

SVBF Conference
THE LONG ROAD TO FREEDOM
November 2, 2019 • Harrisonburg, Virginia

Speakers

DR. BETTY KILBY FISHER BALDWIN

Dr. Betty Kilby Fisher Baldwin was involved in a historical movement that opened the door for people of all races to be equally educated together in Warren County. She was an infant plaintiff in the case of Betty Ann Kilby vs. Warren County Board of Education. Her school was the first school closed under the Massive Resistance Laws. She tells her story in her book *Wit, Will, and Walls*.

Betty researched Warren County's History from 1836 to 1986. Her writings, "Freedom Road" were published in booklet form, in the local paper and in the Shenandoah Valley Historical Review. Her story is told in several documentaries nationally and internationally. She is a historical and motivational speaker, leads workshops and dialogues on racial reconciliation.

Betty earned an Associate degree in Business Management from Lord Fairfax Community College; Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Shenandoah University, an MBA from NOVA University and an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Shenandoah University.

PHOEBE KILBY

Phoebe Kilby is a former member of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District Commission, which led the process to create the National Historic District and Foundation, has since taken her efforts to honor history in a different direction. She was inspired by a group called Coming to the Table, which was formed in 2006 by the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University. Coming to the Table embraces Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech in which he said "I have a dream...that the sons of former slaves and former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." She started researching her family's history of enslaving and was able to trace those enslaved persons to modern-day Kilbys, including Betty Kilby Baldwin. Their story is outlined in a new book, *Slavery's Descendants* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, May 2019).

Phoebe holds a BS in Botany and Master of Environmental Management, both from Duke University. She also has a Graduate Certificate in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University.

KRISTEN LAISE

Kristen Laise is the Executive Director of Belle Grove Plantation, a historic property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation located in Middletown, Virginia. Belle Grove is a non-profit partner in Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. Previously, Ms. Laise served as Executive Vice President of Heritage Preservation, a Washington, D.C.-based, national organization that advocated for the care of collections. There she directed several initiatives including the Heritage Health Index, the first comprehensive survey of the condition and preservation needs of U.S. collections. Ms. Laise has many years of experience working with small museums through the Conservation Assessment Program, a technical assistance program administered by Heritage Preservation in cooperation with the Institute of Museum and Library Services. She holds a BA in History from Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, and an MA in Art History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she worked with the History of Cartography Project. Ms. Laise lives with her husband, Jim, and dog, Maggie, in Winchester, Virginia.

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JONATHAN A. NOYALAS

Jonathan A. Noyalas is director of Shenandoah University's McCormick Civil War Institute. Prof. Noyalas is the author or editor of eleven books, including *Civil War Legacy in the Shenandoah: Remembrance, Reunion and Reconciliation*. He is currently working on his next book, *'To Be Free Some Day': Race, Slavery, and Emancipation in the Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War Era*. He is also the founding editor of the scholarly publication *Journal of the Shenandoah Valley During the Civil War Era*. He has authored more than 100 essays, articles, chapters and review for a variety of scholarly and popular publications including *Civil War History*, *Civil War Times*, *America's Civil War*, *Civil War Monitor*, *Blue & Gray*, *Hallowed Ground*, and *Journal of Illinois History*. He has served as a consultant for a variety of public history projects for organizations such as the National Park Service, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, and Civil War Trust (now American Battlefield Trust). He has appeared on C-SPAN's "American History TV," NPR's "With Good Reason," and the Pennsylvania Cable Network. Noyalas is recipient of numerous awards for his teaching, scholarship, and service including the highest honor that can ever be bestowed upon a professor in the Old Dominion, the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia's Outstanding Faculty Award.

DR. MICHAEL RACKETT

Dr. Michael Rackett teaches students in the VCU ASPIRE community engagement living-learning program at Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Rackett is a graduate of the College of William and Mary (B.A.), Virginia Commonwealth University (M.A.), and Duke University (Ph.D.). His research on the slave narrative of Bethany Veney began in 2010 and has included multiple visits to Luray, VA; Providence, RI; and Worcester, MA. He is a native of Henrico County, and he and his wife, Karen, have two adult sons.

DR. AMY TILLERSON-BROWN

Dr. Amy Tillerson-Brown is a professor of history and history department chair at Mary Baldwin University, Staunton, VA and teaches courses in African American, United States, Women's and African Diaspora history. She also directs the African American Studies and Public History programs while advising Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society.

Tillerson-Brown is a member of several community service boards in Waynesboro, VA and surrounding communities. Tillerson-Brown is completing her book manuscript, *Negotiating Intersections of Gender, Social Class, and Race: Black Women in Prince Edward County, Virginia, Activists and Community Builders, 1920-1965*. This project analyses the activism of Black women in Prince Edward County before and during the public school crisis that began with the 1951 R. R. Moton High School student strike in protest of inadequate educational facilities and ended with the reopening of public schools that closed from 1959-1964 to resist the desegregation mandate of the Brown decision. Tillerson-Brown's research examines the activism of Black PEC women who despite less than optimal economic conditions and traditional negative assumptions associated with their race and gender networked to build their communities. Articles and book chapters related to this research are published in *Virginia Women Their Lives and Times* (University of Georgia Press, Fall 2016), *The Journal of School Choice* (Fall 2016), *The Educational Lockout of African Americans in Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1959-1964* (University Press of America, 2010) and *Emerging Voices and Paradigms: Black Women's Scholarship* (Association of Black Women Historians, 2005). Tillerson-Brown was also a Senior Fellow/Strategic Consultant at the Moton Museum in Farmville, VA.

In 2013, Tillerson-Brown produced a documentary, *Voices from Port Republic Road*. Focusing on the experiences of alumni from the Rosenwald School, this project documents the interconnectedness of school, church, and business in this mid-twentieth century rural Black community along with the challenges of public school segregation and integration. Other research interests of Tillerson-Brown include the activism and resistance of women of Native American descent in Virginia and the Carolinas; and race and criminalization in Virginia, 1870-1950. She has presented papers on both topics at recent Association for the Study of African American Life and History conferences.

Before accepting her position at Mary Baldwin, she was director of African American Heritage Program at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities at UVA. She has taught in the history departments at Virginia Tech, Morgan State University, and Piedmont Virginia Community College and worked as a public school teacher and counselor in Roanoke City Public Schools and Baltimore City Public Schools.

DR. WILLIAM BRAXTER WIGGINS

Dr. William Braxter Wiggins, historian and scholar of American and African American, Russian, African, Urban, Oral, Social and Intellectual, "Psycho," and Comparative histories among others, was born in North

Carolina. He received his undergraduate and initial graduate education at Central Connecticut State College, and subsequent graduate/doctoral education at Kent State and Princeton University.

Wiggins has taught at the University of Connecticut, St. Olaf and Allegheny Colleges, Hampton University and Columbia University, where he also served as an Assistant Dean.

He has widely written and spoken about, as well as participated in conferences on Racism and Sexism in America, psycho-history, Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, Marcus M. Garvey, Nat Turner, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, Frederick Douglass and American Military history, among others.

His publications include pieces on the “Garvey Movement,” “African American Students on White Campuses,” “Testing,” Louis Farrakhan, Jerome Holland and Booker T. Washington, among others. He has appeared on C-Span and other Television programs, participated in radio programs, and newspaper presentations/publications to name a few.

Wiggins currently resides in Hampton, VA, is the CEO of Cliosult & Associates, and continues to write, teach, character act, and lecture, while also assisting his wife Margo with her “Creations by Margo Lynn” retail stores and mail order business.