

NASHVILLE CONFERENCE ON
African-American
HISTORY AND CULTURE

Metropolitan Historical Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
1113 Kirkwood Avenue
Nashville, Tennessee 37204-2901

TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

45th Annual



“From Roots to Resilience:
Reclaiming Black Journeys,
Stories, and Legacies
Across Tennessee”

Friday, February 13, 2026
9:00-4:00 pm

Tennessee State University
Avon Williams Campus
330 10th Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37203

Please Join Us!

On **Friday, February 13, 2026** join Tennessee State University's (TSU) College of Liberal Arts and the Metropolitan Historical Commission (MHC) for a celebration of the myriad contributions of African Americans to Nashville and Tennessee history. For forty-five years, this award-winning conference has brought together historians, students, educators, community leaders, and others interested in learning and celebrating African American history and culture.

This year's conference theme is “From Roots to Resilience: Reclaiming Black Journeys, Stories, and Legacies Across Tennessee.” Dr. Tara Mitchell Mielnik of Cumberland University will present research that uncovers the lives of enslaved people connected to Nashville's Sunnyside Mansion. Jeff Sellers of the Tennessee State Museum will discuss the essential contributions of enslaved skilled laborers in the construction of the Tennessee State Capitol. Serina K. Gilbert and Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr. of the Promise Land Heritage Association will share the history and legacy of Dickson County's first African American community. Glenda Alvin of TSU will detail Harlem Renaissance writer and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston's time in Tennessee. The W. Crimm Singers, ensemble-in-residence at TSU, will serve up a musical treat before lunch. Cheryl McKissack Daniel will recount how her family established McKissack and McKissack, the nation's oldest minority- and women-owned professional design and construction firm, which she leads today. Dr. Daniel Schafer of Belmont University will explore the roles of slavery, racism, segregation, and structural inequality in the history of Nashville's Christ Church, drawing on findings from The Issac Project. A second musical performance by MD and Cobalt Blue will blend reggae, hip-hop, and rock. Renatto Carr of McKendree University will examine the 1942 lynching of James Edward Person, a World War II veteran from Somerville, Tennessee. Rev. Troy Merritt will offer reflections on his experiences at Pearl High School. Additional remarks provided by conference co-chairs Linda T. Wynn and Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr., MHC Interim Executive Director Scarlett Miles, and TSU College of Liberal Arts Dean Dr. Samantha Morgan-Curtis.

Conference Registration



February 13, 2026

Registration Levels:

Students - \$20

Pre-registration (through January 31, 2026) - \$30

Registration (February 1-11) - \$35

No cash or checks will be accepted on the day of the conference—please pre-register or plan to pay by card.

Online registration: www.NCAAHC.org

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Make checks payable to:

Nashville Historical Foundation: TSU/MHC
Conference

Mail to:

Metro Historical Commission
1113 Kirkwood Avenue
Nashville, Tennessee 37204

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email (for confirmation): _____

Questions? Call us at (615) 862-7970 ext. 79780

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged.

Registration cannot be taken over the phone.



Preliminary Program

9:00 am

Welcome and Opening Remarks
Scarlett Miles, Metropolitan Historical Commission
Linda T. Wynn, Tennessee Historical Commission

9:25 am

Searching for the Enslaved: Research into the Enslaved Families at Sunnyside in Nashville, Dr. Tara Mitchell Mielnik, Cumberland University

9:50 am

Stories in Stone: Documenting the Enslaved Workers at the Tennessee State Capitol, Jeff Sellers, Tennessee State Museum

10:15 am

BREAK

10:45 am

Promise Land: From the Fiery Furnace to the Promise Land, Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr. and Serina K. Gilbert, Promise Land Heritage Association

11:10 am

Zora's Sojourn in Tennessee, Glenda Alvin, Tennessee State University

11:35 am

Performance: W. Crimm Singers, ensemble-in-residence, Tennessee State University

12:00 pm

Lunch (provided)

1:30 pm

Remarks, Dr. Samantha Morgan-Curtis, Dean of College of Liberal Arts, Tennessee State University

1:35 pm

The Black Family Who Built America: The McKissacks, Two Centuries of Daring Pioneers, Cheryl McKissack Daniel, McKissack & McKissack

2:00 pm

A White Southern Church (Mis)remembers Slavery: Truth and Fiction in the 1929 Centennial History of Christ Church, Dr. Daniel Schafer, Belmont University

2:25 pm

Performance: MD and Cobalt Blue

2:50 pm

Come As You Are, Hoods Not Required: The 1942 Lynching of James Edward Person in Edgar County, Illinois, Renatto V. Carr, McKendree University

3:15 pm

The Pearl High Experience: Something Money Cannot Buy, Rev. Troy Merritt, St. Paul A.M.E. Church

3:40 pm

Closing Remarks
Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr.

Planning Committee

Conference Co-Chairs

Co-Founder & Co-Chair Linda T. Wynn, Tennessee Historical Commission/formerly with Fisk University Department of History and Political Science

Co-Chair Dr. Learotha Williams, Jr., Tennessee State University

Committee Members

Dr. Joel Dark, Tennessee State University
Caroline Eller, Metropolitan Historical Commission
Dr. Elizabeth Johnson, Tennessee State University
Gloria McKissack, Tennessee State University (ret.)
Fletcher Moon, Tennessee State University (ret.)
Sandra Parham, Meharry Medical College
Jamaal B. Sheats, Fisk University
Sharon Hull Smith, Tennessee State University
W. Tim Walker, Executive Director, Metropolitan Historical Commission (ret.)

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