

FRANKLINTON CENTER AT BRICKS “A LIFE GIVING HOME”



IN THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW; PROCLAIMING,
PRESERVING, AND PROMOTING OUR STORY



Celebrating Women’s History: Franklinton Center Welcomes the Archival Collection of Civil-Rights Luminary Dr. Willa Cofield

The Afro-Christian Archives of Franklinton Center has received archival papers of North Carolina’s civil rights icon, educator and documentary filmmaker, Willa Cofield Ph.D. The Board and staff are delighted to preserve Dr. Cofield’s papers in the Afro-Christian Convention Archives of the Franklinton Center at Bricks Museum Center. The Cofield Collection greatly enhances our efforts to preserve the institutional history of the Franklinton Center at Bricks site, the sacred land and community where a former plantation was transformed into the American Missionary Association sponsored Joseph Keasby Bricks School, which became one of the most outstanding African American schools in the South.

With deep roots at Franklinton Center, having grown up in the neighboring town of Endfield, Dr. Cofield devoted many years to documenting, and sharing the history of Bricks School. Her civil rights activism as a high school teacher led to her wrongful employment termination.

Assisted by the the National Education Association, she became a plaintiff in a successful three year long lawsuit against the Halifax County School Board. The case of Johnson vs Branch (1966) gave protection to thousands of teachers who were working to advance civil rights. Dr. Cofield’s preservation work and trailblazing advocacy in North Carolina has been chronicled in two documentary films, the Brick School Legacy (2003) with Karen Riley, and The Nine O’clock Whistle.

Her most recent publication is a memoir “The Nine O’clock Whistle, Stories of the Freedom Struggle for Civil Rights in Enfield, North Carolina” with former students Cynthia Samuelson and Mildred Sexton (University of Mississippi Press) 2025.

Franklinton Center at Bricks board member Joan Marsh recently interviewed Coefied at her home in Plainfield, New Jersey and recorded Dr. Cofield’s reflections on her seventy years

of education and civil rights advocacy in North Carolina and New Jersey. We are preserving the oral history interview in the archives and looking forward to welcoming Dr. Cofield for a book signing on the first Saturday in August for Franklinton Center Day.

Rev. Brenda Billips Square
Director
Afro-Christian Convention Archives
Franklinton Center at Bricks



Photo: Franklinton Center Board Member Joan Marsh with Dr. Willa Cofield, March 22, 2025

Dr. Willa Cofield - A Living Legend in Civil-Rights and Education

On March 2, the Enfield–Roanoke Rapids Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. filled First Baptist Church in Enfield, N.C., to salute 95-year-old Dr. Willa Cofield. **“Where were you when the whistle blew?”** she asked the crowd, echoing the title of her documentary on small-town resistance. The program blended a voter-awareness forum, screenings of **“The Brick School Legacy”** and **“The 9 O’Clock Whistle,”** and a march to unveil a historic marker honoring Johnson v. Branch—the case that shielded Black teachers fired for supporting civil rights.

Dr. Cofield’s courage was legendary even in the 1960s. Southern organizer John Salter once called

her “one of the very few teachers in that whole northeast section of the state who took a positive public stand on civil rights,” adding that the court victory was **“a tremendous win for both civil rights and academic freedom.”**

Delta Sigma Theta praised her as a model of “political awareness and involvement,” noting that her activism still inspires new generations. As Dr. Cofield told supporters after viewing her marker, **“The torches of justice are still burning—pass them on.”** Her story proves that classroom lessons, community marches, and courageous voices can change history.



Franklinton Center at Bricks’ Ongoing Mission During NMHM

Franklinton Center at Bricks (FCaB) carries the spirit of generations past. Standing on land once used as a plantation, we’ve transformed it into a space for **healing, connection, and hope**. For over a century, we’ve turned hardships into opportunities to **empower local communities, advance health equity, and champion justice**.

During **National Minority Health Month**, we honor the stories of those who walk through our doors—families seeking better access to care, advocates turning heartbreak into action, and neighbors forging partnerships that create real, lasting change. Our programs, from **monthly health equity summits to peer-led healthcare navigation**, ensure every voice is heard. Recognizing that physical and mental health are deeply linked, we integrate **mental health support, nutrition education, and economic literacy** to break cycles of limited access.

