

VALENCIA ABBOTT

“A history teacher that embraces her nerdom...”

Valencia Abbott has taught at Rockingham Early College High School in Wentworth for over a decade and has 20 years of education experience. She completed a Master's Degree in Liberal Studies and received a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in African American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In 2016, she received her Add-On Licensure for Academically/Intellectually Gifted (AIG) from Duke University. She serves on several advisory boards and committees, including the Carter G. Woodson Book Award Selection Committee, the National Council of History Education Teacher Advisory Council, and the George Washington Teacher Institute Advisory Group. In 2023, continuing her collaboration through iCivics, she became a member of the Task Force on Teacher Leadership (TLTF) sponsored by CIRCLE (Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement). In 2022, she received the James Arthur Griggs Civil Rights Memorial Award for accomplishments in “Keeping Dr. King's Dream Alive” from the Reidsville Branch of the NAACP, as well as the Outstanding Teacher of North Carolina History from the North Carolina Historical Society. Most recently, she was accepted for the National Holocaust Museum Teacher Fellowship Program for the 2023-2024 school year and the PBS NewsHour Classroom Invention Education Fellow.



STEPHEN BELL

“Son, Brother, Uncle, educator, social worker, who loves creating pathways of opportunities & spaces of healing for Native youth...”

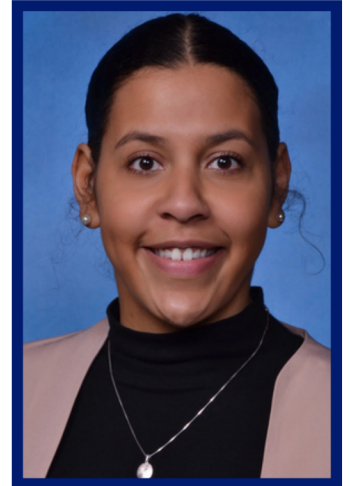


Stephen Bell is a proud member of the Lumbee Tribe and the American Indian Education Coordinator in Guilford County Schools. Following in the footsteps of his grandparents (Mr Buddy and Mrs Sarah Bell), parents (Ronny and Natalie Bell), and aunts and cousins, Stephen began his work in education as a middle school teacher and later a school social worker. For over a decade, he has worked in various school districts, providing counseling for students, as well as training and collaborating with educators and community members to better serve our at-promise youth. In his current role as the American Indian Education Coordinator and member for the State Advisory Council on Indian Education (SACIE) and Guilford Native American Association, he works to create pathways of opportunities, healing and support for Native youth and young people. Stephen is excited to be a part of the America 250 NC Freedom Fellows to collaborate with education leaders from around the state and to support training and curriculum at a more macro level. When Stephen isn't working, you can find him spending time with friends and family, eating good food, working on his beadwork, or working out.

GRACE BROOKS

“A determined, positive, and open-minded individual who aspires to learn and grow myself consistently as a person and an educator...”

Grace Brooks is a teacher at J.H. Rose High School in Pitt County. She teaches AP United States history to students in grades 10-12. She chose social studies because she wants to reiterate the importance of civic competence to the next generation and show them the power that knowing the past has on influencing the future. She is so excited about becoming an America 250 NC Freedom Fellow! She is a 2nd year teacher who joined this profession to never stop learning and she is most excited about further developing her pedagogy and learning from other amazing teachers across the state. As a new NC resident, she is also excited to deepen her content knowledge about her new home! She is hopeful that this fellowship will provide her with the tools to modify her teaching for years to come.



CORI GREER-BANKS

“A woman who envisions an improved society only if we are intentional and work for it...”

Cori Greer-Banks, an inspiring educator, currently imparts her passion for learning as an 8th-grade Humanities teacher at The Exploris School in vibrant downtown Raleigh. She earned her bachelor's degree in History from the University of Maryland in Heidelberg, Germany and a Master's Degree in English Literature from Old Dominion University. Cori's teaching philosophy revolves around fostering empowered students who perceive diversity not merely as an abstract concept but as the cornerstone of an ideal, just, and democratic society. With a commitment to dismantling systems of oppression, she actively engages her students in critical conversations that extend beyond the classroom. Cori was named the NCCSS Middle School Teacher of the Year in 2024 and proudly serves as the 2023-2024 Outstanding Teacher of North Carolina History for the Historical Society of NC. As a current Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice Fellow, Cori continues to champion the values of historical understanding and social justice, contributing to a brighter and more equitable future for her students and society.



