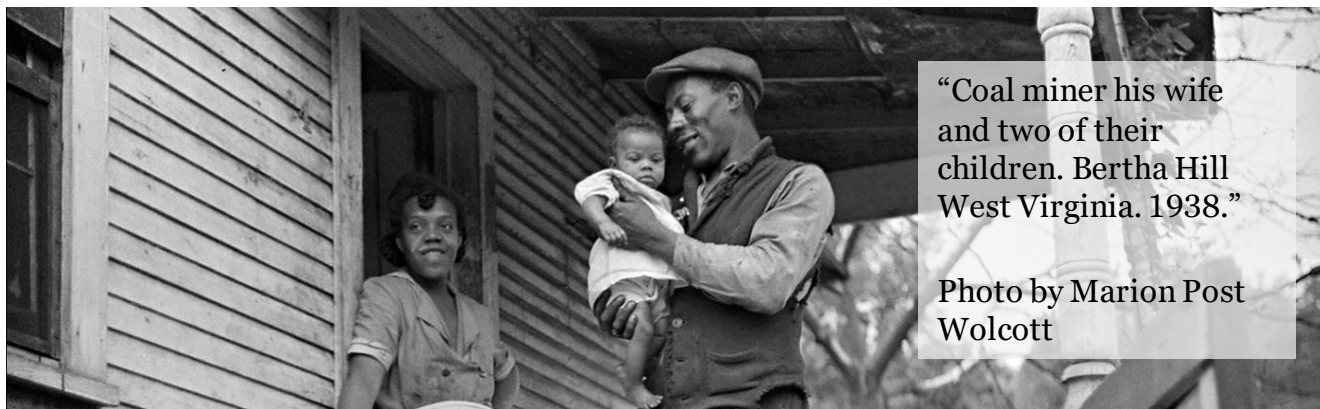


# The Gravy Infusion

News, activities, and doings from the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center



“Coal miner his wife and two of their children. Bertha Hill West Virginia. 1938.”

Photo by Marion Post Wolcott

## Main Sharing

### Freedom Stories Project

Today we'd like to introduce the Freedom Stories Project, a fantastic resource brought to us through the [International Storytelling Center](#). The mission of this project is to uncover the African-American heritage of Appalachia through a series of digital events featuring prominent storytellers, scholars, and community experts. The Director of this initiative is none other than [Alicestyne Turley](#), former Director of Berea College's Carter G. Woodson Center for Interracial Education!

The Freedom Stories kicked off by posing the question, [Do Black lives matter in Appalachia?](#) The recording featured a panel discussion with Dr William Turner (former Berea College Appalachian Studies professor), Dr. Sandra Weissnger, Dr. Darin Waters, Dr. Elwood Watson, and Alona Norwood.

Other episodes including [Emancipation Saturday: An Appalachian Tradition](#) and [What You Don't Know \(But Should\) About Appalachian Slavery](#) can be found on the International Storytelling Center's [Youtube Channel](#) with more to come.

We are grateful for people like Alicestyne Turley who see the value of telling stories. She says, “Storytelling is as American as apple pie, and very much a part of African American and Appalachian life, culture and community.”



“We are worthy, not because of what we produce, but because of who we are.”

~ Elandria Williams

Listen to Elandria read the entire poem [here](#)



## In Memory of Elandria Williams

Last week [Elandria Williams](#), a hugely influential activist from East Tennessee passed away suddenly at the age of 41. She dedicated herself to serving the people of Appalachia through her work with the Highlander Research and Education Center, People's Hub, Beautiful Solutions, and the Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism. In 2015 she came to Berea College as convocation speaker to talk about her revolutionary work in education and social change. We are deeply saddened by her loss.

## Reflection on *Do Black Lives Matter in Appalachia?*

When I watched *Do Black Lives Matter in Appalachia* from the [Freedom Stories Project](#), I was overwhelmed with pride to see pictures of my home in Lynch, Kentucky. Some photos it shared were of my neighbors and even one from my father's birthday party. I couldn't help think of all the stories that were in the images alone. Then Moma Linda Goss begins her story with bells ringing; I believed the bells to be somewhat of a wake-up call or a call for attention to the history of the Black experience in Appalachia. Moma Linda Goss's story was captivating, and her strong voice reminded me of home. I couldn't help but think of how important storytelling is when talking about the black experience in Appalachia. Our stories are all that we have: our history has been erased in many different ways, but our stories will live on through us.

Do Black Lives Matter in Appalachia? I would also like to add my response to the question. Black Lives Matter in general, but from my lived experience, I will say that Black Lives are often overlooked in Appalachia. When I was in high school, one of my friends came to school and found a noose in his locker; nothing was ever done, and he moved away shortly after.

I can recall having to fight tooth and nail to convince my high school English teacher that the racist remarks coming from the back of the room were not just jokes. Nothing was ever done—I was gaslighted and made to seem like the angry Black kid who couldn't take a joke. I will say that the education system in these rural Appalachian places needs some serious work when it comes to the topic of race. Despite the challenges I faced in school, I feel like I have been blessed with a community that loves and supports me, a community I wouldn't trade for the world because I know that my life matters to them.

~ Shaylan Clark, Berea College Senior

