet Awards for scholastic excellence at Mount Holyoke College

Young, Margaret Buckner

Birthplace and date: Campbellsville KY, 1922

Deathplace and date: Denver, CO 2009

Parents: Franck Buckner and Eva Carter Buckner

Childhood: Margaret was raised by her two parents who were both teachers in Kentucky's segregated school system

Education:

- Kentucky State College (1942)
- Master's in educational psychology and testing from the University of Minnesota (1945)

Jobs/Career:

- Instructor at Kentucky State College (1942 – 1944)
- Professor of educational psychology at Spelman College (1957 – 1960)
- Chairwoman and executive director of the Whitney M. Young Jr. Memorial Foundation
- Member of the boards of directors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Lincoln Center, the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Phillip Morris Company and the New York Life Insurance Company
- U.S. delegate to the 28th General Assembly of the United Nations

Spouse: Whitney M. Young Jr. (1944 – 1971)

She wrote:

- The First Book of American Negroes (1966)
- The Picture Life of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968)
- Black American Leaders (1969)

MUSICIANS FROM KENTUCKY

Barbour, Berni

Birthplace and date: Danville, KY April 22, 1881

Deathplace and date: Chicago, IL April 11, 1936

Parents: Morris and Nicey Barbour

Education:

- State Colored Baptist University (1896)
- Schmoll School of Music (1899)

Occupation/ Career:

- Manager of W.C. Handy's Memphis Blue Orchestra
- Writer for the Pace and Handy Music Company
- Entertainer and Composer

He composed:

- Arrival of the Negro
- Redemption
- Ethiopia

Beason, William 'Bill'

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY 1908

Deathplace and date: New York, NY 1988

Education:

- Wilberforce University

Occupation/Career:

- Jazz musician
- Drummer for Horace Henderson's Collegians (1924 – 1928)
- Beason was part of Bessie Allen's band
- Drummer in Chick Webb's Orchestra

He recorded:

- Lady Be Good/ Dicky Wells Blues (1937)
- King Porter Stomp (1937)

Black Coffey (Clay and Jason Coffey)

Birthplace and date:

- Jason – Lexington, KY 1979
- Clay – Lexington, KY 1980

Childhood: The Coffey brother were raised in a musical family and developed their skills and harmonies by performing in church and school choirs.

They wrote:

- Country Boyz (2002)
- Rocket Love
- Spill
- Hard to Get

Brannon, Joan W.

Birthplace and date: Lexington, KY 1963

Occupation:

- Percussionist
- Instructor
- Drum circle facilitator
- Community arts organizer

Interesting fact: Joan has performed throughout the U.S. and West Africa.

Coleman, Valerie

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY 1970

Childhood: Coleman began her music studies at eleven years old and by the age of fourteen, she had written three symphonies.

Education:

- Double BA in theory/composition and flute performance from University of Boston
- Master's degree in flute performance from the Mannes College of Music

Occupation/Career:

- Composer and flutist
- Founder of Imani Winds

Awards:

- Edward and Sally Van Lier Fellowship (2003)
- Herb Alpert Awards Ragdale Prize
- MAPFund
- ASCAP Honors Award
- Chamber Music America's Classical Commissioning Program
- Nominations from the American Academy of Arts and Letters

Fisher, Mary Ann

Birthplace and date: Henderson, KY 1923

Deathplace and date: Louisville, KY March 12, 2004

Childhood: Fischer had eight siblings. Some of them were placed in the Kentucky Home Society for Colored Children in Louisville.

She wrote:

- Song Bird of the South (2004)

Interesting fact: Fischer toured with Ray Charles from 1955 to 1958.

Gaines, Tanita

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY

Occupations:

- Gospel and blues singer

Albums:

- Another City Day

Gaither, William

Birthplace and date: Belmont, KY April 21, 1910

Deathplace and date: Indianapolis, IN October 30, 1970

Parents: Samuel Gaither and Bertha Kennison

Occupation/Career:

- Guitarist and blues singer
- Radio repair shop operator (1940)
- Part of all black 24th Infantry Regiment (1942 – 1945)

Gibson, Clifford

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY 1901

Deathplace and date: St. Louis, MO 1963

Occupation:

- Blues singer and guitarist

Interesting fact: Gibson recorded over 40 titles in his 40-year career

He wrote:

- Bad Luck Dice
- Original moralizing lyrics
- Whiskey Moan Blues

Hampton, Lionel

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY April 20, 1908

Deathplace and date: New York City August 31, 2002

Parents: Charles Edward and Gertrude Hampton

Education:

- University of Southern California

Childhood: Hampton lost his father when he was very young. He moved to Birmingham with his mother. They satyaed with his mother's parents and grew up being influenced by gospel music.

Occupation:

- Jazz musician, vibraphonist, band leader
- Hampton served on the Board of Directors of the Kennedy Center

Spouse: Gladys Neal

Children: Lionel

He wrote:

- Flying Home
- Hamp's Boogie Woogie

Interesting fact: Hampton was the first jazz musician to be recorded playing the vibraphone.