JORDAN CLIFTON

“A determined, positive, and open-minded individual who aspires to learn and grow myself consistently as a person and an educator...”

Jordan Clifton is the Theatre Director at Needham B. Broughton Magnet High School in Raleigh and is a teaching artist at South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts & Humanities and The North Carolina Theatre Conservatory. Jordan is a recent Fulbright Fellow, where he taught collaborative theatre in Delhi, India and is currently an Apprentice Fellow with the North Carolina A+ Schools Network. Jordan believes in the transformative power of the arts. Outside of the classroom, he performs in regional theatre and opera across the state. He is excited to explore the vibrant history of our state as an America 250 NC Freedom Fellow!



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MARQUES A. HARRINGTON

“A passionate, lifelong learner, who is enriched by history, and lives to empower and enlighten others...”

Marques A. Harrington is an educator and Pentecostal minister who is passionate about education. He has high expectations based on a dogged belief in each child's ability to succeed with equitable opportunities. He has served hundreds of students as a social studies instructor at North Pitt High School (Pitt County Schools), as well as the high school graduation coach at Southside High School (Beaufort County Schools). Presently, Harrington is the administrative intern at J.W. Parker Middle School in Nash County Public Schools. He is a Member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. (Zeta Eta Lambda Chapter); a member of the Historical Preservation Commission (City of Greenville); and a first Term 2023-2026 member of the Advisory Board of Greater Kinston Credit Union, the only Black-owned institution of its kind in N.C.. Harrington holds a BA in History, North Carolina A&T State University; a Teaching Certificate, East Carolina University; and is currently earning his MSA from North Carolina Central University. He is signally honored by his selection as an America 250 NC Freedom fellow. He looks forward to thoughtful discussion, enriching professional development, and the expanded community that he will find among other educators/historians.



GUY HILL

“Loves to learn and grow as a person and as a teacher, to be the best version of himself personally and professionally...”



Guy Hill is from the Bronx, New York, and he teaches at Triton High School in Erwin, located in Harnett County. He has taught 9th and 10th grade English as well as AP Language & Composition for 24 years. He is a former president of the North Carolina English Teachers Association (NCETA), a former member of Governor Beverly Perdue's Teacher Advisory Committee (GTAC), as well as an executive board member of Governor Roy Cooper's DRIVE (Developing a Representative and Inclusive Vision for Education) Task Force. He has also been awarded the Marvin Pittman Champion of Education Award by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and the NC African American Heritage Commission Leader in Education Award. His mother (Myrtle B. Hill) was a teacher and he embraces his role in bringing a high level of instruction, expectations, and educational excellence to his students. He is very excited for the new opportunity to learn more about the rich history of North Carolina by becoming an America 250 NC Teaching Fellow. He is married to fellow educator, Dr. Angela M. Hill and they have two daughters, Zora and Charlotte. He enjoys reading, learning, teaching, exercising, and helping young people discover their destiny.

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ANN KELLY

“An optimistic realist with a deep love for education, my family, and the great outdoors...”

Ann Kelly is an 8th grade science teacher at Newport Middle School in the Carteret County Public School System. For the past 17 years, she has worked as an educator whose teaching is rooted in fostering curiosity, building relationships, and engaging students through meaningful learning experiences. She is excited for the opportunity to participate in the America 250 NC Teaching Fellowship and to explore connections between history and science, specifically on how the needs and freedoms of a new nation led to the development of scientific advancements and helped shape us as a people. Mrs. Kelly is an active leader within her school community as a member of the School Improvement Leadership Team, Positive Behavior and Support Team, Chairperson the Science Department, Keys to Literacy coach, and has twice been named Teacher of the Year at Newport Middle. Ann resides in the Down East community of Marshallberg with her husband, Ryan, and daughter, Cordelia. She spends her spare time outdoors, camping, hiking, paddling, and exploring.



GEORGE KNIPS

“A life-long learner and teacher that shows compassion and empathy for his students, but holds all learners, including himself, to high expectations...”



