

PRESS RELEASE
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**The National Association of Black Storytellers Announces**

**the Black Appalachian Storytelling Fellowship Awardees for 2023.**

**Baltimore, MD:** The National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc. (NABS) has selected six artists as the 2023 Black Appalachian Storyteller Fellows. One fellowship, per state in the areas designated by the Appalachia Regional Commission of KY, OH, TN, NC, VA, and WV have been awarded. The recipients will receive a cash award of $5,000 to support their practice as a Black Appalachian storyteller and culture bearer with opportunities to examine, research, develop and perform and/or document the Black Appalachian storytelling tradition. Additionally, the fellows will receive funds for travel and lodging to the 41st Annual National “*In the Tradition…”* Black Storytelling Festival and Conference being held in Salt Lake City Utah, November 8th-12th and a one-year membership to the organization. The fellows will be welcomed at an opening “Akwaaba Gathering,” celebrated at an Awards Ceremony and will perform or present during the festival and conference.

The NABS Black Appalachian Storytellers Fellowship is made possible through partnerships and funding in part by Mid Atlantic Arts’ Central Appalachia Living Traditions Program and South Arts as part of the *In These Mountains,* Central Appalachian Folk Arts and Culture.

This 2nd year fellowship is an adjudicated award recognizing artistic excellence in representation of folk art and cultural heritage. The 2023 Black Appalachian Fellowship awardees are:

**Kentucky**

* Andrew Baskin: Professor Emeritus Berea College, Griot, Advocate, Historian, Mentor; Madison County

**North Carolina**

* Ronnie W. Pepper, Performer, Historian, Advocate, Mentor; Henderson County

**Ohio**

* Lyn Ford: Author, Performer, Teaching Artist, Mentor, Workshop Presenter; Columbiana County

**Tennessee**

* Kelle Jolly: Performer, Recording Artist, Mentor, Workshop Presenter, Cultural Organizer; Knox County

**Virginia**

* L. Renée: Author, Assistant Professor of English at James Madison University, Teaching Artist, Advocate, Workshop Presenter; Tazewell County

**West Virginia**

* Aristotle Jones: Performer, Recording Artist, Radio Show Personality, Director, Community Builder; Monongalia County

The co-founders of the National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc. (NABS), Mother Mary Carter Smith and Mama Linda Goss (born and raised in Appalachia Tennessee) conceived the idea of a storytelling festival to give opportunities to African American storytellers to share the stories of their heritage.

The first “*In The Tradition*…” Festival of Black Storytelling was held at Morgan State

University (MSU) in 1983. Now in its 4stth year, the Festival and Conference will be in Salt Lake City, Utah and co-hosted by NABS Affiliate, NSOUL (Nubian Storytellers of Utah Leadership). The 2023 Fellows will be honored and will receive an originally designed award by Tennessee Appalachian Folk Artist, Dena Jennings.

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