Legacy: The University of Idaho's school of music was named after the Lionel Hampton School of Music.

Handy, W.C.

Birthplace and date: Florence, AL November 16, 1873

Deathplace and date: New York, NY March 28, 1958

Parents: Elizabeth Brewer and Charles Bernard Handy

Education:

Spouse: Elizabeth Price

Occupation/ Career:

- Bandleader, trumpeter, choral director, cornetist and teacher
- Teacher at the Teachers Agriculture and Mechanical College

Interesting facts: Handy lived in Henderson, KY and was known as the father of the blues.

He wrote/published:

- Memphis Blues (1912)
- Long Gone (1920)

Henderson, Jennie Katherine Edmonia

Birthplace and date: Jefferson County, KY 1900

Deathplace and date: Louisville, KY 1947

Occupation: blue singer and evangelist

Hooks, Julia Britton

Birthplace and date: Frankfort, KY May 4, 1852

Deathplace and date: Memphis, TN March 9, 1942

Parents: Laura Marshall and Henry Harrison

Childhood: Julia was born in a slave state but as a free person. She grew up in Lexington with a well-educated mother who was also a singer and a father who was a carpenter.

Education:

- Berea College

Spouse: Sam Wertles, Charles F. Hooks

Occupation/Career:

- Classical Musician
- Educator

Huguely, Angelina M.

Birthplace and date: Richmond, KY 1965

Education:

- B.S. degree in Occupational Therapy from Eastern Kentucky University

Occupation/Career:

- Therapist
- Saxophonist
- Social Worker
- Civil rights activist

Humes, Helen

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY June 23, 1913

Deathplace and date: Santa Monica, CA September 9, 1981

Parents: Emma Johnson and John Henry Humes

Childhood: Humes performed with Bessie Allen's Booker T. Washington Community Center Band.

Education:

- Central High School (1926)

Occupation:

- Jazz singer

She wrote:

- Be-Baba-Leba (1945)
- Songs I like to Sing (1961)
- Helen Comes Back (1973)

Awards/Honors:

- Hot Club of France Award for Best Album of 1973
- Key to the City of Louisville, 1975, 1977

Hunter, Zella M.

Birthplace and date: Newport, KY 1890

Deathplace and date: unknown

Parents: Eula Gray Hunter and John Hunter

Childhood: Her family settled in in Mason City, Iowa

Occupations:

- Piano player
- Clerk

Spouse: Fred Russell

Linkin' Bridge

Linkin' bridge is a singing group from Louisville, Kentucky. It is comprised of four members:

- Montre Davis - baritone soul singer
- Shon 'China' Lacy - rhythmic tenor
- Ralph "Big Rome" Kimbrough - tenor singer
- Elliott "The Kid" Nichols – versatile vocalist

Albums:

- Expressions, Vol 1

Martin, Sara

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY June 18, 1884

Deathplace and date: Louisville, KY May 24, 1955

Parents: William T. Dunn and Mary Katherine Pope

Life: Sara began singing in her church choir at 24. After her 1922 recording, she became a queen of the blues. She toured the country and made over 100 and appeared in multiple movies. She retired from popular music in 1930 and devoted the rest of her life to serving at church. Nine years after, she opened a nursing home which she managed until 1949. s

Occupation:

- Blues singer

- Actress
- Church worker

Spouse: Christopher Wooden (1900- 1901), Abe Burton, Hayes Buford Withers

She wrote:

- Sugar Blues (1922)
- Harris

McLawler, Sarah

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY August 6, 1926

Deathplace and date: September 12, 2017

Childhood: McLawler began playing piano by ear at seven years old. She then played in churches her father was a minister.

Education:

- Fisk University

Occupation:

- Organ player

Albums:

- We Bring You Love (2000)
- We Bring You Swing (2000)
- Under My Hat (2010)

Perkins, Constantine

Birthplace and date: Florence, AL 1870

Deathplace and date: Covington, KY

Parents: Constantine T. Perkins Sr. and Victoria Simpson Perkins

Childhood: At 5 years old, Constantine was a skilled pianist and eventually mastered other instruments like the cornet. He though Handy the 'Father of the Blues' how to play ragtime and the blues given that they were childhood friends.

Tiller, Bryson

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY January 2, 1993

Childhood: Tiler lost his mother when he was four years old and so, he was raised by his grandmother. He started singing and rapping at 15 years old.

Education:

- Iroquois High School

Albums:

- Trapsoul
- True to Self
- Anniversary

Awards & Nominations:

- BET Awards
- American Music Awards
- ASCAP Rhythm & Soul Awards

- Billboard Music Award
- BMI
- iHeartRadio Music Awards
- Kentucky Urban Entertainment Awards
- Soul Train Music Awards
- NAACP Image Awards

Weaver, Sylvester

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY 1896

Deathplace and date: Louisville, KY 1960

Parents: Walter Weaver and maria Cottrell

Occupation:

- Blues guitarist
- Gospel singer

Interesting fact: He served as a talent scout bringing other artists like Helen Humes and Walter Besley to the attention of Okeh records. He also worked with Sara Martin.

