

A Publication of the West Virginia Humanities Council

## “Out the door and into the street” Making one's way in revolutionary Tehran

*Having been expelled from her teaching job at the University of Tehran in 1981, Azar Nafisi began reading western literature with a select group of young women in her home. There they relaxed among themselves, conversing freely and wearing colorful attire, but outside it was another matter. In this excerpt from her bestselling book, Reading Lolita in Tehran, Nafisi describes the transition that took place as her students left the haven of her living room and entered the public sphere.*

**L**e'ts imagine one of the girls, say Sanaz, leaving my house and let us follow her from there to her final destination. She says her goodbyes and puts on her black robe and scarf over her orange shirt and jeans, coiling her scarf around her neck to cover her huge gold earrings. She directs wayward strands of hair under the scarf, puts her notes into her large bag, straps it on over her shoulder and walks out into the hall. She pauses a moment on top of the stairs to put on thin lacy black gloves to hide her nail polish.

We follow Sanaz down the stairs, out the door and into the street. You might notice that her gait and her gestures have changed. It is in her best interest not to be seen, not be heard or noticed. She doesn't walk upright, but bends her head towards the ground and doesn't look at passersby. She walks quickly and with a sense of determination. The streets of Tehran and other Iranian cities are patrolled by militia, who ride in white Toyota patrols, four gun-carrying men and women, sometimes followed by a minibus. They are called the Blood of God. They patrol the streets to make sure that women like Sanaz wear their veils properly, do not wear makeup, do not walk in public with men who are not their fathers, brothers or husbands. She will pass slogans on the walls, quotations from Khomeini and a group called the Party of God: MEN WHO WEAR TIES ARE U.S. LACKEYS. VEILING IS A WOMAN'S PROTECTION. Beside the slogan is a charcoal drawing of a woman: her face is featureless and framed by a dark chador. MY SISTER, GUARD YOUR VEIL. MY BROTHER, GUARD YOUR EYES.

If she gets on a bus, the seating is segregated. She must enter through the rear door and sit in the back seats, allocated to women. Yet in taxis, which accept as many as five passengers, men and women are squeezed together like sardines, as the saying goes, and the same goes with minibuses, where so many of my students complain of being harassed by bearded and God-fearing men.

You might well ask, What is Sanaz thinking as she walks the streets of Tehran? How much does this experience affect her? Most probably, she tries

*Continued on page 3*



Azar Nafisi's October 26 McCreight Lecture in the Humanities kicks off the **2017 West Virginia Book Festival**, which continues October 27-28 in Charleston. The festival features nationally known authors and respected writers from the Mountain State. Exhibitors and a Word Play area for children are set up in the Festival Marketplace. The Humanities Council is a charter presenter of the Book Festival along with the Kanawha County Public Library, Library Foundation of Kanawha County, and the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*. Visit [wvbookfestival.org](http://wvbookfestival.org).

Fall  
2017

1  
McCreight  
Lecture

4  
What's New

8

Folklife  
Apprenticeships



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Open to the public.

# Is hillbilly hot, or what?

I couldn't help but notice *The Glass Castle* and *Hillbilly Elegy* battling it out for first and second place on the *New York Times* bestseller list at the end of summer, with the newspaper also giving the new *Logan Lucky* movie a Sunday section front.

*The Glass Castle* and *Hillbilly Elegy* are both Appalachian memoirs, and both really big books. *Glass Castle* spent more than five years on the bestseller list a decade ago, and is back on top with the recent release of the movie version of the book. Author Jeannette Walls grew up partly in McDowell County, and the *Glass Castle* movie was partly filmed there. J. D. Vance of *Hillbilly Elegy* is rooted in Appalachian Kentucky and Ohio, from a dysfunctional family but whipped into shape by the Marine Corps and Yale University. Now he's begun his second year on the bestseller list.

(Both Walls and Vance are veterans of the West Virginia Book Festival, by the way, brought to you in part by the Humanities Council. Join us for this year's festival October 27-28 at the Charleston Civic Center.)

*Castle* and *Elegy* will wear you out on earnestness, making *Logan* my favorite of the current hillbilly media darlings. The *Times* called it "ridiculously entertaining," and that about captures it. *Logan Lucky* is a wildly funny heist movie modeled on *Ocean's Eleven* – and *Twelve*, and *Thirteen* – and by the same producer. The reviewer also called it a Robin Hood story, and that fits, too. The hard-luck Logans of Boone County, West Virginia, figure to literally suck all the money out of Charlotte Motor Speedway on the biggest race day of the year. And without spoiling it for you, let's just say the hillbillies get the best of their betters.