Communities of color face higher rates of unmet health needs, but we see real proof in everyday stories—neighbors finding belonging through our workshops, families sharing garden produce, and young leaders discovering their voices. These triumphs inspire us to keep going, not only during National Minority Health Month but year-round, bridging the gaps that have held us apart for too long.

At **FCaB**, we reimagine what’s possible by letting our shared past fuel a brighter future. Every partnership and conversation brings us closer to a world where everyone can live a healthy, fulfilling life—no matter their background. Our doors remain open to anyone seeking knowledge, collaboration, or a place to belong. **Together, we can ensure that future generations share in the promise of holistic well-being. Join us on this journey toward equity, healing, and hope.**

FCaB

Honoring Women Contributing to the History, Heritage and Heart of Franklinton Center : FCaB Pioneers



Mrs. Julia Bricks

Julia E. B. Brick was an American philanthropist whose generosity helped establish the Brick School in Whitakers, North Carolina—an institution that later evolved into Franklinton Center at Bricks. She championed education for African Americans at a time when access was severely limited.

Her support and vision laid a strong foundation for the center's continuing mission of empowerment, community development, and social justice.

Ora King, affectionately known as the “First Lady” of Franklinton Center at Bricks, served alongside her husband, Dr. William Judson King, to transform the center into a haven of interdenominational and interracial cooperation. She was instrumental in expanding worship services, health initiatives, and agricultural programs

for families living on and around the Bricks property. Her hands-on approach to community engagement and her commitment to unity helped shape the center's inclusive, forward-looking spirit.



Mrs. Ora King



Dr. Willa J. Coefield

Dr. Willa Johnson Cofield is a lifelong educator, filmmaker, and civil-rights trailblazer from Enfield, North Carolina. In the early 1960s, she was fired from her segregated high-school classroom for teaching students—and, through them, their parents—how to register to vote, a dismissal she challenged in the landmark case *Johnson v. Branch*. Undeterred, she went on to produce award-winning

documentaries such as *The Brick School Legacy* and *The Nine O'Clock Whistle*, preserving local freedom-struggle history while mentoring new generations of activists and educators. Now in her mid-90s, Dr. Cofield remains a sought-after speaker and was recently honored with a North Carolina historic marker celebrating her enduring impact on voting rights and social justice.

Get Involved with Franklinton Center at Bricks!

FRANKLINTON CENTER
AT BRICKS

Present

Fish Fry FRIDAYS!

Every Friday Starting

Date:
Friday February 28th, 2025

Time:
Starting at 12 PM - 7 PM

DINING HALL
281 BRICKS LANE, WHITAKERS NC

PLATES \$15
2 SIDES / DRINK

**SANDWICH
\$7**

Contact us for
**PRE SALE &
Large orders!**

Call Our Number
252-437-1633
252-437-1723

Visit Our Website
fcab.org

Join Us Every Friday for “Fish Fry Fridays” at FCaB!

We’re serving up crispy, golden fried fish with your choice of two sides and a drink—all for just \$15. Prefer something lighter? Our fish sandwich is only \$7! Bring your friends, family, and neighbors to our Dining Hall for great food and an even better cause.

This weekly fundraiser helps support the ongoing work of Franklinton Center at Bricks. By joining us for a hot meal, you’re helping empower our community programs, from educational initiatives to wellness outreach.

Come hungry, leave happy, and make a difference—all in one delicious stop!

We can’t wait to welcome you.

Be Forever Cemented in FCaB’s History!

Be a part of history at Franklinton Center at Bricks by joining our Brick’s Freedom Walkway Campaign!

With a \$100 donation, you’ll have your personal message placed on a 4"x8" brick installed along our Freedom Walkway—becoming a lasting symbol of support and solidarity.

Every inscribed brick we lay reminds us of the collective effort to foster equity and hope.

Join us, and help build a stronger, more inclusive tomorrow—one brick at a time!

Brick By Brick Campaign
Visit
www.franklintoncenteratbricks.org

**281 Bricks Lane
Whitakers NC 27891**

DONATE

For your \$100 gift, we will have your message placed on a standard (4"x8") brick which will be installed on the walkway. Your tax deductible donation will be greatly appreciated and will make you a part of a lasting legacy.

