

## LEH Bright Lights Award Recipients 1985–2025

### Humanist of the Year

1985	Stephen Ambrose, PhD, historian, University of New Orleans
1986	Joe Gray Taylor, PhD, historian, McNeese State University
1987	Lewis P. Simpson, PhD, literary scholar, Louisiana State University
1988	Huel D. Perkins, PhD, educator, Louisiana State University
1989	Ernest Gaines, author, University of Southwestern Louisiana
1990	Patricia and Milton Rickels, PhD, educators, University of Southwestern Louisiana
1991	Earle Labor, PhD, literary scholar/editor, Centenary College
1992	Jessie Jean Poesch, PhD, art historian, Newcomb College of Tulane University
1993	Donald E. Stanford, PhD, literary scholar
1994	Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, PhD, historian, University of New Orleans
1995	(no awards due to shift in ceremony from December to March/April)
1996	Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., PhD, historian
1997	Richard Ford, author and literary scholar
1998	Peggy Whitman Preshaw, PhD, literary scholar, Louisiana State University
1999	Lawrence Powell, PhD, historian, Tulane University
2000	Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., historian, University of New Orleans
2001	Glenn Conrad, historian, University of Louisiana at Lafayette
2002	Jason Berry, independent scholar
2003	Beth Willinger, PhD, director, Newcomb College Center for Research on Women
2004	Douglas Brinkley, PhD, historian, University of New Orleans
2005	Carl Brasseaux, PhD, Director of the Center for Cultural and Eco-tourism at ULL
2006	Nick Spitzer, PhD, professor of folklore, University of New Orleans
2007	J. Richard Gruber, PhD, executive director, Ogden Museum of Southern Art
2008	Ellis Marsalis, Coca Cola endowed chair of Jazz Studies, University of New Orleans.
2009	Barry Ancelet, PhD, scholar, University of Louisiana at Lafayette
2010	Michael White, PhD, musician, Xavier University
2011	Dana Kress, PhD, scholar, Centenary College
2012	Patricia Brady, PhD, scholar, Loyola University
2013	William Pederson, PhD, historian, Louisiana State University at Shreveport
2014	Walter Isaacson, President and CEO of the Aspen Institute
2015	Cokie Roberts, historian and journalist
2016	Zachary Richard, singer-songwriter, poet, documentary film producer, cultural activist, and environmentalist
2017	William Joyce, author, illustrator, and pioneer in the digital and animation industry
2018	Leah Chase, chef, author, and advocate for the arts and humanities
2019	Darrell Bourque, poet and activist
2020	Terence Blanchard, composer, musician, educator
2021	John T. Scott (posthumous), artist, teacher, and visionary
2022	Ruby Bridges, author and activist
2023	Chef John Folse, culinary professional, food historian, and restaurateur
2024	Dickie Landry, musician, photographer, and visual artist
2025	Dr. Norman C. Francis, President Emeritus, Xavier University of Louisiana

### Lifetime Contribution to the Humanities

1992	Lindy Boggs
1997	Charles T. Beard, publisher, <i>Shreveport Journal</i> Sydney Besthoff, owner, K&B Drugstore and founder, Contemporary Arts Center J. Bennett Johnson, retired US Senator from Louisiana
1998	Steve Perry, Governor Mike Foster's Chief of Staff
2000	Minnie Lou Lynch, Oakdale