So how does the West Virginia portrayal come out? Well, to my ear the accents are a little off, more generically Southern than Appalachian, and the topography is not quite right, the mountains a little too mountain-y. I guessed western North Carolina, but it turns out that *Logan Lucky* was mostly filmed in north Georgia.

But those are minor quibbles for a movie that treats its zany mountaineers with overall warm respect. And for bonus points, the *Times* guy throws in his opinion that West Virginia is "a state that, in the real world, punches far above its demographic weight in partisan and symbolic importance."

I'm not sure what that means, exactly, but guess we'll take it, huh?

— Ken Sullivan

*People & Mountains* is published three times a year by the West Virginia Humanities Council.

A state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the West Virginia Humanities Council serves West Virginia through grants and direct programs in the humanities.

We welcome letters, comments, and financial contributions. Please address correspondence to West Virginia Humanities Council, 1310 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, WV 25301 or sonis@wvhumanities.org.

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The Humanities Council invites nominations to its board. Nominees should be West Virginia residents with an interest in the humanities and willing to serve without monetary compensation. Please send the name, contact information and brief biographical details to wvhuman@wvhumanities.org.

*Continued from page 1*

to distance her mind as much as possible from her surroundings. Perhaps she is thinking of her brother, or of her distant boyfriend and the time when she will meet him in Turkey. Does she compare her own situation with her mother's when she was the same age? Is she angry that women of her mother's generation could walk the streets freely, enjoy the company of the opposite sex, join the police force, become pilots, live under laws that were among the most progressive in the world regarding women? Does she feel humiliated by the new laws, by the fact that after the revolution, the age of marriage was lowered from eighteen to nine, that stoning became once more the punishment for adultery and prostitution?

In the course of nearly two decades, the streets have been turned into a war zone, where young women who disobey the rules are hurled into patrol cars, taken to jail, flogged, fined, forced to wash the toilets and humiliated, and as soon as they leave, they go back and do the same thing. Is she aware, Sanaz, of her own power? Does she realize how dangerous she can be when her every stray gesture is a disturbance to public safety? Does she think how vulnerable the Revolutionary Guards are who for over eighteen years have patrolled the streets of Tehran

and have had to endure young women like herself, and those of other generations, walking, talking, showing a strand of hair just to remind them that they have not converted?

We have reached Sanaz's house, where we will leave her on her doorstep, perhaps to confront her brother on the other side and to think in her heart of her boyfriend.

These girls, my girls, had both a real history and a fabricated one. Although they came from very different backgrounds, the regime that ruled them had tried to make their personal identities and histories irrelevant. They were never free of the regime's definition of them as Muslim women.

Whoever we were—and it was not really important what religion we belonged to, whether we wished to wear the veil or not, whether we observed certain religious norms or not—we had become the figment of someone else's dreams. A stern ayatollah, a self-proclaimed philosopher-king, had come to rule our land. He had come in the name of a past, a past that, he claimed, had been stolen from him. And he now wanted to re-create us in the image of that illusory past. Was it any consolation, and did we even wish to remember, that what he did to us was what we allowed him to do?

—Azar Nafisi  
from *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, 2003

## The McCreight Lecture

Award-winning author Azar Nafisi, known for her bestseller *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, will present “The Humanities and the Future of Democracies” as the 2017 McCreight Lecture in the Humanities on Thursday, October 26, at 7:30 p.m. at the Culture Center in Charleston. The event is free and open to the public.

Born in Tehran as the daughter of the mayor, educated in Switzerland, with a Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma and a fellowship at Oxford, Nafisi was teaching literature at the University of Tehran just as the Iranian revolution was clamping down. She was dismissed from the university in 1981 for refusing to wear the mandatory Islamic veil in her classroom.

That experience was the basis for *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, which subsequently spent two years on the U.S. bestseller lists and was translated into 32 languages. Her most recent book, *The Republic of Imagination: America in Three Books*, uses the novels *Huckleberry Finn*, *Babbitt*, and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* to make a powerful case for the vital role of fiction in America today.

Nafisi was a professor of aesthetics, culture, and literature at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington. She has lived in the United States since 1997 and became a citizen in 2008.



Stanley Staniski



Michael Keller

The Humanities Council *History Alive* living history program educates audiences across the Mountain State at schools, senior centers, libraries and museums, among other locations. Our photo shows *History Alive*'s Doug Wood portraying frontiersman Gabriel Arthur at the recent "History Wednesdays" series at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in St. Albans.