Franklinton Center at Bricks

GIVE A GIFT OF LEGACY

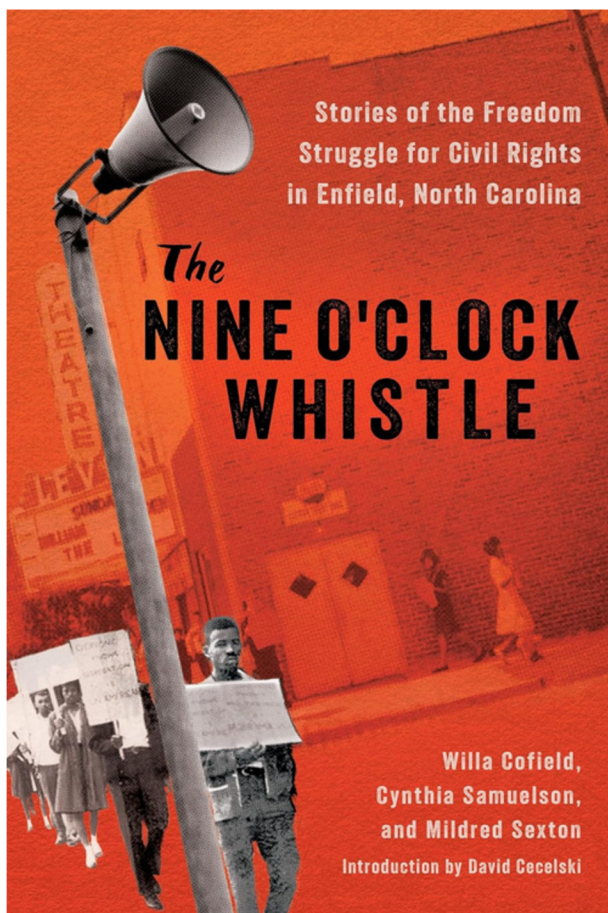
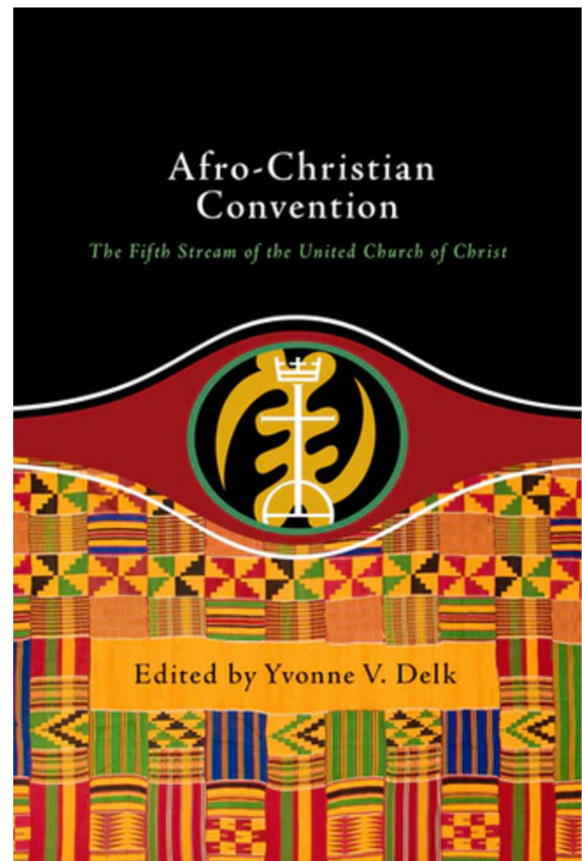
Get Involved with Franklinton Center at Bricks!

Explore the Roots of the United Church of Christ

Dive into *Afro-Christian Convention: The Fifth Stream of the United Church of Christ* and uncover the rich legacy of a community that shaped modern Protestantism. Through firsthand accounts, historical insights, and inspiring stories, this book reveals how the Afro-Christian tradition stands alongside the other streams of the UCC, highlighting its lasting impact on faith and social justice.

How to Get Your Copy

Visit [The Pilgrim Press](#) to order. Join readers across the nation in celebrating a story of faith, heritage, and hope for the future.



