The background features a stylized landscape with rolling hills in shades of blue and green. The top and bottom edges are framed by various types of foliage, including dark brown leaves and large, dark blue leaves. A bright yellow sun is partially visible behind the hills in the center.

# AFRICAN AMERICANS IN WESTFIELD, NEW JERSEY FROM 1720

includes a map, timeline, and walking tour  
**SECOND EDITION**



African American History in Westfield Museum Exhibit Quilt, commissioned by MLK Westfield in 2023. Fabrication by Lisa Shepard Stewart. Design by Ms. Stewart & Christine Carr. Photo by Donnell Carr.

The donation of classroom sets of this Second Edition by the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Association of Westfield to the entire Westfield Public School District are made possible in part by a **2023 Union County HEART (History, Education, Arts Reaching Thousands) Grant.**

**AFRICAN AMERICANS**  
**IN**  
**WESTFIELD, NEW JERSEY**  
**FROM 1720**

*... from enslavement to present day*

**Second Edition (2023)**

***Researched and Prepared by:***

Members of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield:

Donnell Carr, *History/Education Committee Co-Chair*

Susannah Mary Chewning

Patricia Faggins (d.)

Ronald Holmes

Andrew H. Lee

Robert Lombard

Carol Miriam Nixon

Elisa Sananman, *History/Education Committee Co-Chair*

Elizabeth A. Wolf, *President*

*Ex-officio:* Grace Brindle

Cynthia Li

Joyce Allen-Pretlow

Robert Wendel

Copyright © 2023 by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Association of Westfield  
All rights reserved. [www.mlkwestfield.org](http://www.mlkwestfield.org)

**Foreword to First Edition (2020)**

Throughout 2020, the Westfield 300 initiative has commemorated the 300th anniversary of our settlement through a variety of events and programming. An important part of this effort is to reflect on our Town's history, and I'm thrilled to see the contributions of the African American community documented for all to explore and appreciate. I invite all residents to take in and celebrate the richness and diversity of the African American experience in Westfield.



Mayor Shelley Brindle



## Table of Contents

Introduction . . . . .	5
In the Beginning . . . . .	7
Site No. 1: Burial Grounds of the Presbyterian Church . . . . .	9
Site No. 2: Slave Auction Site . . . . .	11
Site No. 3: Bethel Baptist Church . . . . .	12
Site No. 4: Robeson Memorial Park . . . . .	13
Site No. 5: Zora Neale Hurston Residence . . . . .	14
Site No. 6: Plinton Funeral Home . . . . .	15
Black Professional Zone . . . . .	16
Site No. 7: Elks Centennial Lodge 400 . . . . .	18
Site No. 8: Westfield Community Center . . . . .	19
Site No. 9: Charles R. Morrison, Sr. & the Westfield Memorial Pool Complex . . . . .	21
Site No. 10: Langston Hughes Residence . . . . .	23
Site No. 11: St. Luke’s AME Zion Church . . . . .	24
Site No. 12: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument . . . . .	25
Site No. 13: Westfield Neighborhood Council . . . . .	28
Site No. 14: Gideon Ross Estate . . . . .	29
Site No. 15: Fairview Cemetery – the Servant Jude & the Civil War Section . . . . .	30
Site No. 16: Brightwood Park . . . . .	32
Timeline . . . . .	34
Notable African American Community Members . . . . .	36
Reverend Ronald Allen, Sr.	
Sylvia Ballatt	
Patricia Victoria Barrett	
William “Bill” Bowers	
L. Wallace Brown	
Noel Brown	
Dr. Pamela Brug	
Stewart Carey	
Donnell Carr	
Gil Chapman	
Tamecka Dixon	
Gladys Edwards	
Patricia Faggins	

Notable African American Community Members (continued):

Dolores Graves  
Hattie Harris  
Samuel Henry Hazell  
Ernestine Howell  
Ralph and Gloria Jefferson  
Dr. Brenda Jemal  
Dorothy Kirkley  
Kevin “Spud” Monroe  
Dr. Derrick Nelson  
Dr. James and Melba Nixon  
Ernest R. Powell  
Joyce Allen Pretlow  
Reverend Leon Randall  
Rosa Randall  
Tony Tiller  
Mary Withers

Westfield Negro History Club (est. 1933). . . . . 45

Concerned African American Parents (est. 1990). . . . . 45

Black Excellence in Westfield Athletic History . . . . . 46

List of Resources . . . . . 47

## Introduction



Dr. King Association's African American History of Westfield Museum Exhibit 2023.  
Photo by Sal Caruana

People of African descent have contributed richly to the community of Westfield, New Jersey throughout its 300-year history. This book covers a sampling of those contributions and seeks to inform the reader, particularly young people, of the wonderful African American history here, especially the stories of African American residents who achieved when all the odds were against them and who were committed to serving others in Westfield, the state of New Jersey, and the country.

The Second Edition of this book adds new sites to the walking tour of the African American experience in Westfield, from the Colonial period of enslavement to the declaration of a potential realizable achievement of justice for all as espoused by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In addition, we have added several new sections that bring more fully to life the history of African Americans in Westfield, such as the Negro History Club, the Concerned African American Parents,

Notable Black Community Members, and African American Athletes of Westfield. Westfield was home to some important contributors to the Harlem Renaissance\* and to institutions (both spiritual and secular) that gave

\* The Harlem Renaissance spanned the 1920s, during which Harlem was the cultural and intellectual capital of Black America. Alongside writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay, were musicians like Louis "Pops" Armstrong and Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, and artists like Aaron Douglas, William H. Johnson, and Meta Warrick Fuller. This period, considered the golden age of African American culture, was a momentous time in American history. It was a proliferation of art in various genres, including music, poetry, theatrical productions, and the visual arts created by African Americans for African Americans. The synergy of the Great Migration pulling African Americans to Northern cities and African American "Founding Fathers" of intellectual life like Carter G. Woodson, Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, and W.E.B. DuBois constructed the environment for creativity in the arts. These Black intellectuals were instrumental in encouraging African American artists of all genres to pursue their talents in social, cultural, and literary arts.

strength, hope, and sustenance to the African American community here. Included in this booklet is a timeline that identifies important national events that impacted all African Americans and juxtaposes them with local events that were significant in our community. An interactive version of the timeline, with more in-depth descriptive material, is available at: [time.graphics/line/399475](https://time.graphics/line/399475).

Please refer to the tour map on the back cover. This walking tour is also available on the location-driven interactive history map website and mobile application, **The Clio**. You can follow the tour by downloading the app, (search for “The Clio” in your app store), and then searching for *African American History in Westfield Walking Tour*, or by accessing the tour on the Clio website at: [www.theclio.com/tour/1585](http://www.theclio.com/tour/1585). Note that sites numbered 1 through 12 are most likely “walk-able,” whereas sites numbered 13 through 16 are further out and would be most easily reached by car.

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Association of Westfield established its African American History Project at the end of 2020 to steward the research of this local history and introduce it to the community. This book is one result of that endeavor. Please visit the African American History Project page on our website: [www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp](http://www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp) to find out more about this work and access many resources on the African American History of Westfield.



African American History of Westfield Trolley Tour, 2021.  
Photo by Elizabeth A. Wolf



## *In the beginning ...*

In the New York Times *1619 Project*, Nikole Hannah-Jones writes that “out of slavery ... grew nearly everything that has truly made America exceptional.” In celebrating Westfield’s 300th year in 2020, we had the opportunity to acknowledge the history of African Americans in this town, tracing their contributions, from those that have been unheralded to the remarkable accomplishments recognized nationally. It is a history that is not often taught, but it is a history that is an integral part of Westfield’s story.

In 1920, when Westfield celebrated its 200th anniversary, it presented a grand, all-day pageant in Mindowaskin Park representing the historical milestones of the town from 1720 to 1920. The history of the Lenape was represented in one of the parades, but the word “slavery” or any mention of African American history was noticeably omitted. The existence of slaves in Westfield, however, along with the remarkable contributions and resilience of African Americans, is very much a part of the colonial history of Westfield.

We trace the 300-year journey of African Americans in Westfield on this walking tour. In so doing, we uncover what has been hidden from us and like archeologists uncovering a lost civilization, we bring this story to light.

It is likely that African Americans lived in New Jersey before the 1660s, but the exact date when enslaved people arrived is unknown. We do know that African Americans were part of the lives of the early settlers here.

Know all men by these presents, that I, Benjamin Hinds, of the County of Essex and Township of Westfield, for the sum of forty dollars in hand paid or secured to be paid, have and do bargain and sell to John Dunham, of the township and county afore-said, his executors, administrators and assigns, a certain Negro girl named Lydia, for the term of eight years, commencing the first day of January, in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirteen, to have and to hold to him, his executors, administrators and assigns, of which said girl I have put the said John Dunham in full possession at the sealing of these presents, and I do warrant and will defend the said John Dunham in the peaceable possession of said girl against me and all persons whatsoever. Witness my hand and seal this first day of January, in the year eighteen hundred and thirteen. 1813.

Sealed and delivered in the  
presence of  
SALLY DUNHAM.

BENJAMIN HINES. (Seal).  
his  
JOHN (x) VAN WINKLE. (Seal).  
mark

Slave bond in Westfield, 1813.

Source: Charles A. Philhower, *History of Town of Westfield, Union County, New Jersey*, 1923.



The Burial Grounds, 2020.

Photo by Elisa Sananman



Entry gate to the Burial Grounds, 2020.

Photo by Elisa Sananman

## Site No. 1

### Burial Grounds of the Presbyterian Church – 140 Mountain Avenue

The Burial Grounds of the Presbyterian Church was designated in 1720, about the same time that the West Fields of Elizabeth was settled as a village. Early on, the Burial Grounds was a community cemetery and all residents of Westfield would have been eligible for burial here; there were no restrictions based on race or ethnicity according to the church Cemetery Committee.

Rev. Woodruff, minister of the Presbyterian Church during this early period, was buried in the cemetery where you are standing. He owned slaves and married off one of his slaves to an enslaved person owned by Dr. Elmer, also of Westfield.

Although few markers have been found that identify African American burial locations in this cemetery, L. Wallace Brown, an African American man born in Westfield in 1931, remembers visiting his great, great grandmother's grave here when he was a child. Mr. Brown's family bible traces his ancestors back to Lemby Williams, who was born in 1792 and was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and John C. Williams, who was born in 1795. Remarkably, Mr. Brown is a living representative of very early African American residents of our town who trace their lineage to colonial times.