February 1, 2018, is the deadline for proposals for new *History Alive* characters. Individuals interested in portraying historically significant people no longer living, from any period of history, are eligible for consideration. Presenters receive a stipend for each program they deliver. Application materials are available at [wvhumanities.org](http://wvhumanities.org) or by contacting Mark Payne at (304)346-8500 or [payne@wvhumanities.org](mailto:payne@wvhumanities.org). Successful applicants will join the *History Alive* roster beginning November 1, 2018.



## Teaching Black History

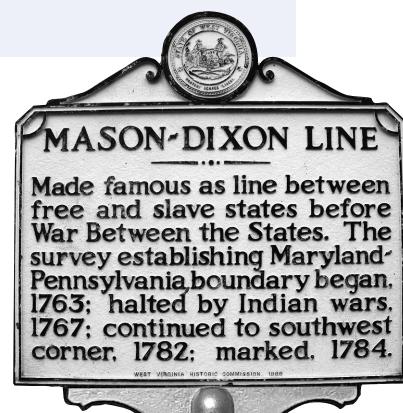
Professor Burnis R. Morris of Marshall University is the author of *Carter G. Woodson: History, the Black Press, and Public Relations*, to be published by the University Press of Mississippi in October. In the new book, Morris reveals how Woodson (left) popularized black history in the early decades of the 20th century through his skillful use of newspapers and public relations. Woodson, once a Fayette County coal miner, is remembered today as the Father of Black History.

Morris, the Carter G. Woodson Professor at Marshall University's W. Page Pitt School of Journalism, researched his book with the support of a 2011 Humanities Council Fellowship. The Council also supported a teacher institute conducted by Professor Morris this past summer, training local educators to teach black history and to make it relevant to their students.

**West Virginia Scores Big with NEH!** The National Endowment for the Humanities recently announced West Virginia grants totaling nearly a half million dollars for the following projects: WVU's National Digital Newspaper Program for the digitization of 100,000 pages of West Virginia newspapers dating from 1836 to 1929, \$210,394; the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum in Matewan for the Battle of Blair Mountain Centennial Project, \$30,000; Shepherd University for a national teacher institute for 25 schoolteachers to explore Appalachian culture and history through literature, music, and theater, \$145,905; Marshall University for the West Virginia Digital Heritage Trails Project to further develop the Clio app providing GPS-guided information on historical and cultural landmarks, \$60,000.

## Mason-Dixon Celebration

In 1765, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon began surveying their famous line separating Pennsylvania from Maryland and (West) Virginia. By 1767 they had surveyed 233 miles and reached present Monongalia County. With the support of a Humanities Council grant, the Dunkard Creek Watershed Association will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Mason-Dixon Line on October 13-15. The three-day event includes living-history interpreters who will portray survey workers and the Indians who visited and helped guide the survey. The celebration takes place at the Mason-Dixon Historical Park in Core. Visit [md250.exploretheline.com](http://md250.exploretheline.com).



The Humanities Council Holiday Open House is Friday, December 8, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House, 1310 Kanawha Boulevard, E., Charleston. Join us for some holiday cheer!

## Briefs

### Prize-Winning Podcast Continues

The Humanities Council and West Virginia Public Broadcasting are adding a four-part series to the award-winning podcast *Us & Them*, thanks to special funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The NEH *Humanities and the Legacy of Race and Ethnicity* initiative supports programs addressing social, economic, cultural, and racial issues that divide communities.

Producer Trey Kay has completed the first episode under the new initiative. "Deanna, Tymel, and Amarie" profiles anti-violence activist Deanna McKinney of Charleston's West Side.

Subsequent podcasts will focus on the Charleston Police Department's work toward racial

sensitivity training and community relations, and the 2016 shooting death on Charleston's East End of 15-year-old James Means. *Us & Them* podcasts are available at [wvpublic.org](http://wvpublic.org) and [usandthepodcast.com](http://usandthepodcast.com).

We remember Humanities Council board member Susan Landis who died July 14 in Beckley. Susan was executive director of the Beckley Area Foundation and an avid advocate of the arts and humanities in West Virginia and nationally. We will miss the guidance and devotion she brought to our organization.



### The Practice of Preaching

The Humanities Council will fund the keynote speech by Marc Saperstein at the upcoming conference, "Sermon: Text and Performance," sponsored by Marshall University's Center for Sermon Studies. The conference will bring together scholars and clergy of various faiths to discuss the history, theory, and practice of preaching.