2001 Kenneth Holditch, literary scholar emeritus, University of New Orleans  
 2002 Michael P. Smith, photographer  
 2003 James Sefcik, director, Louisiana State Museum  
 2004 E. John Bullard, director of New Orleans Museum of Art  
 2005 Thomas Jaques, retired State Librarian  
 2006 Rosemary James, founder of Pirates Alley Faulkner Society, Faulkner Literary Festival and Double Dealer Redux Literary Journal  
 Joseph DeSalvo, Jr., founder of Pirates Alley Faulkner Society, Faulkner Literary Festival and Double Dealer Redux Literary Journal  
 2007 Susan Larson, Book Editor, New Orleans *Times-Picayune*  
 2008 Dr. Norman Francis, president, Xavier University  
 2009 Priscilla Lawrence, Executive Director, The Historic New Orleans Collection  
 2010 Gloria Fiero, PhD, Friends of the Humanities, University of Louisiana Lafayette  
 2011 Patricia Gay, Preservation Resource Center  
 2012 Glen Pitre, filmmaker  
 2013 Alfred Lemmon, PhD, Director of Williams Research Collection, The Historic New Orleans Collection  
 2014 Peggy Scott Laborde, film producer and journalist  
 2015 Susan Roach, scholar  
 2016 Beth Courtney, President of Louisiana Public Broadcasting  
 2017 Susan Tucker, author, editor, and archivist  
 2018 Mary Lou Christovich, preservationist, author, and philanthropist  
 Ben Sandmel, musician, author, and oral historian  
 2019 Hiram "Pete" Gregory, PhD, Northwestern State University  
 2020 Bertney and Linda Langley, Coushatta Tribal Archives  
 Warren Perrin, founder, Acadian Heritage and Culture Foundation  
 2021 Frank de Caro (posthumous), nationally recognized folklorist  
 2022 Dr. Joyce Marie Jackson and Kalamu ya Salaam  
 2023 Marianne Fisher-Giorlando, scholar and activist  
 2024 Freddi Williams Evans, author and scholar  
 2025 Jim Davis, Executive Director of the Louisiana Center for the Book and the Louisiana Book Festival

### Chair's Award for Institutional Support

1992 James R. Moffett, Freeport McMoRan  
 1993 *Times Picayune* Publishing Corporation  
 Beth Courtney, Louisiana Public Broadcasting,  
 1994 Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
 Louisiana State Museum  
 1995 (no awards due to shift in ceremony from December to March/April)  
 1996 Tennessee Williams/New Orleans Literary Festival  
 University of Southwestern Louisiana  
 1997 WYES-Channel 12  
 1998 Willis-Knighton Health System  
 1999 The Historic New Orleans Collection  
 2000 East Baton Rouge Parish Library  
 Loyola University of New Orleans  
 2001 Patrick F. Taylor Foundation  
 2002 Hibernia National Bank  
 2003 Governor Murphy J. Foster  
 Mark Drennen-Division of Administration  
 2004 Jones Walker Law Firm  
 2005 Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge  
 2006 Bruce Cole, PhD, National Endowment for the Humanities Chairman  
 2007 Louisiana State University in Shreveport  
 2008 Community Foundation of Shreveport-Bossier  
 2009 Friends of the Humanities Lafayette  
 2010 Phyllis Taylor, Patrick F. Taylor Foundation  
 2011 The Helis Foundation  
 2012 Center for Louisiana Studies, Lafayette  
 2013 Shell Oil Company

2014 The Zemurray Foundation  
 2015 BHP Billiton  
 2016 Baptist Community Ministries (BCM)  
 2017 The Carolyn W. And Charles T. Beard Family Foundation  
 W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
 2018 Rosemary and Randy Ewing  
 2019 Dorothy Hanna & Rod and Mattie Olson  
 2020 Walton Family Foundation  
 2021 Entergy Charitable Foundation  
 2022 Union Pacific Foundation  
 2023 Patrick F. Taylor Foundation  
 2024 Charles Lamar Family Foundation  
 2025 Willie Landry Mount

## Humanities Book Award

1998 *Rising Tide*, John Barry  
 1999 *Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana*, edited by Carl Lindhal, Maida Owens, and C. Renee Harvison  
*Louisiana Sojourns: Travelers' Tales and Literary Journeys*, edited by Frank de Caro, Rosan Jordan  
  