L. Wallace Brown near his ancestor's gravesite, 2023.  
Photo by Jon Ulanet





Possible area of slave auction site, 2020.  
 Photo by Google Earth and Elizabeth A. Wolf

**10 DOLLARS REWARD.**  
**R**ANAWAY from the subscriber on the 15th instant, a Negro Girl, named Nelly, 16 years of age, stout built, rather short, yellow complexion, long Indian hair, curled before, bold, but rather down looking. Had on a white gown, light shawl, straw bonnet, and black shoes; also took with her a green umbrella with a fringe. Whoever will take up said girl, and return her to her mistress living near Stoney-Brook, two and a half miles this side of Princeton, shall receive the above reward.  
**AMEY CHESTON.**  
 October 24, 1809. 58-3w.

Trenton Federalist ad for a female runaway slave, 1809.  
 Source: "Princeton's Fugitive Slaves," Princeton & Slavery Project

**A** Likely Parcel of Negro Boys and Girls from 12 to 20 Years of Age; who have all had the Small-Pox, To be sold by **CORNELIUS HETFIELD,** in Elizabeth-Town.

Westfield resident, Cornelius Hetfield, advertised slaves for sale in 1757.

Source unknown.



## Site No. 2

### Slave Auction Site – Downtown Westfield



Lincoln Plaza, 2020.  
Photo by Elizabeth A. Wolf

Slaves were bought and sold in Westfield in the 18th and early 19th centuries, although the exact location of the auction site is unknown, it is assumed that it was in this central downtown area, possibly at Lincoln Plaza according to local folklore. In 1780 there were 25 enslaved people living in Westfield, more than the number of houses reported in town and the Westfield Historical Society documents that slaves were openly traded on the streets of Westfield in 1813. Westfield's wealthiest families, including the Cory, Elmer, and Ross families, all owned slaves in 1830.

In 1757 Westfield resident Cornelius Hetfield advertised for sale (in a slave auction in Elizabeth) a "likely parcel of negro boys and girls from 12-20 years of age who have had small pox." Implicit in this ad is the cruel separation of enslaved children from their parents. Laws in place at the time broke up families and prohibited enslaved people from visiting family in other states. The laws enacted separate regulations with more severe punishments for African Americans and prevented African Americans from meeting and holding property.

New Jersey newspapers of the day were filled with advertisements for slave auctions as well as ads searching for runaway slaves, in fact there were some 1500 such advertisements from 1715-1781. Most runaway slaves in New Jersey were men with an average age of 27 and were often described by their particular skills, such as: tanner, skinner, tailor, carpenter, millwright, cooper, baker, brickmaker, musician, and shoemaker. This was a change from the earlier decades in which most slaves were described as farmers or field hands.

There were numerous slave insurrections in New Jersey in the second half of the 18th century, including in Somerville (1734), in Hackensack (1741), in Perth Amboy (1772), and in Elizabethtown in 1779. In fact, at this time New Jersey had the second highest number of slaves of any colony north of Maryland (New York was first). After a major slave rebellion in New York City in 1741, fears of a similar incident in Elizabethtown led to several enslaved persons being burned at the stake and hanged at the Elizabethtown courthouse. Although the names of those enslaved killed were not recorded, the names of the men who provided the wood for the fires was recorded along with the amount they were paid for that wood by the Elizabethtown freeholders.

By the time of the 1830 census, there were 19 slaves and 134 free African Americans living in Westfield. John Williams, born in Westfield in 1795 and living on Clark Street, was one of those free men. Mr. Williams was Wallace Brown's great, great, grandfather, listed in Mr. Brown's family bible. It is unclear whether John Williams was born free, which was a possibility if a parent had served in the Revolutionary War, or if he escaped bondage or was rewarded with his freedom in some other way. At any rate, John Williams owned property worth \$200, which is notable since for many years African Americans (enslaved or freed) were not permitted to own property. He was most likely an apprentice or servant.

**Site No. 3**  
**Bethel Baptist Church – 539 Trinity Place**



Drawing of Bethel Baptist Church,  
artist and date unknown.



Bethel Baptist Church, 2023.  
Photo by Elizabeth A. Wolf

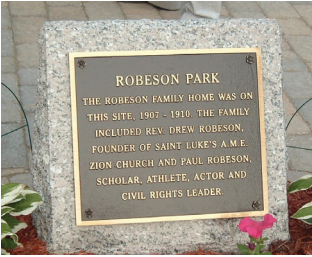
In 1889 a large population of African Americans arrived in Westfield from Virginia. The group needed a place to worship and to find fellowship so they approached and were accepted into the fellowship of the First Baptist Church of Westfield, the only Baptist church in town.

The southern Black Baptists stayed for a while but soon realized that they needed a separate building. The First Baptist Church donated the land for the church on September 21, 1889, the church was built, and the land was held in trust by the First Baptist Church. Originally the church's name was New York Avenue Baptist Church, but this was changed to Bethel Baptist Church in 1913.

Over the years Bethel Baptist has played an important role in the African American community in Westfield and in 1988 hosted the first annual town-wide celebration of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Since 1991, the pastor of Bethel Baptist Church has been the Rev. Kevin Clark, who succeeded the Rev. Miles Austin, an original founder of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield.

## Site No. 4

### Robeson Memorial Park – Corner of Rahway Ave. & Watterson St.



Robeson Park Memorial marker, 2007.

Photo by Patricia Faggins

Robeson Park, situated at the location of the Robeson family home from 1907 to 1910, was dedicated by Westfield town officials and members of the Paul Robeson Centennial Committee of Westfield on July 10, 2007. The park commemorates the contributions of the Robeson family to the town of Westfield, the State of New Jersey, and the countries of the world, and was the culmination of efforts that began in 1998 as the town acknowledged the centennial year of Paul Robeson's birth. The Committee hosted a Westfield community celebration that included activities from April 5 – 9, 1998.

After Reverend William Drew Robeson lost his wife to a home fire when Paul was six years old, he and his sons, Paul and Ben (the rest of the children were away at school), moved from Princeton to Westfield in 1907. Here he established St. Luke's AME Zion Church on the corner of Osborn and Downer Streets (Site No. 10). The family (William and Paul) moved to Somerville, NJ in 1910.

Paul Robeson's education from ages 9-12 (grades 4-7) was in Westfield where he was an outstanding student and athlete. He graduated from high school in Somerville and enrolled in Rutgers College in 1915. He graduated from Rutgers as a premier athlete, scholar, and orator and was its first All-American in football. Robeson said of his time in Westfield that the barriers between Black and White were less rigid than in larger communities, like Princeton, where he was born. The schools in Westfield were integrated and young Paul Robeson was frequently mentioned in the Westfield newspapers for his accomplishments in sports.

Robeson became world famous as an actor, orator, singer, humanitarian, and social activist, speaking forcefully and courageously against racism and social injustices throughout his life. During World War II, Robeson returned to Westfield and raised over \$1 million in war bonds at a benefit at the Westfield Rialto. Although he traveled the world and made an enormous impact with his career as a performer, statesman, and athlete, he can be counted as a son of Westfield who felt close to this community throughout his life.



Paul Robeson, 1942.

Photo by Gordon Parks, Library of Congress



Paul Robeson Centennial Committee at Dedication of Robeson Memorial Park, 2007. Donnell Carr, Lenore Scurry, Carol LaPierre, Patricia Faggins, Giles Wright, Andrew H. Lee, Rev. Robert Taylor, Rev. Leon Randall.

Photo courtesy of Patricia Faggins

## Site No. 5

### Zora Neale Hurston Residence – 405 West Broad Street

Zora Neale Hurston was born in Notasulga, Alabama in 1891. In 1894 her family moved to Eatonville, Florida, where she grew up. After her primary education she studied at Morgan Academy (now Morgan University) in Baltimore, then briefly at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and finally at Barnard College in New York City, where she finished her undergraduate studies at the age of 27. Ms. Hurston became an accomplished author, anthropologist, and film maker and was considered by W.E.B. Dubois to be one of the Talented Tenth. She, like her contemporary Langston Hughes, was an important contributor to the Harlem Renaissance (1920s to early 1930s – see page 28). Zora Hurston was the leading black woman novelist during this period.

Around 1930 Ms. Hurston moved to Westfield while collaborating with Langston Hughes on a play for Broadway called *Mule Bone*, which was based on the story *The Bone of Contention*. After a dispute with Mr. Hughes, she left Westfield and moved to Manhattan in April, 1931.

One interesting aspect of Hurston's life was that she was viewed by many of her colleagues and associates as the most conservative black person in the art world; not prone to being politically correct in her writings and storytelling.

#### Notable Sayings by Zora Neale Hurston:

*"There are years that ask questions and years that answer."*

*"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose."*

#### Notable Books:

*Tell My Horse*

*Their Eyes Were Watching God*

*Mules and Men*

*I Love Myself When I'm Laughing*



405 West Broad Street, 2020.  
Photo by Donnell Carr



Zora Neale Hurston.  
Photo by Unknown, Library of Congress



**Site No. 6**  
**Plinton Funeral Home – 411 West Broad Street**



Plinton Curry Funeral Home, 2020.

Photo by Elizabeth A. Wolf

*"It Is Better to Know Us and Not Need Us, Than to Need Us and Not Know Us."*

The Plinton Funeral Home was established in 1949 by W. Hollis Plinton (1915 - 1983), a graduate of Westfield High School. Mr. Plinton attended Boston University and the School of Embalming and Restoration after serving in World War II, for which he was the first black man drafted in Westfield. He was also the first black president of the New Jersey Funeral Directors Association. As a 7th grade student at Roosevelt Junior High School, Mr. Plinton drew the plans for his business on West Broad Street in his Mechanical Drawing class.

In comments to the Westfield Historical Society, Mr. Plinton noted that the town of Westfield had changed during his lifetime and he remembered when portions of town had board sidewalks, which would throw him off his bicycle while he was delivering papers. "I call it the days of walking back and forth downtown and you spoke to everybody downtown and you knew everybody you spoke to." He also remembered that when he left for the war "my front door was never locked," but when he came back the door had a lock on it.

Hollis Plinton was a member of the Bethel Baptist Church, served on the Board of Directors of the Westfield Community Center, and was a member of the Centennial Lodge. During his tenure as the Chairman of the Housing Committee at the Centennial Lodge, they facilitated the construction of houses on Windsor Avenue, for returning black WWII veterans. He was also active on the Westfield Recreation Commission for over twenty-two years, following in his mother's footsteps.

After his death in 1983, the Plinton Funeral Home continued to be owned and managed by his widow, Eva Holmes Plinton. Hollis Plinton was the brother of James O. Plinton, Jr. (see Black Professional Zone entry).

## Black Professional Zone (1940 - 1970)



This area of Westfield was home to black businesses and professional offices throughout the twentieth century. Many black doctors and dentists had their offices here in addition to black-owned businesses such as the Cameron Barbershop, the Braxton Pool Hall (403 West Broad St.), and two taxi companies. Please be sure to watch the documentary short *Black Professional Zone*, by Isaiah Anderson, about this area of Westfield on the MLK Westfield YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@mlkwestfield>.