Professor Saperstein, a retired rabbi, is a scholar of Jewish history and the Jewish preaching tradition. His keynote address, "Jewish Pulpit Responses to Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder, 1933-1945," will take place at 7:00 p.m. on October 19 in Smith Hall on the Marshall campus. Contact Robert Ellison at [ellisonr@marshall.edu](mailto:ellisonr@marshall.edu) or visit [marshall.edu/sermon\\_conference](http://marshall.edu/sermon_conference).

The Board of Directors elected two new members at its summer meeting in Wheeling: Laurie Erickson of Morgantown chairs the Erickson Foundation, and Megan Tarbett is director of the Putnam County Library. Welcome! We thank departing board member Frances Hensley for her many years of service.

The West Virginia Folklife Program recently partnered with McArts to bring activist songwriter Elaine Purkey to Kimball for a concert at Ya'sou Greek Restaurant. Purkey wrote songs for the 1989 Pittston Coal Strike and the Ravenswood Aluminum lockout (1990-92), and is portrayed in the 2014 film *Moving Mountains*. She teaches singing to children at the Big Ugly Community Center in Lincoln County.

The Humanities Texas traveling exhibit *Shakespeare* visits Hardy County this fall thanks to a Humanities Council grant. It is on display at East Hardy High School in Baker from now through October 6. The museum-quality exhibit features Shakespeare's First Folio—the first printed collection of his plays—and the star-crossed lovers Romeo and Juliet among its topics.

The Storer Sesquicentennial culminates October 6-8 when Harpers Ferry National Historical Park commemorates the 1867 founding of Storer College. The three-day conference includes keynote speeches, musical and dramatic presentations, and family activities. Storer was West Virginia's first black college. Contact [Todd\\_Bolton@nps.gov](mailto:Todd_Bolton@nps.gov).

On September 30, the American Folklife Center will screen *Inside Appalachia: James Shaffer, Charleston Broom & Mop Company*, as part of its ethnographic film event at the Library of Congress. A West Virginia Folklife Program production, the documentary tells the story of the last handmade-commercial-broom maker in West Virginia.

The Robert C. Byrd: Senator, Statesman, West Virginian traveling exhibit arrives at the Culture Center in Charleston on November 17 to honor the 100th anniversary of Byrd's birth. Supported by a Humanities Council grant, the exhibit was designed by the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education at Shepherd University and features digital representations of more than 100 documents and photographs from its archives.

## Grant Categories

The Humanities Council welcomes applications in the following grant categories.

**Major Grants** (\$20,000 maximum) support major humanities projects, symposiums, conferences, exhibits, lectures.

**Due:** Feb. 1, Sept. 1

**Minigrants** (\$1,500 maximum) support small projects, single events, or planning and consultation.

**Due:** \*Oct. 1, Feb. 1, April 1, June 1

**Fellowships** (\$2,500) support research and writing projects by humanities faculty and independent scholars.

**Due:** Feb. 1

**Media Grants** (\$20,000 maximum) support projects intended to produce audio or video products, websites, or a newspaper series.

**Due:** Sept. 1

**Publication Grants** (\$20,000 maximum) are available to nonprofit presses and academic presses, and support the production phase of a completed manuscript.

**Due:** Sept. 1

**Teacher Institute Grants** (\$25,000 maximum) are available to colleges and universities, and the state Department of Education, and support summer seminars for secondary and elementary teachers.

**Due:** Sept. 1

\* Approaching Deadline!



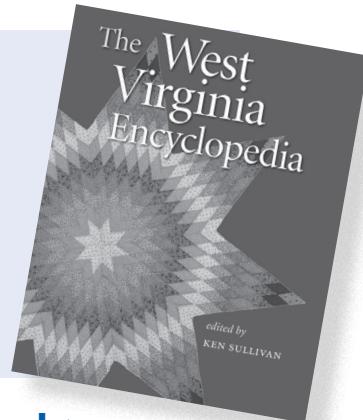
## Viet Vets Remember

This month, West Virginia Public Broadcasting premieres *Vietnam: West Virginians Remember*, which was funded in part by the Humanities Council. The one-hour documentary, a companion to the Ken Burns PBS series *The Vietnam War*, was broadcast before the Burns September 17 opening segment. *West Virginians Remember* may be seen again on September 24 at 7:00 p.m., with a later episode of the Burns series.

*Vietnam: West Virginians Remember*, produced by Suzanne Higgins, profiles five combat servicemen approximately 50 years after their service, examining their lives before the war, chronicling their experiences of combat, and allowing them to reflect on the impact of those experiences. The film explores the reasons why more than 36,000 West Virginians served in Vietnam, the political environment of the time, and public opinion of the war.