 2000 *Fortune and Misery: Sallie Rhett Roman of New Orleans: A Biographical Portrait and Selected Fiction (1891-1920)*, Nancy Dixon  
*Zydeco!*, photographs by Rick Olivier and text by Ben Sandmel  
 2001 *Marie Adrien Persac, Louisiana Artist*, contributors H. Parrott Bacot, et.al  
 2002 *Audubon's Watch*, John Gregory Brown  
 2003 *Historic Buildings of the French Quarter*, Lloyd Vogt  
*Plantations by the River*, Marcel Boyer and Jay Edwards  
 2004 *Buildings of Louisiana*, Karen Kingsley  
*Charting Louisiana: 500 Years of Maps*, Alfred E. Lemmon, John T. Magill and Jason Wiese  
 2005 *One Big Self, Prisoners of Louisiana*, Deborah Luster  
 2006 *Missing New Orleans*, Phillip Collier, Rick Gruber, Mary Beth Romig, and Jim Rapier  
*Why New Orleans Matters*, Tom Piazza  
 2007 *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, Douglas Brinkley  
*Breach of Faith: Hurricane Katrina and the Near Death of a Great American City*, Jed Horne  
*Geographies of New Orleans: Urban Fabrics Before the Storm*, Richard Campanella  
 2008 *One Drop: My Father's Hidden Life--A Story of Race and Family Secrets*, Bliss Broyard  
 2009 *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*, Ned Sublette  
 2010 *Bienville's Dilemma*, Richard Campanella  
 2011 *Dictionary of Louisiana French: As Spoken in Cajun, Creole, and American Indian Communities*, edited by Albert Valdman, PhD, and Kevin Rottet, PhD  
 2012 *Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans*, Freddi Williams Evans  
 2013 *The Accidental City*, by Lawrence Powell, PhD  
*Ernie K-Doe: The R&B Emperor of New Orleans*, Ben Sandmel  
 2014 *A Company Man*, by Marc Antoine-Caillet, edited by Erin M. Greenwald, PhD  
*Livestock Brands and Marks: An Unexpected Bayou Country History*, Christopher E. Cenac Sr., MD, FACS  
 2015 *Jerry Lee Lewis: A Life*, Rick Bragg  
*Upstairs Lounge Arson: Thirty-Two Deaths in a New Orleans Gay Bar, June 24, 1973*, Clayton Delery-Edwards  
 2016 *Beyond Freedom's Reach*, Adam Rothman  
*Poverty Point: Revealing the Forgotten City*, Jenny Ellerbe and Diana M. Greenlee  
 2017 *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou*, Shane K. Bernard  
*Hard Scrabble to Hallelujah, Volume 1: Legacies of Terrebonne Parish*, Christopher E. Cenac Sr., MD, FACS  
 2018 *Krazy: George Herriman, a Life in White and Black*, Michael Tisserand

2019	<i>The Thibodeaux Massacre: Racial Violence and the 1887 Sugar Cane Labor Strike</i> , John DeSantis
2020	<i>A Cajun Girl's Sharecropping Years</i> , Viola Fontenot
2021	<i>Solitary: My Story of Transformation and Hope</i> , Albert Woodfox
2022	<i>Katrina: A History, 1915-2015</i> , Andy Horowitz
2023	<i>Economy Hall: The Hidden History of a Free Black Brotherhood</i> , Fatima Shaik
2024	<i>Necropolis: Disease, Power, and Capitalism in the Cotton Kingdom</i> , Kathryn Olivarius
2025	<i>The Great Power of Small Nations: Indigenous Diplomacy in the Gulf South</i> , Elizabeth Ellis
	<i>The Carceral City: Slavery and the Making of Mass Incarceration in New Orleans, 1803-1930</i> , John Bardes

## Documentary Film Awards

2008	<i>Reconstructing Creole</i> , Jennifer John Block
2009	<i>Louisiana Story: The Reverse Angle</i> , Tika Laudun and Charles Richard
2010	<i>All Over But To Cry</i> , Jennifer John Block
2011	<i>Walker Percy</i> , Winston Riley
2012	<i>No One Ever Went Hungry</i> , Kevin McCaffrey
2013	<i>T-Galop</i> , Conni Castille
2014	<i>Bayou Maharajah</i> , Lily Keber
2015	<i>Big Charity</i> , Alexander John Gustrom
2016	<i>Shape of Shreveport</i> , Chris Charles Scott
2017	<i>Small Town Rage: Fighting Back in the Deep South</i> , David Hylan and Raydra Hall
2018	<i>Deeply Rooted: John Coykendall's Journey to Save our Seeds and Stories</i> , Christina Melton
2019	<i>A Man and His Trumpet: The Leroy Jones Story</i> , Cameron Washington
2020	<i>Mossville: When Great Trees Fall</i> , Alexander Glustrom
2021	<i>Professor Longhair: Rugged and Funky</i> , by directed by Joshua Bagnall
2022	<i>The Neutral Ground</i> directed by C. J. Hunt and produced by Darcy McKinnon
2023	<i>Roots of Fire</i> directed and produced by Abby Berendt Lavoie and Jeremy Lavoie
2024	<i>The Precipice</i> directed by Ben Johnson and produced by Linda Midgett
2025	<i>Ancestral Artistry: The Influence of Africans and Creoles of Color on Louisiana Architecture</i>