**A** — *Dr. James Byrd, DDS* – 550 Trinity Place – Having been raised in Westfield and graduating from Westfield High School in 1928 (where he was a great long distance runner), Dr. Byrd attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He maintained his dental practice in Westfield for over 40 years.

**B** — *Dr. Howard Brock, MD* – 413 West Broad Street – Dr. Brock was born in West Chester, PA in 1890. He attended the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and earned his medical degree at Howard University, in Washington, D.C. Dr. Brock maintained his practice in Westfield for more than 50 years and had an office in New York City until 1957.

## Black Professional Zone (1940 - 1970)

**C** — *Dr. Russell Corbin, DDS* – 432 West Broad Street – Dr. Corbin was raised in Westfield, graduating from Westfield High School in 1924. Dr. Corbin maintained his dental practice for close to 40 years.

**D** — *Dr. George H. Jones, DDS* – 450 West Broad Street – After growing up in Norlina, North Carolina, Dr. Jones earned his Doctor of Dental Surgery at Howard University and maintained a practice in Westfield for over 40 years.

**E** — *James O. Plinton, Sr. and James O. Plinton, Jr.* – 516 West Broad Street – James O. Plinton, who was born in Jamaica, West Indies, was a dental technician whose laboratory was maintained at his home. He did work for dentists from Elizabeth to Bound Brook and was the first black owner of a dental laboratory in Union County. His son, James Plinton, Jr. was born and raised in Westfield, graduating from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, and serving it the U.S. Merchant Marines. In 1941 Mr. Plinton began a 40-year career in aviation that took him from being a flight instructor for the Tuskegee Airmen, to starting air services in Ecuador and Haiti, to becoming a Vice President for TWA and Eastern Airlines. He is the brother of Hollis Plinton (see site No. 6, Plinton Funeral Home).

**F** — *Dr. Minturn Thompson, MD* – 530 West Broad Street – Dr. Thompson was a lifelong resident of Westfield who received his medical degree from Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C. After his internship at Freedmen's Hospital, now the Howard University Hospital, he maintained his medical practice on West Broad Street for over 36 years.

**G** — *Dr. Robert Thompson, DDS* – 203 Palsted Avenue – Dr. Thompson was raised in Westfield and graduated from Westfield High School in 1941. He attended the College of Dentistry at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he received numerous citations and certification for his many years of public service. Dr. Thompson practiced dentistry in Westfield for over 40 years.

**H** — *Dr. Hubert Humphrey, MD* – 430 Downer Street – Dr. Humphrey was born and raised in Westfield, graduating from Westfield High School in 1927. After receiving his medical degree from the Howard University College of Medicine in 1935, and interning at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C., he began his Westfield medical practice in 1936, which lasted over 33 years.

## Site No. 7 Elks Centennial Lodge 400 – 444 West Broad Street

The Elks Centennial Lodge 400 was organized July 28, 1923 at Shady Rest Country Club in Scotch Plains, New Jersey. The Centennial Lodge has worked in the community facilitating various humanitarian efforts including supporting children, sponsoring oratorical contests, and encouraging Black Westfield youth to pursue their education. In 1952 the Centennial Lodge sponsored a housing development on Windsor Avenue, which was a remarkably successful and notable accomplishment that resulted in the building and completion of affordable housing for returning African American WWII veterans. Mayor Charles P. Bailey and the Westfield Town Council were very supportive of this effort. In 1954, Mayor Emerson Thomas donated a nine-room house on Spring Street (now Watterson Street) for the use of the lodge, which was eventually moved to its present location at 444 West Broad Street.



Elks Centennial Lodge 400 in 1930s, photographer unknown.



**Site No. 8**  
**Westfield Community Center – 558 West Broad Street**



Westfield Community Center, 2020.

Photo by Velvet Rogers

*“The Fellowship of the World Begins in One’s Community”*

An often overlooked treasure in town is the Westfield Community Center located at 558 West Broad Street. The Center has been an important and vital part of Westfield since 1935. It was formed after a group of prominent citizens – members of the Avalonte and the Mindowaskin Clubs – cooperated with the National Youth Administration to provide social and recreational activities for young people in Union County towns and started the Toy Lending Library. In addition to collecting, repairing, and lending toys to children, the library offered a full-scale recreation program and a work employment program for young men and women in the area. The Toy Lending library was renamed the Westfield Community Center in 1937. The center’s first Executive Director was Mrs. Ursula Plinton. The second Director was Mr. Leroy Scurry, whose leadership developed the center into a highly successful provider of social services to the Westfield community.

The center moved from its original location at 464 West Broad Street to its present location in 1941 and was formally incorporated in 1948. Federal tax exempt status was granted to the Center in 1951 and public charity status was granted in 1970. Over the years the center has operated after-school, pre-school, and youth summer camp programs, as well as serving senior citizens and being designated and funded by the County of Union as a senior citizens facility. In addition, in 2015, the Westfield Community Center designated a special room in the center as the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield library and museum. This room is where the Dr. King Association has its regular meetings.

## Site No. 8 (continued) Westfield Community Center – 558 West Broad Street

Over its long history, the Westfield Community Center has hosted many distinguished visitors who were invited to offer wisdom and inspiration to children and adults. Among those visitors were the baseball player Jackie Robinson, the tennis champion Althea Gibson, the Olympian Jesse Owens, and the renowned educator Mary McLeod Bethune. During the 1960s, 70s, and 80s the Center hosted fundraising events that drew musicians such as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Harry James, and Woody Herman, as well as the Glenn Miller Orchestra and famous singers such as Fanni Jones. These eminent musical performances greatly enhanced the center's image as a first class provider of community services.



Mrs. Bethune (seated, third from right) visits the Westfield Community Center in 1937.



Jackie Robinson visiting Westfield Community Center in the 1950s.



Tennis champion Althea Gibson visiting the Westfield Community Center in the 1960s.



Jesse Owens, with Mayor H. Emerson Thomas to the right, visiting the Westfield Community Center in the 1960s.

Photos on this page courtesy of  
the Westfield Community Center Archive

**Site No. 9**  
**Charles R. Morrison, Sr. & the Westfield Memorial Pool Complex**  
**713 Cumberland Street**  
**(corner of Cumberland & North Scotch Plains Avenue)**



Charles Morrison, Sr.  
Photo courtesy of the Morrison family

Charles Morrison, born in 1920 in North Carolina, moved to North Scotch Plains Avenue in Westfield in the early 1950's after marrying his wife, Shirley, who had grown up here. Prior to that Mr. Morrison had served as a Chief Warrant Officer during WWII in the segregated U.S. Army and had attended North Carolina Central University.

In 1962, the Town of Westfield planned to use a large field behind North Scotch Plains Avenue as a town dump and municipal equipment area. Mr. Morrison mobilized his community to create the Westfield Civic Improvement Association and under his leadership they fought to block the town's plan because it would destroy the residential character of the neighborhood, create an unsafe environment for the children due to the heavy truck traffic, and create an eyesore within the residential community destroying the livability and home values there. Mr. Morrison advocated for a proposal to dedicate the land for recreational purposes for the local community. He noted in the *The Westfield Leader* that placing a town yard like this in any other neighborhood in Westfield would be "inconceivable."

## Site No. 9 (continued)

### Charles R. Morrison, Sr. & the Westfield Memorial Pool Complex

After months of wrangling and re-examination, the town council and mayor determined that the Conservation Center would be located down past Tamaques Park, where it still exists today. After learning of the decision to move the proposed site, Mr. Morrison paraphrased Thomas Paine in *The Westfield Leader*: “We have undergone the fatigue of supporting democracy, but we have tasted its fruits.”

In August of 1963, Mr. Morrison felt compelled to march with Dr. King in The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He went on to fight for the rights of Black families to find housing in Westfield through the Westfield Civic Improvement Association, which also led the community to confront issues of racial inequality within the school system and local employment opportunities.

In 1970, the Westfield Memorial Pool Complex was built on the site that was originally slated to be the town dump. In part, we have Charles Morrison to thank for that town-wide accomplishment. In 2021 a memorial plaque was installed honoring Charles Morrison, noting his accomplishments, and stating, in part: “Labeled by some as a troublemaking Black resident, Mr. Morrison’s “good trouble” was pivotal in establishing the Westfield Memorial Pool and Park Complex.” Mr. Morrison was inducted into the Westfield Historical Society’s Hall of Fame in 2022.



Charles Morrison Plaque, Westfield Memorial Pool, 2023.

Photo by Elizabeth A. Wolf



## Site No. 10

### Langston Hughes Residence – 514 Downer Street

Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967) was born in Joplin, Missouri in 1902. His grandfather was killed in abolitionist John Brown’s raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia in 1859. Hughes lived as a boy in Lawrence, Kansas, then moving with his mother to several cities in the mid-west. During these moves he fell in love with books and decided that he wanted to be a writer. After high school he spent two years in Mexico with his father, and then, because he wanted to see Harlem, he moved to New York and entered Columbia University in 1921, leaving after a single unhappy year. He entered Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1925 and graduated in 1929.

Langston Hughes moved to Westfield around 1930 where he collaborated with Zora Neale Hurston on writing a play for Broadway. Hughes, like Hurston, became an important contributor to the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes moved from Westfield to NYC in 1931.

#### *I, Too*

I, too, sing America  
 I am the darker brother.  
 They send me to eat in the kitchen  
 When company comes,  
 But I laugh,  
 And eat well,  
 And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
 I’ll be at the table  
 When company comes  
 Nobody’ll dare  
 Say to me,  
 “Eat in the kitchen,”  
 Then.

Besides,  
 They’ll see how beautiful I am  
 And be ashamed –

I, too, am America.



514 Downer Street, 2020.  
 Photo by Donnell Carr



Langston Hughes, 1939.  
 Photo by Carl Van Vechten

1930 United States Federal Census for Langetta Hughes														
New Jersey Union Westfield District 0706														
Street No.	House No.	Name	Relation	Home Value	Mar.	Sex	Race	Age	Married	Married	Birthplace	Father Birthplace	Mother Birthplace	Language
514		Langston Hughes	Son	1000	Y	M	W	27	Y	Y	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	
		Langetta Hughes	Wife		N	F	W	25	N	N	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	
		Langetta Hughes	Daughter		N	F	W	10	N	N	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	
		Langetta Hughes	Daughter		N	F	W	8	N	N	Missouri	Missouri	Missouri	

Langston Hughes listed at 514 Downer St. on the 1930 census.  
 Photo by Donnell Carr

**Site No. 11**  
**St. Luke's AME Zion Church – 500 Downer Street**



St. Luke's AME Zion Church, 2020.