George Knips is the Instructional Coach at Southeast Area Technical High School in New Hanover County. Mr. Knips' vision is to intertwine the Humanities with meaningful technological outlets that create inquisitiveness and accessibility for all students. He also believes that students need access to real world experiences in the Humanities and beyond to make connections, inspire creativity, and develop the ability to think critically and problem solve. Mr. Knips is humbled by the selection to the America 250 NC Freedom Fellowship and can not wait to explore the vast history North Carolina has, both in the collection of historical sites and in the knowledge of the state's leading academics. In his spare time you can find Mr. Knips spending time with his family, rooting for the Mets, and playing guitar. In 2019 Mr. Knips won the Joseph B. Hughes Award Winner (North Carolina History Day Teacher of the Year) and in 2021 he attended the Case Method Institute at the Harvard Business School.

ALLIE LACKEY

“A joyful, enthusiastic lifelong learner who is an excellent communicator and loves to share knowledge with students each and every day...”

Allie Lackey teaches in Alexander County Schools at East Alexander Middle School located in Hiddenite. She is an 8th grade US and North Carolina History teacher. While this is her first year teaching, she has spent many years working with children within the K-12 space. She was inspired by great educators to go on and be one herself. She believes that each and every child has an opportunity to grow and thrive if given the opportunity. She believes that each and every day really can make a difference, and that even the smallest changes add up to movements! Allie is thrilled to be a part of the America 250 NC Teaching Fellow! She loves to continue learning about the wonderful state and country that she lives in. She is excited to bring back this knowledge not only to her classroom, but her school and local community. Allie is an avid reader, vintage collector and loves to go hiking in the North Carolina mountains!



NATASHA MILLER

“An inquisitive student who is excited about our local and global histories, and how knowledge of such history helps prepare us for a better future...”



Natasha Miller is a second career educator at STEM Early College NC A&T, Guilford County Schools. She teaches World History Honors and Economics and Personal Finance Honors. Natasha enjoys teaching history, and she learns a lot in the process. For Natasha, it is so exciting to teach history and observe "light bulb" moments with students. Natasha integrates past experiences in the legal field into her teaching, from having served as a practicing attorney in criminal and patent law, an environmental justice intern working along the US-Mexico border, as well as justice advocate and researcher on climate change and toxic waste environmental issues. She also currently serves as an ordained minister for a congregation in rural North Carolina. Natasha is grateful to be a part of the America 250 NC Freedom Fellows inaugural class, and looks forward to working collaboratively with other educators from across the state to explore the colorful history of North Carolina is exciting in and of itself.

MAURICE MYERS

“A passionate educator, who after 25 years as a teacher and 38 years of working with youth, still loves the excitement and his mission in life...”

Mr. Maurice Myers has been an educator for over 25 years, the past 10 of which have been at Rolesville High School in Wake County. He has taught and/or teaches subjects including AP United States History, African American History, World History, and The Vietnam War, and is excited to bring AP African American History to his students next year. Mr. Myers loves teaching and credits his students' excitement after learning about history as the best part of his job. He has received numerous recognitions throughout his career, including Teacher of the Year at PACE West K-12 School and Teacher of the Year at Northside Middle School in Virginia. He has twice been named Teacher of the Year at Rolesville High, and has received two “Rammy Awards,” a Legacy Award,, and was named WRAL’s Teacher of the Week. Mr. Myers is also the advisor to 5 different clubs, including Key Club, History Club and National Social Studies Honor Society. He was blessed to marry his college sweetheart, with whom he has two wonderful 12-year-old twins, both proud Wake County Public school students.



MATT SCIALDONE

“Dedicated and driven to lead both students and my fellow teachers through transformational experiences...”



Matt Scialdone has been teaching for more than two decades at Middle Creek High School, in Apex where he teaches English I, African American Literature, and Teaching as a Profession. Matt is a National Board Certified Teacher; he served as the Wake County Public School System Teacher of the Year in 2015-16, and in 2019, he was among 50 teachers worldwide to be selected as a Yale University Outstanding Educator. Matt believes in the power of learning that centers civic engagement and has worked with his students to participate in a "truth and reconciliation" project with the Equal Justice Initiative as well as collaborating with community partners to research and establish official recognitions for the Rosenwald Schools in their community. Matt is excited by the opportunities afforded for collaboration and experiential learning by the American 250 NC Freedom Fellowship.