## Documentary Photography Awards

### Michael P. Smith Memorial Award for Documentary Photography

2009	Philip Gould
2010	Sydney Byrd
2011	Debbie Fleming Caffery
2012	Neil Johnson
2013	Chandra McCormick and Keith Calhoun
2014	Richard Sexton
2015	Deborah Luster
2016	David Spielman
2017	Eric Waters
2018	Jeremiah Ariaz
2019	Frank Relle
2020	Charles M. Lovell

### Documentary Photographer of the Year

2021	Abdul Aziz
2022	L. Kasimu Harris
2023	Jenny Ellerbe
2024	Ben Depp
2025	Pableaux Johnson (posthumous)

**Light Up for Literacy Award** (Given in partnership with State Library of Louisiana)

2015	Ann Dobie
2016	Herreast Harrison
2017	Richard Louth
2018	Sisters of the Holy Family
2019	Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell
2020	Lynn Clark
2021	Pat Austin
2022	Jeannine Pasini Beekman and Tracy Cunningham
2023	Megan Holt
2024	Jane Wolfe
2025	Lt. Michael Brooks

### **Champion of Culture Award**

2015	Daryl Byrd, MBA, President, CEO and Director, IBERIA BANK
2016	David Kerstein, President and CEO, Helis Oil & Gas
2017	William D. Adams, Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities
2018	Roger Ogden, founder, Ogden Museum of Southern Art
2019	Gregory Kallenberg, founder, Shreveport Film Prize and Prize Fest
2020	LSU Press
2021	Carol Bebelle, co-founder of Ashé Cultural Arts Center
2022	John Barbry, director of development and programming, Tunica-Biloxi Language and Culture Revitalization Program
2023	Senator Gerald Boudreaux
2024	Dr. Nick Mueller, founding president of the National World War II Museum
2025	Festivals Acadiens et Créoles

### **Museum Exhibition of the Year**

2018	<i>Storyville: Madams and Music</i> , The Historic New Orleans Collection
2019	<i>Changing Course: Reflections on New Orleans Histories</i> , New Orleans Museum of Art
2020	<i>Per(Sister): Incarcerated Women of Louisiana</i> , Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane
2022	Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, permanent exhibition
2024	<i>Creole New Orleans, Honey!</i> , The Louisiana State Museum at the Cabildo

*Note: The Museum Exhibition of the Year Award is awarded biannually in even-numbered years.*

### **Best in Digital Humanities**

2021	<i>Slow Burn: David Duke</i> , podcast produced by Slate and hosted by Josh Levin
2023	Freedom on the Move, database of fugitives from enslavement
2025	<i>A Closer Walk: New Orleans Music History, Block by Block</i> , a digital guide of important locations in the musical history of New Orleans

*Note: The Best in Digital Humanities Award is awarded biannually in odd-numbered years.*

### **PAST AWARD CATEGORIES**

## Individual Achievement in the Humanities Awards

- 1987 Barbara Cicardo, PhD
- 1988 Goodloe Stuck, historian, Louisiana State Library, Shreveport
- 1989 Robert Lafayette, PhD, scholar, Louisiana State University  
Judy Godfrey, Meadows Museum of Art
- 1990 Barry Jean Ancelet, PhD, scholar, University of Southwestern Louisiana
- 1991 Karen Snyder, filmmaker  
Elizabeth Bedikian and Dan Wilson, New Orleans Public Library
- 1991 Elizabeth Bingham, head of circulation, East Baton Rouge Public Library  
Gary Tisdale
- 1992 Dorothy Brown, PhD, scholar, Loyola University of New Orleans  
Barbara Ewell, PhD, scholar, Loyola University of New Orleans  
Paul Stekler, filmmaker, University of Texas
- 1993 Phaniel Egejuru, PhD, scholar, Loyola University of New Orleans  
Patrick Mire, filmmaker  
Michael P. Smith, photographer
- 1994 Mary Howell, Piney Woods Opry  
Phillip Gould, photographer  
Mary Richardson, scholar, McNeese State University
- 1995 (no awards due to shift in ceremony from December to  
March/April)
- 1996 Robert Becker, PhD, scholar  
Peggy Scott Laborde,  
film producer  
Glen Pitre, filmmaker
- 1997 Earl Bryant, PhD, scholar, University of  
New Orleans  
John Bullard, director, New Orleans  
Museum of Art  
James A. Cowman, scholar, Nicholls  
State University
- 1998 Dana Kress, scholar, Centenary College  
William Pederson, scholar, Louisiana State University  
Shreveport  
Kalamu Ya Salaam, poet
- 1999 Sarah Albritton, artist  
Mark Fernandez, PhD, historian, Loyola University of  
New Orleans  
Peggy Jelks, PhD, scholar, Northeast Louisiana  
University  
John Menszer, photographer  
Susan Roach, PhD, scholar, Louisiana Tech University
- 2000 David Estes, PhD, scholar, Loyola University of  
New Orleans  
Stanley Hilton, PhD, scholar, Louisiana State  
University Ursula Jones, associate librarian,  
Calcasieu Parish Library  
Thomas Phelps, program officer for public humanities  
program, NEH  
Cindy Treme, assistant director, Beauregard Parish  
Library
- 2001 Tom DuBose, PhD, literary scholar, Louisiana State University  
Shreveport  
Michael Luster, folklorist  
Denise Tullier-Holly, PhD, scholar, Southeastern  
Louisiana University  
Richard Louth, PhD, Southeastern Louisiana University  
Lee Estes, photographer
- 2002 Oneal Isaac, professional storyteller  
Michael Tarver, PhD, associate history professor at McNeese State