He wrote:

- Guitar Rag

PHOTOGRAPHERS FROM KENTUCKY

Dorsey Jr., Charles Ford

Birthplace and date: Louisville, KY 1941

Parents: Charles Sr. and Anna Lewis Dorsey

Education:

- East Los Angeles College

Jobs/career:

- Charles worked as a full-time employee at the American Synthetic Rubber Company in Louisville
- Freelance photographer for the Louisville Defender newspaper and magazines such as Ebony, Jives, JET and Soul Confession

Higgins, Chester

Birthplace and date: Chicago IL 1917

Deathplace and date: Washington, DC 2000

Chester received his education in Kentucky.

Education:

- Dunbar High School
- Kentucky State College
- Louisville Municipal College
- University of Louisville

Jobs/career:

- Reporter and feature writer for the Louisville Defender
- Editor of the Detroit edition of the Pittsburgh Courier
- Contributing editor of Ebony and Tan magazines
- Senior editor of Jet magazine
- Professor at Malcolm X College
- Adjunct professor at Howard University
- Assistant chief in the Public Affairs Office of the Department of the Army

Legacy/Honors:

- Numerous photographic exhibits from 1974 – 2018
- The Kentucky House of Representatives adjourned in his honor; several resolutions acknowledging “his immeasurable contributions to the Commonwealth of Kentucky

Lawson, William H.

Birthplace and date: Maysville, KY 1840

Deathplace and date: Louisville, KY 1913

Parents: Robert and Maria Lawson

Jobs/career:

- Photographer
- Cofounder of the United Brothers of Friendship
- Quartermaster sergeant during the Civil War

- President of the Louisville Colored Musical Association
- Superintendent of the Twelfth Street Sunday School
- Storekeeper gauger

Sleet Jr., Moneta

Birthplace and date: Owensboro, KY February 14, 1926

Deathplace and date: Chicago, 1996

Parents: Ozetta Allensworth Sleet and Moneta Sleet Sr.

Education:

- Western High School
- Kentucky State College
- Master's degree in Journalism at New York University (1950)

Jobs/career:

- Staff photographer for Ebony Magazine
- Sportswriter for the Amsterdam News in New York City and the magazine Our World
- Sleet worked for Johnson Publishing

Spouse: Juanita

Children: Gregory, Michael and Lisa

Interesting fact: Sleet was the first black man to receive a Pulitzer Prize and the first person to win an award while working for a black publication.

Awards/Prizes/Legacy/Honors:

- Pulitzer Prize for feature photography
- Citation for Excellence from the Overseas Press Club of America
- Awards from the National Urban League and the National Association of Black Journalists
- On February 24, 2000, Owensboro declared the date Moneta Sleet Jr. Day

Smith, Morgan and Marvin Smith (twin brothers)

Birthplace and date: Nicholasville, KY February 16, 1910

Deathplace and date:

- Morgan: February 17, 1993
- Marvin: November 9, 2003

Parents: Charles and Allena Smith

Occupations/ Career:

- Morgan was the first staff photographer for New York Amsterdam News in 1937
- They opened their own photography studio called M & M Studios
- The twins were the official photographers of the Apollo Theatre
- Marvin served in the U.S. Navy
- Morgan became a sound technician for ABC News
- Marvin also worked in television.

Spouse:

- Morgan: Florence McLean (1936 – divorced 1939)
- Marvin: Anna McLean (1936 – 1939), Morgan Mais (1950 -)

Children: Monica Smith Bolden (Morgan's)

Strider, Maurice William

Birthplace and date: Lexington, KY 1913

Deathplace and date: Savannah, GA February 1989

Education:

- Dunbar High School (1929)
- Bachelor of arts degree in history and education from Fisk University
- Master of education in art degree at the University of Kentucky (1960)

Jobs/career:

- Teacher at Dunbar High School
- Photographer for the Pittsburg Courier and the Louisville Defender
- Painter

Spouse: Mildred Goff-Steele Strider

Children: Maureen Cook

Awards:

- Atlanta University's John Hope Art Award for his painting 'The Carnival'
- Brotherhood Award

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Reflection

This project had ups and downs. Certain times, I got frustrated due to the fact that I could not find the right information to add to every biography; other times, I was happy going through the different articles and websites because I was able to get what I was looking for. During these 120 hours, I learned so much about black people, their struggles and successes as well as how things change overtime. The different generations go through different phases and each individual has their personal struggles also contributing to their progress, failures and achievements. This was a great opportunity for me to do research. Being a psychology major, this project gave me some experience and I developed a greater interest in reading and writing. I hope I become an authoress someday. Seeing the importance of photographers in the Kentucky African American history also motivated me to keep working towards one of my goals which is to eventually become a professional photographer; own studios and make history.