

The Department of Intercultural Affairs 2014-2015 Campus Theme Window Collage

North Carolina: Our State, Our Time

Fred Alexander was the first African American elected to the Charlotte City Council and the first black to hold elected public office in Mecklenburg County since the 1890s. He served for nine years. Alexander devoted great amounts of time to registering African Americans to vote.

Levi Coffin, born in Guilford County, NC, Coffin was deeply involved in the Underground Railroad and was nicknamed "President of the Underground Railroad" because of the thousands of slaves that are reported to have passed through his care while escaping their masters.

Maya Angelou was best known as a poet and author but was also a singer, dancer, Grammy-winning composer, director, and actress. She was hailed as an internationally regarded figure for her role as a civil rights leader who fought for social and racial justice. Angelou lived in Winston-Salem, NC for over thirty years and taught at Wake Forest University.

Hiram Rhodes Revels was born in Fayetteville, NC. Revels Revels was ordained as a minister by the African Methodist Church and traveled extensively, ministering to African American congregations. Upon moving to Mississippi, Revels became the president of Alcorn College, the state's first college for African American Students.

Adolph L. Dial was a respected Lumbee scholar and advocate for Indian rights. He spent 30 years as a professor of American Indian Studies at Pembroke State University, and was also a businessman, a North Carolina state senator and a spokesperson for full federal recognition of the Lumbees.

Dr. Annie Lowrie Alexander was born in Mecklenburg County, NC and was the first female licensed to practice medicine in the South. Annie practiced medicine in North Carolina for 40 years

Mary Jane Patterson, born in Raleigh, NC, was the first African American women to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree. Patterson went on to be a teacher and principal, paving the way for other black female educators.

Chang and Eng Bunker were conjoined twins from Siam, who's condition became the basis for the term "Siamese Tiwns". Chang and Eng lived in North Carolina with their wives and 21 children for 30+ years.

Terry Sanford, a North Carolina native, was a United States politician and educator. A UNC Chapel Hill and University of North Carolina School of Law graduate, Sanford was notes for his progressive leadership in civil rights and education.

Greensboro Sit In on February 1, 1960, consisted of four male African American students from NC A&T, who sat down at the lunch counter inside Woolworth department store to take a stand against segregation. The four university freshmen – Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair, Jr. (later known as Jibreel Khazan), and David Richmond – stayed until the store closed. Their actions helped launch a student movement across the state.

Eliza Jane Pratt was a native of Anson County, NC and was the first woman to represent the state in the U.S. Congress as a U.S. Representative.

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Gertrude Weil was born in 1879 in Goldsboro, North Carolina and was heavily involved in women's suffrage. Weil helped found the Goldsboro Equal Suffrage Association and served as its first president and was an officer in the North Carolina Equal Suffrage League, becoming president in 1919. Weil became North Carolina's first alumna of Smith College.

JoAnne Smart and Bettye Tillman, both North Carolina natives, were the first African American students admitted to the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina (now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro). Both graduated four years later in 1960.

Henry E. Frye, of Richmond County, NC, was the first African-American chief justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court.

Harvey Beech and J. Kenneth Lee were graduates of North Carolina College (now N.C. Central University) and North Carolina A&T, respectively, who became two of the first African American students to be enrolled in law school at the University of North Carolina. Both went on to be legal legends during the Civil Rights Movement.

Mary Hilliard Hinton, of Wake County, NC, formed the state branch of the Southern Rejection League (Raleigh, NC) in response to the congressional adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment allowing women to vote. Although Hilliard Hinton was an anti-suffragist, her formation of the league and membership in numerous patriotic and allied organizations helped challenge historic gender roles.

Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Jr is an African American civil rights leader born on January 22, 1948 in Oxford, North Carolina. In his youth, Dr. Chavis was an assistant to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who inspired him to work in the civil rights movement.

Billy Graham was born in Charlotte, NC. Graham is an evangelical Christian evangelist and Southern Baptist minister, who has served as a spiritual advisor for several U.S. Presidents. Graham was a supporter of the Civil Rights Movement, suggesting integrated seating for his revivals and crusades, invited Martin Luther King Jr. to preach with him, and bailing King out of jail after a 1960's demonstration where he was arrested.

The Wright Brothers were inventors and aviation pioneers who needed a place to test their inventions. The brothers relocated to Kitty Hawk, NC to conduct their aviation tests, and are credited with building and flying the first successful airplane, allowing North Carolina to claim "First in Flight".

Charlotte Hawkins Brown was an author and educator from Henderson, N.C. She was active in national efforts to improve opportunities for African Americans and was the first African American woman to be named to the national board of the YWCA.

Harriet Ann Jacobs was an African-American writer who escaped from slavery and became an abolitionist speaker and reformer. Jacob's wrote one of the first autobiographical narratives about the struggle for freedom by female slaves and an account of the sexual harassment and abuse they endured based on events of her own life.

Dr. H. Nolo Martinez is bilingual adult educator, who has worked for more than 25 years to build bridges between immigrant and diverse populations and existing communities in North Carolina.

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Michell Hicks is a WCU graduate, who is currently serving as the Principal Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Levern H. Allen became the first African American student enrolled in an all-white state supported institution, when she took a summer course at Western Carolina College (now Western Carolina University).