Photo by Donnell Carr



Rev. William Drew Robeson, 1845-1918.  
Photo courtesy of St. Luke's AME Zion  
Church in Westfield

St. Luke's African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church came into existence in 1853, originally as part of the Quakers. In 1907, under the leadership of Reverend William Drew Robeson, the current church was constructed. St. Luke's still celebrates the birthday of its most famous son – Paul Robeson – and in April 1998, during the tenure of the late Rev. Leon Randall and Westfield's Centennial celebration of Robeson, the corner of Downer and Osborn Streets was designated Paul Robeson Corner by the Town of Westfield. The current pastor of St. Luke's is the Rev. William E. Lawson.

## Site No. 12

### Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument – South Avenue Circle (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Circle)

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument was erected in 2005 by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield to honor Dr. King's life and legacy. Dedicated on June 19, 2005 ("Juneteenth") in a public celebration, the monument now serves as: a place of quiet reflection; a rallying point for peaceful demonstrations, memorials, and vigils; and, the starting location of the Association's march to its annual commemorative MLK Day service on the third Monday in January of every year.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument was funded by the members of the Dr. King Association of Westfield, interested citizens, and The Westfield Foundation. The site for the monument was provided by the Town of Westfield.

The plaque reads:

#### ***We Are Living the Dream***

*The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield and the Town of Westfield honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929 - 1968. He dedicated his life to the ongoing struggle for racial, social and economic justice through passive resistance and non-violent action. We find it fitting that Dr. King be paid lasting homage so that his life and work may continue not only to inspire us today, but for generations to come. In grateful appreciation, we dedicate this monument on this 19th day of June 2005. His dream lives on.*



Dr. King Association at the monument dedication, 2005. L-R: Front Row: Sylvia Ballatt, Elizabeth Wolf, Carol LaPierre, Patricia Faggins, Carol Molnar, Hattie Harris, Dolores Graves. Second Row: LaVar Harris, William Foley, Andrew H. Lee, Julie Purnell. Back row: Donnell Carr, Rev. Leon Randall, Nathan Hollis. Photo courtesy of Patricia Faggins



## Site No. 12 (continued) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument – South Avenue Circle



Dr. King Association at Annual MLK Day Service in 2018.  
Photo by MLK Westfield

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield was established in the summer of 1987, when the seed of celebrating the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. germinated in the minds of five people — Rev. Theodore Calhoun, Rev. Miles Austin, Mrs. Dorothy Kirkley, Ms. Patricia Faggins, and Mr. Tyrone Laws. They were motivated to action and pooled their efforts to present the first community-wide interfaith observance of the birthday of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Bethel Baptist Church. From that time, the annual service has continued as a community celebration, is attended by hundreds each year, and is now hosted by a different Westfield house of worship annually.



MLK Day Annual Contest Student Winners, 2020.  
Photo by MLK Westfield

Throughout the years, the Dr. King Association has worked within Westfield to keep the spirit of Dr. King alive through education, activism, and advocacy. Our creation of the African American History Project ([www.mlkwestfield.org/aaHP](http://www.mlkwestfield.org/aaHP)) made possible the continued research into the history of African Americans in Westfield, the publication of this book, the establishment of the African American



Mrs. Rosa Randall singing at MLK Day Service 2022 in Mindowaskin Park.  
Photo by The Westfield Leader



## Site No. 12 (continued) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument – South Avenue Circle

History in Westfield Museum Exhibit, and the dissemination of the deep and rich history of African Americans here throughout the community and the schools. In addition the Association hosts community-wide discussions on race, awards scholarships to college-bound students, holds an annual essay, art, and poetry contest in the local schools, holds vigils and events at the MLK Monument, and hosts a Juneteenth celebration.



MLK Westfield members visit Dr. King Monument in Washington, DC in 2012.  
Photo by Renae V. Brown



The MLK Monument as space to raise racial justice issues, 2021.  
Photo by Elizabeth A. Wolf



MLK Westfield Members Plan "Listening Event" at Monument in 2022.  
Photo by MLK Westfield



Peace Vigil at the Monument in 2016.

Photo by MLK Westfield

## Site No. 13 Westfield Neighborhood Council – 127 Cacciola Place



Westfield Neighborhood Council, 2023.

Photo by Elizabeth A. Wolf

Westfield Neighborhood Council (WNC) is a private, non-profit community based social service organization located at 127 Cacciola Place. The purpose is to serve residents of the community with programs and services that enable individuals to strive with pride to reach their highest potential. These programs historically included pre-school, after-school, summer, teens, and senior citizens.

WNC started as a grassroots movement in 1967 when several women of Cacciola Place began meeting to discuss the deplorable living conditions in their neighborhood. In February 1967, the women presented their list of concerns before the Westfield Town Council and the Town responded immediately by sending trucks for a cleanup weekend. A Community Development Corporation was soon formed in Westfield, funds were raised, and a 22-unit apartment complex and two duplexes were constructed and opened in May 1971.

This grassroots movement also inspired the women to have a center in the Cacciola neighborhood to address the needs of the predominately black families. That summer, a nearby empty lot was cleared for recreational activities. The women sought guidance from county and local officials on how to start a neighborhood center. Soon, others joined them in their efforts, and they eventually were able to establish and incorporate a multi-service center in 1969.

Over the years, the WNC programs have reached children, many of whom benefitted from them for decades from preschool through adulthood. Currently the programs have been restructured utilizing mostly volunteers to offer activities for youth, adults, and senior citizens.

## Site No. 14 Gideon Ross Estate – 231 Elizabeth Avenue

In the 1830s, according to recollections of old families in Westfield, the Gideon Ross estate had slave quarters that were still in existence until the 1920s. The 1830s tax records for Westfield indicate that there were approximately nineteen slaves in town. By 1840 that number was down to four slaves and by 1850 only one person remained enslaved in Westfield.

Looking at slave codes to get a sense of life as a slave in Westfield, we learn that the 1704 New Jersey Slave Code banned buying or selling goods to enslaved people and punished them if they were more than ten miles from their master's home. Later the slave code "banned freed slaves and their children from holding property, effectively denying them the right to vote or hold office." (see Geneva Smith, "Legislating Slavery in New Jersey," *Princeton & Slavery Project*, at [slavery.princeton.edu/stories/legislating-slavery-in-new-jersey](http://slavery.princeton.edu/stories/legislating-slavery-in-new-jersey)).

Originally the eastern area of New Jersey established separate courts to try and punish slaves without a jury to handle crimes committed by slaves. Since slaves could not own property, they could not be fined, and to incarcerate a slave would deny his master of his labor, so whipping was a form of punishment. According to local stories passed down through the generations, there was a slave whipping post at the intersection of West Broad Street and Martine Avenue in Scotch Plains.



The Gideon Ross Estate as it appeared around 1850 in an image on a ceramic dish at the Westfield Historical Society, 2020. Photo by Robert Wendel.

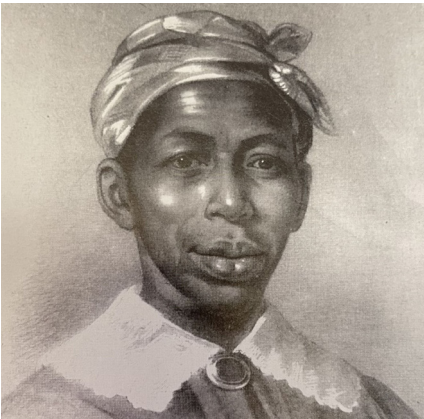


## Site No. 15 Fairview Cemetery –1100 East Broad Street

When the Burial Grounds of the Presbyterian Church became crowded, Fairview Cemetery was opened in 1868 to afford more burial space. Fairview is notable for its unsegregated burial site of Civil War soldiers and for the plot of an indentured servant buried with the family she served.

One of the families re-interred in the Fairview Cemetery was the Denman family. Their servant, Jude, is buried near them, having died in 1851 at forty-two years of age after 39 years of service. The Denmans inscribed her headstone to “Jude, a faithful and beloved servant.” At the time that Jude lived, the law in New Jersey was that children born of slaves after July 4, 1804 were to be free though they remained “apprentices” of their mother’s owner for a specified period (25 years for a man and 21 years for a woman). This enabled owners to continue to appropriate the labor of the children of their slaves. Since Jude was born after the 1804 Act, the law required that she work 21 years before her status changed from mandatory “apprentice” servant to free person. Note that she continued as a servant to the Denmans for her entire life. Though legally free after the period of servitude, the 1804 Act did not change the working conditions of the servants. Thus, they often continued doing the same work and living in the same conditions as their enslaved mothers. Unlike apprenticed white servants, African American apprentice servants had no contractual agreements with their overseers, obligating them to work without agreed-upon benefits.

The will of John Denman, who died one year before Jude, indicated that she be provided for. He asked that his wife provide a “suitable support and maintenance for my former negro servant woman Jude and my former slave ... during the life time of my said wife in case either of them should become incapable of earning a competent livelihood by their own labors.”



Portrait of Jude, year and artist unknown.  
Ethel Washington, *Union County Black Americans*



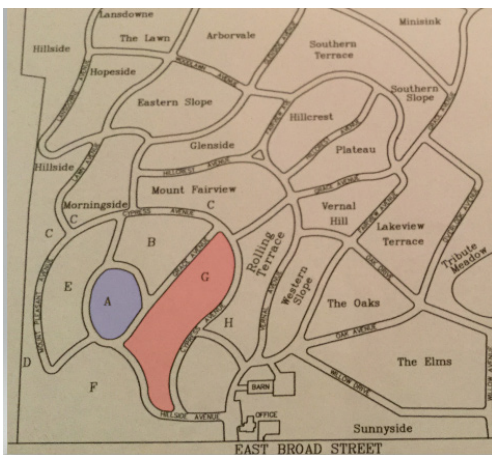
Headstone of Jude, Fairview Cemetery, 2023.  
Photo by Susannah Mary Chewning



## Site No. 15 (continued) Fairview Cemetery –1100 East Broad Street

Though New Jersey was the last state to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, Fairview Cemetery's Civil War section reflects Westfield's evolving attitude. The graves of African American Civil War soldiers are buried in Ward G with full honor in a majestic spot along with their white peers. This may be, in part, due to the advocacy of the Grand Army of the Republic, a fraternal veterans organization formed in 1866 that was among the first organized advocacy groups supporting voting rights for Black veterans. Mindful of the demonstrated loyalty and sacrifices of the African American soldiers in the Civil War, the Grand Army pushed for honorable burials. Note that most Black soldiers did not receive any pension or remuneration for wounds incurred during the Civil War. The names and lot numbers in Ward G of the African American Civil War soldiers are as follows:

John Brinkerhoff , died 1911 (age 72), Lot 2  
Milton A. Brown, died 1911 (age 59), Lot 147  
Edmund D. Chamberlain, died 1891 (age 50), Lot 68  
George L. Holland, died 1909 (age 74), Lot 2  
James H. White, died 1929 (age 82), Lot number unavailable



Map courtesy of Fairview Cemetery, 2020.  
Civil War Soldier section in red area.  
Denman family section with Jude gravesite in blue area.