CHADWICK STOKES

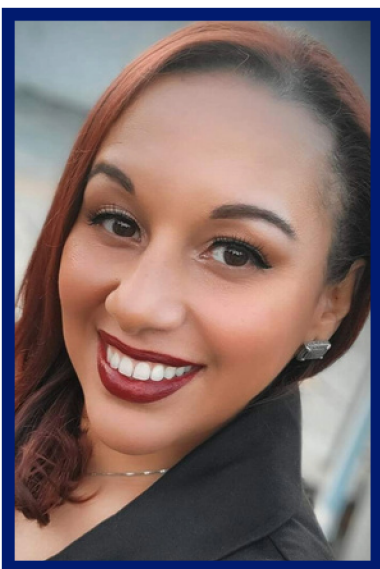
“A passionate & innovative teacher who strives to provide the best educational experience possible for his students...”

Chadwick Stokes teaches 8th grade history at E. B. Frink Middle School, located in La Grange, where he has been teaching for seven years. He believes in creating engaging lessons for his students that bring history to life for them and has created a successful “History Lab” that accomplishes this goal. Chadwick is thrilled to be selected as an America 250 NC Freedom Fellow and is looking forward to collaboration with other teachers. He has been named Teacher of the Year for his school in recent years and has been awarded Teacher of the Year by the Historical Society of North Carolina. He enjoys traveling and discovering new & interesting places.



SIMONAE WILLIAMS

“A dedicated teacher, mother and dreamer with strong ambition; diligent work ethic; an open-minded, well-traveled perspective; a creative, artistic flair; and an adaptable spirit...”



Simonae Williams teaches History and Science at Wake Forest Charter Academy where she also serves as eighth-grade team lead. Simonae is passionate about collaborative projects and problem-based learning. As a former AVID site coordinator for Johnston County, she firmly believes in the AVID WICOR model which creates more culturally responsive and inclusive classrooms. It is her deepest desire to be the teacher for her students she never had by providing meaningful and enriching experiences that students carry with them for a lifetime. With 10 years of educational experience, Simonae has received Bright Ideas grants, Crystal Apple awards, and outstanding performer recognitions. Most recently, she was a recipient of the 2023 Morehead-Cain Foundation Impact Educator of the Year award along with a travel research fellowship to the Pacific Northwest. Simonae is excited to begin her journey as an America 250 NC Freedom Fellow and is eager to be a voice for underrepresented communities in North Carolina, and to contribute to curriculum development and strategies promoting inclusivity. When she’s not teaching or organizing school activities, she channels her creativity into running her jewelry business, Silva Works Jewelry.

JAMIE WILSON

“A passionate educator and lifelong learner who seeks to have a positive impact on my students, my school, and my community...”

Jamie Wilson is a National Board Certified history teacher at Watauga High School in Boone, where she teaches US History, AP US History, and AP US Government & Politics. She also serves as department chair, is part of the PLT Leadership Team, and she coaches fellow educators through the National Board process. Jamie has been the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, most recently she was awarded the Morehead-Cain Impact Educator Grant, which allowed her to travel to Oklahoma in the summer of 2023 to learn about the history of Indigenous Americans who were forcibly removed from their homelands in the Southeast. After twenty-two years in the classroom, Jamie believes that strong social studies education is essential for the development of active citizens and a successful democracy. She is thrilled to be an America 250 NC Teaching Fellow, and she looks forward to learning with and from fellow educators.



CLAY WOOLDRIDGE

“Born to be a teacher...”



Clay Wooldridge is a 7th grade middle school teacher in Brevard, NC. He is a life-long educator, having taught in a wide range of both traditional, outdoor leadership and environmental education settings since graduating from the University of Montevallo in 2003. Clay's educational philosophy was developed during his early years as an outdoor educator. It taught him the power of teachable moments, what it looks like to really be prepared for any situation and, most importantly, that for education to be meaningful, the connections to the real world must be explicitly obvious to the learner. Clay brings a passion for project based learning into the classroom, collaborating with his peers to create experiences for his students that combine skills from across content areas into projects that explore issues pertinent to middle school students. As an America 250 NC Freedom Fellow, Clay is excited to connect with other inspired educators from around North Carolina and to see how they use the past to explore the role each citizen has in making our state and country a place we can be proud to call home. Clay also loves being a dad, husband, musician, and outdoorsman. Living in Brevard makes being all of those things just a little more enjoyable and he looks forward to serving his community at Brevard Middle School for years to come.