Tom Belt is the Cherokee language coordinator at WCU, which is one of only two university Cherokee language programs in the country.

Dr. Henry Lewis Suggs was the first African American faculty member at Western Carolina University.

Robert Conley is WCU's Sequoyah Distinguished Professor of Cherokee Studies. As a member of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, Conley was the first American Indian names president of the Western Writers of America.

Joe Crocker is a WCU graduate who became the first African American to be elected to serve as the chairman of WCU's Board of Trustees.

Jerald Gaines is the only 3 sport All-American in WCU's athletic history, receiving honors for football, track & field, and baseball. Jerry was part of WCU's first-ever induction class to their athletic Hall of Fame.

Kofi Lomotey has been named Western Carolina University's first Chancellor John Bardo and Deborah Bardo Distinguished Professor of Educational Leadership.

R. Turner Goins is the university's first Ambassador Jeanette Hyde Distinguished Professor of Gerontological Social Work and a nationally recognized expert on American Indian aging issues.

Manteo Mitchell is a WCU graduate and track & field standout, who helped the U.S. Men's Olympic 4x400 meter team earn a silver medal in the 2012 Summer Olympics.

James "Bo" Taylor is a WCU graduate and member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians who has been named executive director of The Museum of the Cherokee Indian.

Terrence Mann is an actor, director, singer, songwriter and dancer who has been prominent on the Broadway stage for the past three decades. Mann is WCU's Carolyn Plemmons Phillips and Ben R. Phillips Distinguished Professor in Musical Theater.

Greg Holland is a WCU graduate and Catamount Baseball player who went on to play in the Major Leagues with the Kansas City Royals. Hollands is the first WCU alumnus to pitch in a MLB All-Star game.

David Patten is a former Western Carolina University wide receiver and a 12-year NFL veteran, who returned to WCU in 2013 as part of the football coaching staff.

Paxton Myers, a 2000 graduate from WCU, is an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians who was named the vice president of casino marketing at Harrah's Cherokee Casino and Hotel in 2012.

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Al “Mutt” Degraffenreid is a WCU graduate who is said to have had one of the biggest impacts on WCU football. Degraffenreid was a three-year letter winner who is credited with the first-ever tackle made on the artificial field at Whitmire Stadium. He went on to become part of the football coaching staff for 16 years, and was also the first-ever women’s track & field coach at WCU.

Nardia Moore is a WCU graduate who was the first-ever recruit/signee for the women’s soccer program. As of 2011, Moore was the only WCU three-time All-Southern Conference selection.

Ron Rash, Parris Distinguished Professor of Appalachian Culture at WCU is a prize winning author, who is most recently known for his New York Times Bestselling Novel “Serena”, which is slated to become a film starring Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper.

Gurney Chambers was a first-generation college student who graduated from WCU. After moving on for graduate school, Chambers returned to WCU as a professor of education and later became the dean of the College of Education and Allied Professions, serving WCU for more than 30 years.

Judge James A. Beaty Jr. is a Senior United States federal judge serving on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina, and a former nominee to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Beaty received his Bachelors degree from Western Carolina University.

Ida, Beulah, & Lena Smith, Fances Rogers, Welch Galloway are known as **The First Five**, as they were the first five students to graduate from Cullowhee High School, which was the forerunner institution of WCU.

Ronnie Carr is credited with making the first intercollegiate three-point field goal in a basketball game, at Reid Gym (Western Carolina University).

Henry Logan was a four-time All-American basketball player at Western Carolina. Logan was the first African American athlete at Western Carolina College (now Western Carolina University) and the first African American athlete to compete at any predominantly white public institution in North Carolina. He went on to play professional basketball.

Katie Spear, WCU graduate and member of National Pan-Hellenic Council, and a former intern in the WCU Office of Public Relations and former staff member in the Office of Admission, has been linked to Hollywood celebs such as Tracy Morgan, Cameron Diaz, Derek Jeter, and Demi Moore.

Sheila Robinson is a 2011 graduate who founded Diversity Woman, a publishing company and magazine that also hosts special events across the country, to support businesswomen.

Geno Segers is a WCU alumnus and former football player who went on to reach celebrity status as an actor for Disney, and starred as Mufasa in the Australian production of the “Lion King”.

Bobbi Baker James graduated from WCU in 2011 and went on to become an actress, best known for her role in Tyler Perry’s sitcom “House of Payne”.

Victoria Casey McDonald was the second African American to graduate from Western Carolina University. McDonald was a teacher, preacher and published author.

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Cecil Adderley is a WCU music education alumnus who is now chair of music education at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. In 2011, WCU honored Adderley with the Academic Achievement Award.

Josefina Niggli was a Mexican-born playwright and novelist who joined the Western Carolina University faculty as a director of drama and journalism instructor in 1955. Today's Niggli Theater is named after her.

Kevin Martin is a former WCU Men's Basketball star who found success in the NBA. Martin has played for the Sacramento Kings, the Houston Rockets, the Oklahoma City Thunder, and currently plays for the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Amy Schmidt graduated from WCU with a B.A. in English and Spanish. Amy was recently named the Executive Director of Vecinos Inc.. Vecino's Inc, Farmworker Health Program is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides free mobile medical outreach, case management, and health education to farmworkers and their families in Western North Carolina.