Headstone of George L. Holland,  
Area G, 2020.

Photo by Elisa Sananman

## Site No. 16 Brightwood Park - the 1100 Block of Prospect Street

### *Before It Was a Park, It Was a Neighborhood*

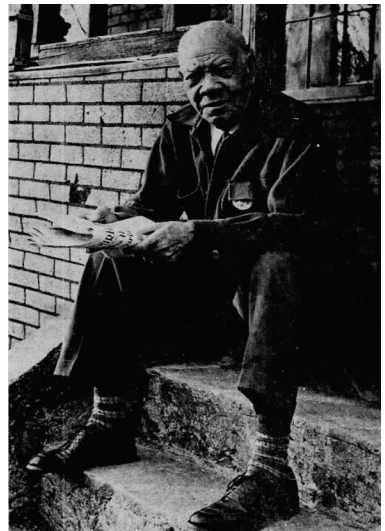
Between 1905 and 1920, the mostly undeveloped, wooded area, now known as Brightwood Park, was subdivided into 340 small lots and purchased by individuals hoping to build houses or simply profit from their investments. Most lots sold for less than \$100 and were 25 feet by 100 feet in size. The “paper streets” upon which the houses sat were dirt paths at best that connected each lot to either Prospect Street or Brightwood Avenue. There was no sewer or water service, leaving residents to rely on wells and outhouses even though a water main, which was never made accessible to the residents who owned homes there, went through the community. By 1920, twenty-seven homes and one church had been constructed within the future boundaries of the park, about eighty percent of which were owned and/or occupied by African Americans, most of whom came North with the “Great Migration” from the southern states of the United States.

The residents of “the Big Woods” or “Turkey Swamp” as it was sometimes known at the time, worked as servants, janitors, hotel porters, gardeners, barbers, cooks, laborers, and railroad workers. Active in the Elks and Masons, the residents also helped form St. Thomas A.M.E. Zion Church, Metropolitan



1921 Sanborn Map showing streets and lots is superimposed over a 1979 aerial photograph of Brightwood Park.

Image courtesy of Robert Lombard



Samuel Jarvis on the front steps of his home at 1118 Fanwood Ave. in 1964.  
Photo by the *Courier News*

## Site No. 16 (continued) Brightwood Park – the 1100 Block of Prospect Street

Baptist Church, and St. John’s Baptist Church. They married, had children, and generally sought a better life for themselves and their families. At the outbreak of each World War, male residents signed up for the draft, and many served. Like everyone else at the time, the residents struggled through the Great Depression and no new homes were built from 1930 to 1940. It is also likely that the lack of paved roads, water, and sewer services made this neighborhood less attractive to home buyers and the number of resident homeowners declined. In addition, the federal government system of ranking neighborhoods to qualify for federally guaranteed mortgages (what became redlining), which ranked racially integrated neighborhoods negatively, prevented the property owners in the Big Woods from obtaining mortgage financing through these programs to improve their homes.

By the mid-1950s, the town of Westfield had begun to hold on to properties it acquired through foreclosure and in 1964, the town formally authorized the full acquisition of the park site. By 1970, most of the remaining private parcels were acquired through negotiated sale and six parcels were acquired through condemnation. Two of the resident property owners, one of whom was Samuel Jarvis, were granted lifetime occupancy of their homes as part of the purchase by the town as they refused to sell their homes. Brightwood Park formally opened in 1980.

Please be sure to watch our documentary short: *Before it was a Park, it was a Neighborhood*, on our YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/@mlkwestfield](http://www.youtube.com/@mlkwestfield). Read more about the history of the neighborhood and the individual residents at the *African American History Project* page on our website: [www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp](http://www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp).

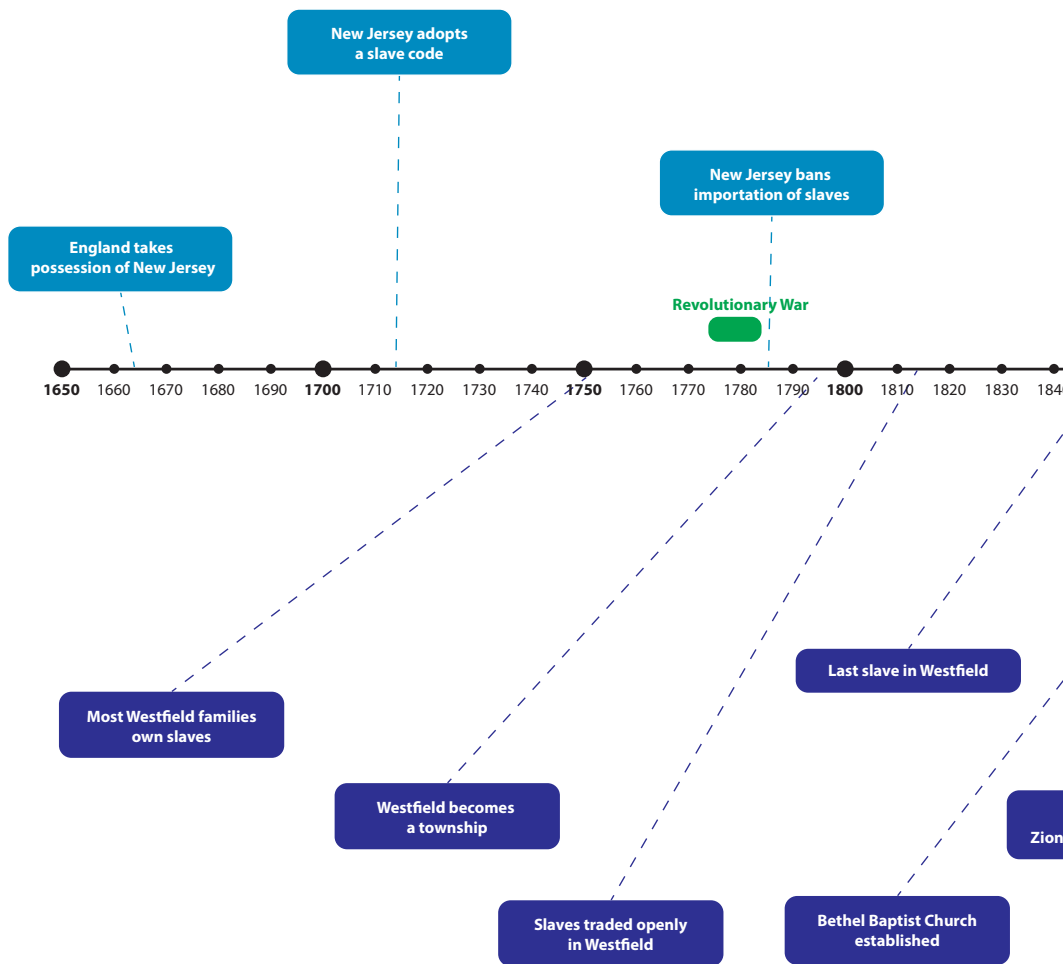


1126 and 1128 Fanwood Ave. as seen in 1943.  
Photo courtesy of Westfield Historical Society



1112 Fanwood Ave. – St. Thomas AME Zion Church and Rectory as seen in 1943.  
Photo courtesy of Westfield Historical Society

# TIMELINE



***Timeline Research & Production***

Grace Brindle, *Chair*

Chloe Beaulieu	Sofia Regencia
Donnell Carr	Ashley Talwar
Andrew Jiang	Anna Tichenor
Cynthia Li	Shelley Brindle, <i>Sponsor</i>





## Notable African American Community Members

### **Reverend Ronald Allen, Sr.**

Ronald Allen was raised in Westfield and educated in the public schools. Currently the pastor of the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Summit, New Jersey, Rev. Allen is a retired detective of the Westfield Police Department where he worked for twenty-six years (twenty-two years as the Juvenile Detective investigating crimes committed by juveniles). Rev. Allen started and coordinated the D.A.R.E. program for the Westfield school district and he has served as the Executive Director of the Westfield Police Athletic League for many years. Rev. Allen also serves on the Supreme Court of New Jersey Ethics Committee XII and on the advisory board of Overlook Medical Center. He is a dedicated mentor and role model for Westfield's youth.

### **Sylvia Ballatt (1927-2014)**

Born and raised in New York City, Sylvia Ballatt began a long career first as a nurse (in part during WWII) and then as a teacher, principal, and superintendent in the New York City public school system. Ms. Ballatt retired in 1987 from her position as the executive director of the NYC Board of Education division that oversaw all public high schools. Having lived in Westfield since 1965, Ms. Ballatt was a volunteer and advisor to nineteen different non-profit organizations throughout her retirement, including the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield. In her work with the Dr. King Association, she created the essay, art, and poetry contest that is still conducted in the Westfield public schools in commemoration of the Dr. King holiday every January.

### **Patricia Victoria Barrett (1926-2003)**

Patricia Barrett, a graduate of Newark State Teachers College (now Kean University) and Seton Hall University (Masters), taught at the Morton St. School in Newark for 46 years before retiring. Ms. Barrett was a strong advocate for the preservation of Black History Month in New Jersey and the nation, chairing a committee to Save Black History Month. She was a member of the Westfield Paul Robeson Centennial Committee formed in 1998 to celebrate Robeson's 100th birthday. As part of this Committee, it was Ms. Barrett's idea to name the corner of Downer and Osborn Streets -- the location of St. Luke's A.M.E. Zion Church, which was founded by Paul Robeson's father -- "Paul Robeson Corner."

### **William "Bill" Bowers (1933-2015)**

Bill Bowers, a resident of Windsor Ave. was a prominent community activist. As a charter member and president (1965) of the Westfield Civic Improvement Association, he advocated for fair housing and equitable treatment from the town of Westfield. He was also active as a Board Director with the Westfield Neighborhood Council, the Westfield Negro History Club, and the Westfield Y's Men's Club. A lifelong member of the NAACP and numerous other organizations, Mr. Bowers was especially inspired by his participation in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963. He was a civil rights activist in our community and a strong advocate for education for African American youth.