The Nine O'Clock Whistle

The *Nine O'Clock Whistle* recounts the grassroots civil-rights uprising that shook Enfield, North Carolina, between 1963 and 1965.

Co-authors Willa Cofield—an English teacher fired for her activism—and her former students Cynthia Samuelson and Mildred Sexton reveal how Black residents defied a Saturday-night siren that ordered them off downtown streets, endured fire-hoses, and launched a three-month boycott of white-owned stores. The struggle soon expanded into voter-registration drives, school-integration efforts, and Cofield's landmark First-Amendment lawsuit. Interwoven family history—stretching back to Cofield's grandfather's enslavement—underscores the community's resilience. Together, the authors dispel the myth that the civil-rights movement bypassed rural eastern North Carolina, showing how ordinary people transformed Enfield—and themselves—forever.

Get Involved with Franklinton Center at Bricks!



FRANKLINTON CENTER DAY 2025

"TELLING OUR STORY"

**Food ! Vendors!
Cultural Activities !
Fellowship!
Performances by
Church Choirs!
Book Signing
Drumming !**

**Games ! Music!
Arts & Crafts!
Facepainting!
Bounce House &
Games for Children!
Food Trucks!
Youth Extravaganza!
Youth Activities**

AUGUST 2, 2025

10AM-4PM

Hospitality House #1

Franklinton Center at Bricks * 281 Bricks Lane * P.O. Box 220 * Whitakers, NC * 27891
Office: (252) 437-1723 * Fax: (252) 437-1278
Email: minnie@franklintoncenteratbricks.org * Website: www.franklintoncenteratbricks.org

Save the Date!



YOU CAN HELP FCaB RIGHT NOW

In this season of reduced Federal funding, attempts to erase our place in history, and the bold attempts to miseducate our youth and adults, FCAB stands at the crossroads as the Life-Giving space for renewal and sustainability.

FCAB appreciates your financial support throughout the years. Yet now our aged Campus needs repairs and ongoing maintenance. FCAB strives to offer the best accommodation and a comfortable setting for your spiritual, justice and educational growth. We want to be the preferred venue for your next family and group activities.

We are prayerful that you will select and donate one of these projects below to donate actual items or financial support toward purchasing or sustaining them.

UPCOMING PROJECTS:

FCaB's Pool

Our year-round pool is a hub for youth programs and community wellness, but it requires constant care—chemicals, safety equipment, lifeguards, and insurance—every day of the year. We need \$25,000 annually, plus a reserve for unexpected repairs, to keep this vital resource open and safe.

New Windows in Admin Building

Thirty aging windows in our historic white Administration Building must be replaced with durable plexiglass to improve energy efficiency and comfort in every season. At \$250–\$300 per window, this upgrade will lower utility costs and protect our workspace for years to come.

New Picnic Tables

To expand accessible gathering space, we plan to purchase 20 collapsible metal picnic tables with benches at \$269.99 each from Costco. These sturdy tables will support camps, retreats, and community events, turning our grounds into a welcoming, all-weather meeting place.

There is a fierce urgency attached to each item listed. Please select and offer your special donations. Your name and the organizations will receive special recognition at the end of each quarter.

For more information, Please contact **Minnie White** at **252-437-1723** or **minnie@franklintoncenteratbricks.org**

Written by Joan Marsh



Support Our Mission to Transform Lives

At Franklinton Center at Bricks, we draw on our rich history to create forward-looking programs in education, health equity, and social justice. From empowering local communities through hands-on advocacy to hosting national conferences, every effort is rooted in building a fairer future.



Why Give?

- **Lasting Impact:** Your contribution sustains programs that uplift individuals and families.
- **Broad Reach:** We engage with regional, national, and global partners to effect change.
- **Community-Centered:** Donations fund life-changing initiatives in our conference center and beyond.

How to Contribute

Visit fcab.org to donate or learn more. Your gift ensures that Franklinton Center at Bricks continues to be a beacon of hope—empowering communities for generations to come.

Thank you for reading!

FRANKLINTON CENTER AT BRICKS, INC.	 (252) 437-1723  (252) 437-1278
FCAB.ORG	Mailing Address: P.O. Box 220, Whitakers, NC 27891 Physical Address: 281 Bricks Lane, Whitakers, NC 27891