Local screenings of the Vietnam special are set for various locations across West Virginia including the WVU Mountainlair Gluck Theatre on September 27 at 4:00 p.m., the Brooke County Library on September 29 at noon, and the Ohio County Public Library on November 10 at 7:00 p.m. For more information visit [wvpublic.org/vietnamwv](http://wvpublic.org/vietnamwv).

**Give the gift of West Virginia!** *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, now in its second printing, and *West Virginia: A Film History*, the acclaimed public television series, are perfect holiday gifts for West Virginians—whether they live in the Mountain State or beyond our borders. We stand ready to take your order at (304)346-8500 or at [www.wvhumanities.org](http://www.wvhumanities.org) and [www.wvencyclopedia.org](http://www.wvencyclopedia.org). The 927-page hardbound encyclopedia sells for \$44.95 and the two-DVD film history for \$29.95. Order yours today!



Victoria Paul

Ronni Lundy (left) and Emily Hilliard.

## Ronni Lundy Returns

With support from a Humanities Council grant, Appalachian food writer Ronni Lundy will visit the Northern Panhandle. Lundy was featured in October 2016 at the Council's farm-to-table fundraiser at the J. Q. Dickinson Salt-Works in Malden. This fall, she will deliver two lectures on her book *Victuals: An Appalachian Journey, With*

*Recipes*. *Victuals* was the James Beard Foundation's 2017 Book of the Year, and also won in the Beard Foundation's American Cooking cookbook category. (And Snuffy Smith had it right, the proper pronunciation is "vittles.")

Lundy, a founder of the Southern Foodways Alliance, will explain how the culture and folkways of a community may be understood through the customs of food. She will appear November 7 at noon at the Ohio County Public Library, followed by a November 8 program at 5:30 at the Sandscrest Conference and Retreat Center near Wheeling. For those with reservations, dinner will be provided at Sandscrest from recipes featured in the book. Contact Cheryl Harshman at [cherylrharshman@gmail.com](mailto:cherylrharshman@gmail.com) or at (304)280-3030.

## Donations April 1 - July 31, 2017

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**The Humanities Council continues** the restoration of the 1836 MacFarland-Hubbard House. We recently completed important upgrades to the property, including new copper water dams on the gutters, repairs to the roof, rehabilitation of eight historic wooden casement windows, and the repainting of the 180-year-old brick exterior. Six aging HVAC units were also replaced with more energy-efficient equipment. Grants from the State Historic Preservation Office and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts, plus much appreciated private contributions, supplemented the cost of these repairs. Thank you!

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The West Virginia Humanities Council gratefully acknowledges support from the National Endowment for the Humanities; the Office of the West Virginia Secretary of Education and the Arts; and foundations, corporations, and individuals throughout the Mountain State and beyond.

## Folklife Apprenticeships

This fall, the West Virginia Folklife Program at the Humanities Council is launching the Folklife Apprenticeship Program, supported in part by an Art Works grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The program offers funding up to \$3,000 for West Virginia master traditional artists or tradition bearers to work with qualified apprentices intensely for one year. These apprenticeships, offered in traditional music, dance, craft, foodways, storytelling, and more—in any cultural community in the state—are meant to encourage the transmission of techniques and artistry, with associated histories and traditions.

The West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program will support up to five pairs of master artists and their apprentices, culminating in a final public showcase in Charleston in September 2018. Master-apprentice pairs will also hold a public presentation in their home communities.

"We are thrilled to offer this new program that will strengthen the transmission of cultural heritage traditions between existing masters," says state folklorist Emily Hilliard. The new initiative effectively resumes the work of a similar program

generations in communities across the state, inspire new practitioners, and recognize says state folklorist Emily Hilliard. The new initiative effectively resumes the work of a run by folklorist Gerry Milnes at the Augusta Heritage Center from 1989 to 2011. Milnes is a member of the Humanities Council board of directors and is a West Virginia Folklife advisor.

For 14 years, Virginia Folklife Program director Jon Lohman has operated an apprenticeship program through the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. He speaks highly of the role apprenticeships play in sustaining traditional art forms and expressions: "In my opinion, apprenticeships are the most effective means we have to help ensure that our living folkways not only survive but thrive."

Applications and further information about the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program may be found at [wvhumanities.org/folklifeapprenticeships](http://wvhumanities.org/folklifeapprenticeships). Applications are due October 15. Contact Emily Hilliard at [hilliard@wvhumanities.org](mailto:hilliard@wvhumanities.org) or (304)346-8500 with any questions or for help with the application.

The West Virginia Folklife Program is dedicated to the documentation, preservation, presentation, and support of West Virginia's vibrant cultural heritage and living traditions.



Dave Bing's tool bucket