## Notable African American Community Members

### L. Wallace Brown

L. Wallace Brown was born in Westfield in 1931 and he can trace his ancestors here back to the late 1700's (see Site No. 1). Mr. Brown attended McKinley School, Roosevelt Intermediate School, and graduated from Westfield High School in 1951. A veteran of the Korean War, Mr. Brown worked for the Internal Revenue Service as an internal tax auditor and was the first African American Special Agent in the Criminal Investigation Division in New Jersey. He also served as a member of the Presidential detail of the Secret Service. He has long been a member of the Centennial Elks Lodge and has served as president and trustee of the Westfield Community Center for many decades.

### Noel Brown

Noel Brown's presence in Westfield from 1982 through 2011 was characterized by his articulate and commanding voice. Mr. Brown was active in Westfield organizations, serving on the board of directors of the Westfield Community Center, as a member of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield, and a mentor for troubled high school students. He was a co-founder and first president of CAAP (Concerned African American Parents). Mr. Brown's activism and influence were inspired by his participation in the Children's March in Birmingham, AL in 1963, during which he served three days in jail for demonstrating without a permit in this civil rights march.



### Dr. Pamela Brug

As a lifelong Westfield resident, Dr. Pamela Brug, an OBGYN with Robert Wood Johnson, is dedicated to her patients as well as to education, community building, and social justice. She graduated from Douglass College of Rutgers University with degrees in Biology and Sociology and earned her Doctor of Medicine degree from Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson School of Medicine. Dr. Brug is the founder of the New Jersey Black Women Physicians Association, a non-profit organization and network that addresses health disparities in New Jersey, specifically in black maternal and infant mortality, and advocates for advancing women of color in the medical field. During the COVID pandemic, Dr. Brug worked

tirelessly as a doctor as well as a social advocate through outreach in vulnerable communities to ensure that all were educated and equipped to stay healthy and safe. Dr. Brug has also been a longtime member and officer of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield.

## Notable African American Community Members

### **Stewart Carey**

Stewart Carey moved to Westfield from Charlottesville, VA in 1969 to start his career as a physical education teacher at Edison Intermediate School. Becoming an assistant principal at Edison in 1996, Mr. Carey then became the principal of Roosevelt Intermediate School in 2003. In addition, Mr. Carey coached both basketball and baseball in the district and retired from his career in education in 2017 after 48 years of service to the Westfield public schools.

### **Donnell Carr**

A Westfield resident since 1981, Donnell Carr has long been active in the Westfield community. The first African American resident to sit on the Town Council, Mr. Carr has also served as an officer of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield for many decades, a trustee and board member of the Westfield Community Center for over 40 years, and a founder of the Concerned African American Parents (CAAP) organization in 1990 seeking to address racial disparities in the Westfield public schools. He has also been a member of the Westfield Foundation, the Westfield 300 Commemoration History Committee, and the Westfield United Fund, as well as serving as the president of the Trustees Board of the Echo Lake Church of Christ. Along with Rev. Leon Randall, he co-chaired the Paul Robeson Centennial Committee of Westfield. While a member of the Westfield 300 Commemoration Steering Committee, Mr. Carr initiated what became the African American History Project now undertaken by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield.

### **Gil Chapman**

Longtime Westfield resident, Gil Chapman, was a record-setting football player at Thomas Jefferson High School in Elizabeth, NJ and at the University of Michigan. Mr. Chapman went on to play professionally for the New Orleans Saints before becoming a businessman. In addition to owning a Ford Motor Co. dealership in Staten Island, he was the first African American to hold an elected office in the City of Elizabeth, NJ, serving on the city council from 1978 to 1983. He has also served on several boards, including Northfield Bancorp and was inducted into the inaugural Elizabeth City Athletic Hall of Fame. In Westfield, Mr. Chapman was active with CAAP in the 1990s and has always given freely of his time and expertise to the betterment of the community.

### **Tamecka Dixon**

Tamecka Dixon, a Westfield native, was a High School All-American basketball player in Linden, NJ and a college conference Player of the Year and Honorable Mention All-American while at the University of Kansas. Ms. Dixon played professional basketball for the Los Angeles Sparks and the Indiana Fever. After finishing her basketball career, Ms. Dixon began her entrepreneurial career as the owner/operator of an Avis car rental service in Westfield. A former President of the Board of Directors of the Westfield Neighborhood Council, Ms. Dixon has actively served as a mentor and example for Westfield's youth.



## Notable African American Community Members

### **Gladys Edwards**

Gladys Edwards celebrated her 100th birthday in August 2023. Having grown up in Florida, Mrs. Edwards has lived in Westfield for over 60 years. She was a member of the Board of Directors of the Westfield Community Center, was the Secretary of the Negro History Club, volunteered in the McKinley School library, was a Cub Scout Den Mother, and has been a member of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield for many decades. One of the most important services that Mrs. Edwards provided to her community was as a source of great encouragement to the many young people that she foster-parented, mentored, and supported in her neighborhood. Her deep love and compassion for her community in Westfield is an example of how an ordinary citizen's life can be so impactful and significant to many others.



### **Patricia Faggins (1943-2021)**

Patricia Faggins was a lifelong Westfield resident, a dedicated servant to her community, and a social justice activist. In 1987, Ms. Faggins and four others founded the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield, with the purpose of annually celebrating the newly established Martin Luther King, Jr. federal holiday. As a founder and longtime treasurer of that organization, Ms. Faggins helped it grow in breadth of mission and impact throughout the decades. She was also deeply involved in the establishment and work of the Westfield Neighborhood Council for over 50 years always seeking to help members of her community advance in life, especially through education. After her passing,

scholarships were created in her honor by the Dr. King Association and the Westfield Neighborhood Council.

### **Dolores Graves (1929-2020)**

Born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Harlem, Dolores Graves and her husband Harry moved to Westfield in 1950, where they raised their eight children and where she owned and operated a day care center for 39 years. She was a proud business owner, creating job opportunities for her community and working to make daycare more accessible and affordable for everyone. Mrs. Graves was very active in the Metropolitan Baptist Church, was recognized as a Mother of that church, and was the founder of its Scholarship Committee. She served her community through her business, her church work, and her membership in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield where she was an astute, consistent, and generous volunteer for many years.

## Notable African American Community Members

### **Hattie Harris (1920-2018)**

Hattie Harris, originally from North Carolina, lived in Westfield for over 70 years. Having graduated from Water's Training High School in Winton, NC and the Van De Vyver Business School in Richmond, VA, Mrs. Harris worked as the office manager for the YWCA of Westfield for 25 years. She contributed to the community through her volunteerism as a Girl Scout leader, treasurer of the Westfield Day Care Center, president of the Westfield Negro History Club, on the board of directors of the Westfield YWCA and the Westfield Community Center, the secretary of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield, and the secretary and trustee board treasurer of the First Baptist Church of Cranford.

### **Samuel Henry Hazell (1940-2006)**

Samuel Hazell was a distinguished educator who contributed much to the students, staff, and citizens of Westfield. After earning his degrees in secondary social science from Newark State College and a graduate degree from the New School for Social Research, Mr. Hazell served Westfield for 27 years, starting as Assistant Principal at Edison Intermediate School and Westfield High School, and then as Principal of Edison Intermediate School. During his tenure in Westfield he was very involved in the education of all his students, and had a special place in his heart for those who were disadvantaged. To Westfield's students, parents, and staff members, Principal Hazell's reputation was one of respect and honor and he was beloved by many. Upon his retirement in 1997, CAAP honored his legacy and outstanding contributions with a grand affair at the Pines Manor in Edison, NJ.

### **Ernestine Howell (1935-2004)**

Ernestine Howell, raised in Norfolk, Virginia graduated from Virginia State University in 1956. Ms. Howell was the fourth Executive Director of the Westfield Community Center serving from 1989-2003. The Center flourished during her 35 years of involvement (20 years as a Board member and 15 years as the Executive Director). Ernestine, a true ambassador and an outstanding representative of the Center, knew all the "important" folks in Westfield and knew how to influence their decisions about support and funding. Often a centerpiece of community gatherings like the annual United Fund events, Ms. Howell was always sure to represent the Center and its needs. Her social graces, eloquence, and communications skills were unequalled as she sought to optimize the performance and programs of the Westfield Community Center, a true benefit to her community.

### **Ralph and Gloria Jefferson**

Ralph and Gloria Jefferson moved to Westfield, NJ in 1953 after he graduated from Howard University with a degree in architecture. They came to New Jersey because the Washington, DC firms were not hiring black architects. Initially finding work with a Newark firm, Ralph completed seven years apprenticeship and was licensed and ultimately formed the Ludlow and Jefferson architecture firm in

## Notable African American Community Members



Summit. In 1963 Ralph was appointed to the Westfield Board of Education, becoming the BOE's first black member. During their over 40 years in Westfield, Ralph designed innovative buildings including their house on Downer St. and his passion became designing schools and houses of worship. Gloria was a certified Radiology Technologist who was trained at the Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, DC and who worked at Muhlenberg Hospital from 1971-1994. Together,

Ralph and Gloria made numerous contributions to the Town of Westfield and the State of New Jersey in the areas of fair housing, education, and civil rights.

### **Dr. Brenda Jemal**

Dr. Brenda Jemal holds a Ph.D. in Counseling from Purdue University and moved to Westfield when she worked at Bell Laboratories designing and delivering management workshops in Diversity. Dr. Jemal also served as a Special Education teacher in the Patterson, NJ public schools and was an educational consultant for several years after leaving Bell Labs. Dr. Jemal served a term as the president of CAAP (Concerned African American Parents) of Westfield in the 1990s where she set up programs and workshops to aid parents and children.

### **Dorothy Kirkley (1927-1999)**

Dorothy Kirkley was one of the five founders of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield in 1987 and remained a dedicated member of that organization until her death. She was passionately devoted to the educational success of African American students in Westfield's schools. As a substitute teacher and general assistant at WHS, she supervised the High School Awareness Club, which was an organization created to support, mentor, and encourage Black youth. Dorothy was a caring advocate of her charges, an active member of CAAP (Concerned African American Parents), and a member of the Board of the Westfield Neighborhood Council. In recognition of her many contributions and passionate example, the Dr. King Association established an annual Dorothy Kirkley Scholarship for deserving students that best fit her example.

### **Kevin "Spud" Monroe**

Spud Monroe was an outstanding basketball player at Westfield High School (1977) who was inducted into the Westfield Athletic Hall of Fame in 2020. After playing college basketball for Eastern Kentucky University on a Division 1 scholarship, Spud played professionally in South America and Europe for several

## Notable African American Community Members

years before returning to Westfield, where he has distinguished himself as a community activist. A legend in his community, Spud advocates to improve the social environment of young people living in Westfield and creates programs to serve them, such as the very popular Unity Day Games, which he co-founded and now directs to bring the Windsor Ave. and West Broad St. communities together.

### **Dr. Derrick Nelson (1975-2019)**

Born in Plainfield, NJ, Dr. Nelson came to the Westfield School District first as an assistant principal at Roosevelt Intermediate School, then assistant principal at Westfield High School, and, in 2017 became the Principal at WHS. Dr. Nelson was an inspiring leader and educational innovator who always led by example and cared for every student in his charge. He worked with the community, teachers, students, and families to promote success. In addition to a lifetime as an educator, Dr. Nelson served his country for over 20 years in the United States Army Reserve. His impact on the community of Westfield, particularly its students, cannot be overstated and he will always be remembered by his philosophy of contributing to society and helping others: “You lift as you climb.”

### **Dr. James and Melba Nixon**

Westfield residents since 1965, James and Melba Nixon made many valuable contributions to Westfield’s rich cultural experience. Dr. Nixon, who earned a PhD in Inorganic Chemistry from Cornell University in 1960, aspired to become a college professor although there were no chemistry professor vacancies at the Historically Black Colleges or Universities and positions at the historically white colleges were not available to him because of racial segregation. Dr. Nixon became a research chemist at Esso (Exxon), work that resulted in 15 publications and nine U.S. patents. In 1965 the Nixons moved their young family to Westfield with the assistance of the Fair Housing Council of Union County. Dr. Nixon served as President and Director of the Allocations Committee of the Westfield United Fund (WUF); Board Chairman of the Westfield Neighborhood Council; Program Chair of the Westfield Optimist Club; member of the Westfield Community Judiciary Committee; and a member of the First Congregational Church Board of Trustees and Board of Outreach. He was passionate about developing and implementing programs that increased under-represented minorities in STEM programs, including establishing the successful Minorities in Engineering program at Union County College in the 1980s and 1990s. In the early 1960s,





## Notable African American Community Members

Dr. Nixon also served as the Education Committee Chairman of the Elizabeth Chapter of the NAACP. Dr. Nixon is proud of his participation in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Melba Nixon was the first African American woman to serve on the Westfield Board of Education (1989-1996). In addition, she served on the board of the Westfield Community Center, the Westfield Adult School, the Westfield YWCA/YMCA, the Westfield Recreation Commission, the Friends of Mindowaskin Park, was the President of the Westfield High School PTA, and was a Deacon of First Congregational Church. Both James and Melba were active members of Concerned African American Parents (CAAP), received the Golden Volunteer Award from the Westfield Y in 1996, and were inducted into the Westfield Historical Society's Hall of Fame in 2022.

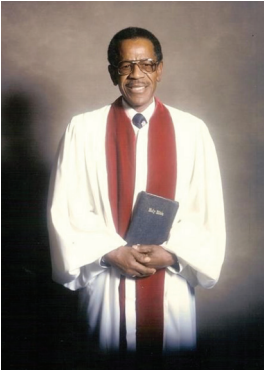
### **Ernest R. Powell (1917-2004)**

Mr. Ernest Powell was a prolific contributor to the town history of Westfield. After serving in the U.S. Navy during WWII, Ernest was employed by the Westfield Post Office for 38 years. He was a valuable repository of African American History, often called upon to give talks on this subject, and was a respected member and contributor to the Westfield Historical Society and the Westfield Negro History Club. Mr. Powell was a dedicated member of the Bethel Baptist Church and the Elks Centennial Lodge 400, serving in many positions in both organizations. As a result of Mr. Powell's 50 years of service to the Westfield YMCA, including heading the Y's Christmas Tree Drive for many years, he was awarded the National YMCA Service Award. A pavilion at the YMCA Camp Speers-Eljabar in Dingman's Ferry, PA is named in his honor. Because of his deep involvement, vast knowledge, and continuous promotion of African American History in our community, he can truly be called the Father of African American History in Westfield.

### **Joyce Allen Pretlow**

A life-long resident of Westfield, Joyce Pretlow has served the community of Westfield in various capacities. Joyce is currently a trustee of the Westfield Community Center and was previously the President of the Board of Directors with a total service of over 40 years to the Center. She is a member of the Westfield Historical Society and was a member of the Westfield 300 Committee African American History subcommittee (2020), which created this walking tour and history booklet. Joyce is a long-time member of Bethel Baptist Church.

## Notable African American Community Members



### **Reverend Leon Randall (1928-2010)**

Rev. Leon Randall was a ubiquitous presence in Westfield since transferring from St. Thomas A.M.E. Church in Somerville, NJ to St. Luke's A.M.E. Zion Church in Westfield in 1993. Rev. Randall was deeply and richly involved in town activities in addition to his dedicated service as Pastor to St. Luke's. He served as President of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Westfield for 15 years and was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Westfield Community Center and Westfield Senior Citizens Housing. In addition, Rev. Randall was the Co-Chair of the Paul Robeson Centennial Celebration in Westfield in 1998. Rev. Randall was deeply admired and

respected in Westfield as is his wife, Mrs. Rosa Randall.

### **Rosa Randall**

Born in South Carolina in 1929 and moving north to New Jersey in 1944, Mrs. Rosa Randall has been a part of the Westfield community since 1993. That year, Mrs. Randall and Rev. Leon Randall moved to his pastorate of St. Luke's AME Zion Church on Downer Street. Mrs. Randall immersed herself in St. Luke's choir and missionary ministry, as well as its beautification committee. She has been a dedicated member of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Association of Westfield for these many years and, blessed with the gift of a voice that can match any occasion, Mrs. Randall lifts our community up as the head of music for all of the Association's events. Her motto in life has been: "may the works that I do speak for me."

### **Tony Tiller**

Anthony "Tony" Tiller, born in Westfield, began his service working for the Westfield Public Works Dept. when he volunteered for the Westfield Fire Dept. in 1993. He was brought into the WFD in a paid position in 1997. He quickly rose through the ranks and was selected as the Chief of the WFD in 2019 -- a remarkable journey completed in 22 years! Chief Tiller retired in 2022 after 26 years of exemplary service to the town of Westfield.

### **Mary Withers**

Mary Withers, a long-term citizen of Westfield, is a founder and charter member of the Westfield Neighborhood Council (WNC) established in 1967. Since its inception, Mary has served in various capacities and is presently a member of the Board of Directors. Mary is also a member of the Westfield Historical Society. Mary's presence in the community is also well established as a caterer specializing in Southern foods. She is the former owner of Blackberrys Catering in Plainfield, NJ. Mary's voice is often heard in advocacy for her neighborhood and community.

## Westfield Negro History Club – 1933

The Westfield Negro History Club was organized on February 9, 1933 by six conscientious young men and women who were interested in their heritage and what effects it had in the development of this great nation, and to involve themselves in the welfare of the community.

The objectives of the club were: “to study, analyze and show Negro History in its true form as Negro Americans; to introduce Negro History into the school curriculum; serve the community by helping the ill, underprivileged and distressed; to work toward improving race relations through community involvement and education.”

Over the years the club did just what it set forth to accomplish by doing worthy deeds, by extending scholarships to deserving young men and women to encourage them in furthering their education, by showing the beauty of the African American community through the Arts, and by hosting various programs and participating in panel discussions.

Part of the Westfield Negro History Club mission statement:

*We as Negro Americans should work together as a common cause to enlighten the public and the community in the many contributions Negroes have made to society. Now as new avenues are our goal, old avenues still exist which is why we as Americans and the Westfield Negro History Club can strive to undo the turbulence of prejudice.*

## Concerned African American Parents (CAAP) 1990-2000

In early 1990 a group of over seventy citizens met at the Westfield Community Center (WCC) to talk about the situation with Black students in the Westfield Public School District. Conversations between WCC Board President Carlisle, who was the director of the WCC’s After-School Youth Program, and Donnell Carr, a member of the WCC’s Board of Directors, concerning reports of unfair, race-based discipline at Westfield High School prompted the meeting of the community members. Two high school students - one Black and one White – had been in a fight that resulted in their suspensions - the White student for two days, and the Black student for four days. The meeting to discuss this perceived injustice resulted in the formation of CAAP. The initial elected CAAP officers were: Noel Brown, President; Donna Sotolongo, Vice-President; Beverly Grant, Secretary, and Donnell Carr, Treasurer. Linda Stith and Cynthia Barr were appointed Special Committee Chairpersons and President Carlisle was appointed Senior Advisor to the organization.

A list of grievances and proposals was submitted to the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mark Smith, who proved to be not just a great resource, but a great partner. CAAP’s mission was to: serve as an advocate/ombudsman for Black parents; promote performance achievement through activities and programs (mentoring, recognition, etc.); improve community and school relations (appoint school liaisons); communicate more broadly the specific needs and problems of minority students; encourage parental involvement; and sponsor events/forums addressing CAAP’s concerns. Specifically, CAAP sought to address: the over-classification of Black students in Special Education or Basic Skills classes; the under-inclusion of Black students in advanced programs; performance gaps in standardized testing; “instructional grouping”; discipline; parental participation in school activities; scholarships and awards for achievement; and minority teacher/staff recruitment. CAAP persevered for ten years resulting in major achievements and improvements for Black students in the Westfield public schools.

## Black Excellence in Westfield Athletic History

Westfield High School is New Jersey’s most decorated high school in team sports in the last 100 years. It has earned this honor because of the many outstanding male and female athletes who have worn the blue and white. Westfield High School’s Black students have been all-state, all-district, and conference performers in all the sports in which they have participated. Especially noteworthy have been the football, basketball, baseball, softball, track, and cross-country athletes. The Black athletes listed below, some of whom participated in sports that were outside of the school system, will be joined by many more in the future.

Trustee Ron Allen	Football, Basketball.....	1979
Floyd Beane	Football.....	1942
Adam Bergo	Football, Track.....	2002
Kenny Blackwell	Football, Track.....	1973
Russell “Boo” Bowers	Basketball .....	1977
Rudy Brown	Football.....	1965
Kent Burke	Football.....	1991
Jimmy “Nurmi” Byrd	Basketball, Track.....	1928
Chris Campbell	Wrestling.....	1973
Coach Stu Carey	Basketball, Baseball	
Andrew Cary	Football, Track.....	1987
Jan Coccoziello	Football, Basketball, Baseball.....	2004
David Coleman	Cross Country, Track .....	1962
Jay Cook	Football, Basketball, Baseball.....	2002
Keith Davis	Football, Track.....	1973
Tamecka Dixon	Basketball .....	1993
Ashley Edwards	Track .....	2011
Lee Gallman	Football, Track.....	1989
Ron Holmes	Football, Wrestling, Track.....	1966
Frank Jackson	Football, Wrestling .....	1970
Alexis Jemal	Fencing .....	1999
Ricardo Johnson	Football, Wrestling, Track.....	2009
Willie Johnson	Football, Track.....	2010
Erwyn Lyght	Football.....	1995
Cyndil Matthew	Softball, Volleyball, Basketball .....	2009
Kevin “Spud” Monroe	Basketball .....	1977
Ed “Nicky” Morton	Football, Track.....	1972
Wellington “Ducky” Ross	Track .....	1935
Tony Tiller	Football, Track.....	1986
Lamont Turner	Football, Basketball, Baseball.....	1999
Jim Turpin	Football, Basketball, Baseball.....	1942
Marcie Williams	Soccer, Basketball.....	1988
Harold “Butch” Woolfolk	Football, Track.....	1978



## LIST OF RESOURCES

- African American History in Westfield Walking Tour*, available at:  
[www.theclio.com/tour/1585](http://www.theclio.com/tour/1585) or on “The Clio” mobile application downloadable from your app store.
- African American History Project, [www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp](http://www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp) (resources and links to documents, oral histories, exhibit boards, and more).
- Before it was a Park it was a Neighborhood*, documentary short,  
<https://youtube.com/@mlkwestfield>.
- Black Professional Zone*, documentary short by Isaiah Anderson,  
<https://youtube.com/@mlkwestfield>.
- Brown, Lloyd L., *The Young Paul Robeson: On My Journey Now* (Westview Press 1997).
- Colonial Westfield Past and Present*, compiled under the auspices of the Westfield Tercentenary Committee, available as a pdf at:  
[www.digifind-it.com/westfield/home.php](http://www.digifind-it.com/westfield/home.php) (select: Colonial Westfield Past and Present). [Site No. 1]
- Cooley, Henry Scofield, *A Study of Slavery in New Jersey* (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1896). [Site No. 2]
- Hamilton, Henry C., *The Revolutionary Cemetery in Westfield, New Jersey*, (Westfield Bicentennial Committee 1975).
- Harlem Renaissance, Art of Black America* (The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1987).
- Hodges, Graham Russell, *Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial (sic) and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*.
- Honeyman, A. Van Doren, *History of Union County New Jersey, 1664-1923, Vol. II*, Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1923. [Site Nos. 1, 2, and 14]
- Hughes, Langston, *I, Too*, reprinted in *Crossing the Danger Water*.
- Johnson, James P., *Westfield From Settlement to Suburb, 1977*, available as a pdf at: [www.digifind-it.com/westfield/home.php](http://www.digifind-it.com/westfield/home.php) (select: Westfield from Settlement to Suburb). [Site No. 2]
- Levine, Jesse, *A Brief Overview of Slavery in Westfield*, Westfield Historical Society. [Site No. 2]
- Marrin, Richard B., *Runaways of Colonial New Jersey: indentured servants, slaves, deserters, and prisoners, 1720-1781*. [Site No. 2]
- Mullane, Deirdre, Editor, *Crossing the Danger Water; Four Hundred Years of African-American Writing*, (Doubleday 1993). [Langston Hughes Poem, I, Too, Site No. 10]
- Official Program, *Two Hundredth Anniversary of Settlement of Westfield*, 1920. [Site No. 1]
- Philhower, Charles A., *History of Town of Westfield, Union County, New Jersey* (Lewis Historical Publishing Co. 1923), available online at:  
[www.digifind-it.com/westfield/home.php](http://www.digifind-it.com/westfield/home.php) (select: History of Town Westfield (Charles Philhower). [Site Nos. 1 and 2]

## LIST OF RESOURCES (continued)

- Plinton, Hollis O., Interview, Oral History Project for the Westfield Historical Society and the Westfield Memorial Library (April 13, 1978), audio and transcript versions available at: [www.digifind-it.com/westfield/interviews.php](http://www.digifind-it.com/westfield/interviews.php) (select: Hollis O. Plinton from list). [Site No. 6]
- Presbyterian Church in Westfield, Church Cemetery Committee.
- The Reeve History and Cultural Resource Center, *A Brief History of Slavery in Westfield*. [Site No. 2]
- Richmond's Directory, 1917, list of African American residents of Westfield (including addresses and occupations), Westfield Historical Society Archives. See African American History Project resources at [www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp](http://www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp).
- Robeson, Jr., Paul, *The Undiscovered Paul Robeson*.
- Robeson, Susan, *The Whole World in His Hands, A Pictorial Biography of Paul Robeson* (Citadel Press 1981).
- Safian, Gail, *Slavery in New Jersey: A Troubled History*, Exhibit Monograph, Durand-Hedden House & Garden Association, Inc. in consultation with South Orange Maplewood Community Coalition on Race, available at: [www.durandhedden.org/docs/juneteenth-exhibit.pdf](http://www.durandhedden.org/docs/juneteenth-exhibit.pdf).
- Smith, Geneva, "Legislating Slavery in New Jersey," *Princeton & Slavery Project*, available at: [slavery.princeton.edu/stories/legislating-slavery-in-new-jersey](http://slavery.princeton.edu/stories/legislating-slavery-in-new-jersey). [Site Nos. 1, 14, and 15]
- "Survival and Success of Westfield Family Revealed in Oral History Project," *Westfield Historical Society Newsletter*, February - March 1993, pgs. 1-2.
- Thirteen.org: *Slavery and the Making of America*.
- Town of Westfield, History at: [www.westfieldnj.gov/300history](http://www.westfieldnj.gov/300history).
- The Undiscovered Paul Robeson, An Artist's Journey, 1898-1938*, (John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2001).
- Washington, Ethel, *Union County Black Americans* (Arcadia Publishing, 2004). [Site No. 2]
- Wikipedia, *Grand Army of the Republic and History of Slavery in New Jersey and Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes*.
- Wolinetz, Gary K., "When Slavery Wasn't a Dirty Word in New Jersey," *New Jersey Lawyer*, Feb. 15, 1999.
- Westfield 1830 Census. [Site No. 2]
- Westfield 300 African American History Committee Timeline: [time.graphics/line/399475](http://time.graphics/line/399475).
- Westfield Historical Society; [www.westfieldhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.westfieldhistoricalsociety.org).
- Westfield Memorial Library Local History page: [www.digifind-it.com/westfield/home.php](http://www.digifind-it.com/westfield/home.php).



Juneteenth Celebration tour of African American History in Westfield, 2023.

Photo by Tyler L. Brown



**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Association of Westfield (est. 1987)**

[www.mlkwestfield.org](http://www.mlkwestfield.org)

African American History Project —[www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp](http://www.mlkwestfield.org/aahp)

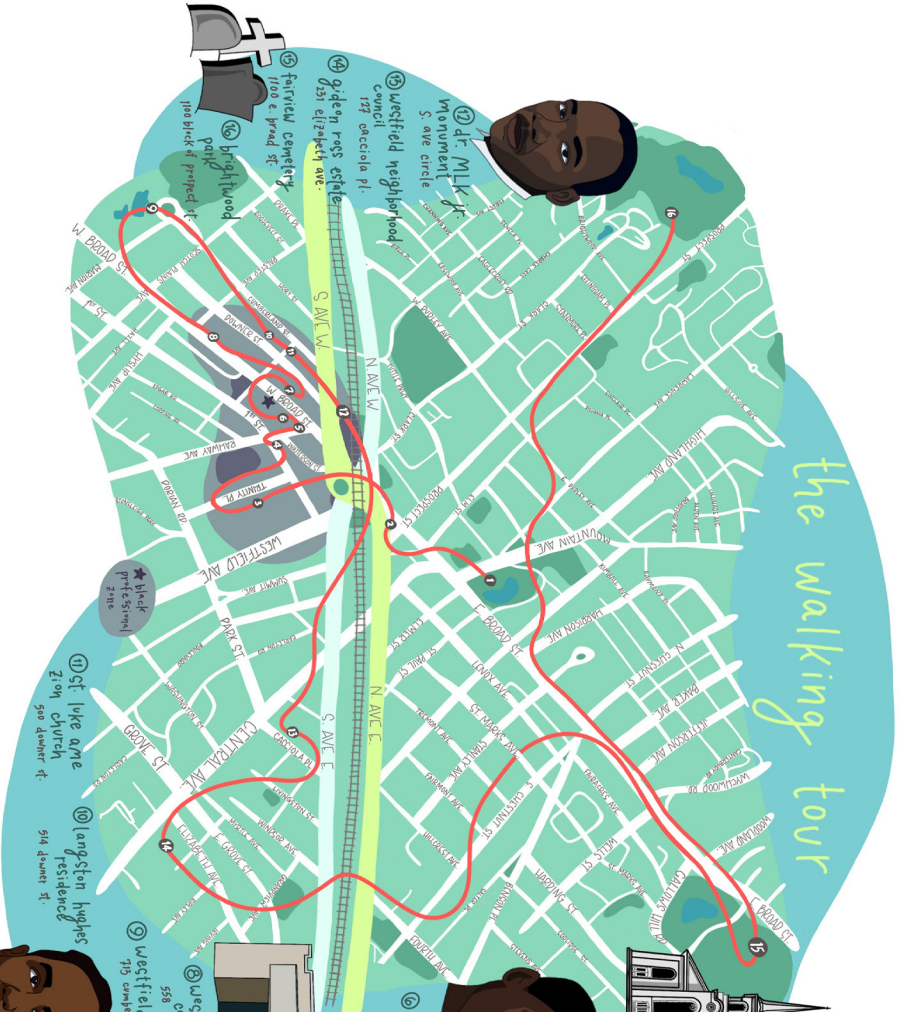
[MLKWestfield@gmail.com](mailto:MLKWestfield@gmail.com)

<https://youtube.com/@mlkwestfield>

**PRINTING, LAYOUT AND DESIGN**

Grandstand Design  
[www.grandstanddesign.com](http://www.grandstanddesign.com)

# the walking tour



1 burial grounds of the Presbyterian church  
1406 Franklin ave

2 slave auction site  
downtown westfield



3 Bethel Baptist church  
599 Trinity pl

4 Robeson memorial  
corner of western + valley

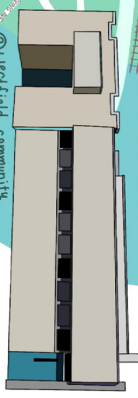


5 Zora neale Hurston residence  
445 W Broad St.



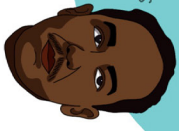
6 Plinton funeral home  
411 W Broad St.

7 Elks central lodge 400  
444 W Broad St.



8 Westfield community center  
558 W Broad St.

9 Westfield memorial pool  
715 Sutherland St.



10 Langston Hughes residence  
914 Duane St.

11 St. Luke A.M.E. Zion Church  
500 Duane St.



black professional zone

12 Brightwood park  
the block of president



13 Fairview Cemetery  
1100 E Broad St.

14 Gideon Ross estate  
631 Elizabeth ave.

15 Westfield neighborhood  
157 Cascade Pl.

16 Dr. MLK Jr. Monument  
S. ave circle