- University  
 Kathleen Smith, PhD, assistant history professor at Northwestern State University
- 2003 Michael Wynne, historian  
 Olivia Pass, PhD, professor of language and literature, Nicholls State University  
 Deb Robertson, director of public programs, American Library Association  
 David Moore, PhD, associate professor of history, Loyola University  
 Judy Boyce, librarian, West Baton Rouge Public Library
- 2004 Nancy Hawkins, manager, Louisiana Division of Archaeology  
 Lisa Abney, director, Louisiana Folklife Center and Natchitoches/NSU  
 Mary Ann Wilson, PhD, professor of English. University of Louisiana Lafayette  
 Huey S. Guagliardo, PhD, professor of English. LSU Eunice  
 Marshall Scott Legan, professor/chair of history at the University of Louisiana Monroe  
 James Trojanowski, Prime Time expansion in Wisconsin  
 Carole DeJardin, Prime Time expansion in Wisconsin
- 2005 Jack Bedell, professor of literature and creative writing, Southeastern Louisiana University  
 Martha Hodnett, youth services librarian for the Lafourche Parish Public Library  
 Helen Taylor, PhD, professor and director of the Master of Liberal Arts program, LSU Shreveport.  
 Linda LeBlanc, parent involvement coordinator, Jefferson Davis Parish School System  
 Cheryl Ware, PhD, professor of English, McNeese State University
- 2006 Wanda Ellard, storyteller at 100 sessions of LEH's Prime Time-Family Reading Time literacy program  
 Jerry Purvis Sanson, PhD, professor of history, Louisiana State University Alexandria  
 Diane Dufilho, director, Meadows Museum of Art at Centenary College of Louisiana Shreveport Folklife Festival
- 2007 Mary Jill Brody, PhD, the Fred B. Kniffen Professor of Geography and Anthropology, LSU, Baton Rouge  
 John Magill, Head of Research, The Historic New Orleans Collection
- 2008 Delma McLeod-Porter, PhD, professor and coordinator of developmental writing, McNeese State University  
 J. Paul Leslie, PhD, professor of history, Nicholls State University  
 Jack Heflin, professor of English, University of Louisiana at Monroe
- 2009 Dr. John Hall, professor emeritus in geography, LSU Shreveport  
 Dr. Thomas Fick, English professor, Southeastern Louisiana University  
 Karen McPheeters  
 Gail Garcia
- 2010 Ann Dobie, PhD, Distinguished Professor Emerita, University of Louisiana Lafayette  
 David Kunian, radio documentarian
- 2011 Georgiann Potts, scholar and program director, University of Louisiana Monroe
- 2012 Charles Elliot, PhD, professor of history, Southeastern Louisiana University
- 2013 Greg Lambousy, Director of Collections, Louisiana State Museum
- 2014 Stephen Webre, PhD, Garnie W. McGinty professor of history and interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Louisiana Tech University

## Public Humanities Programming

- 2007 Louisiana Folklife Inc., for community history *From Bouef to Beaucoup: Vintage Tales of Caldwell*

- Parish*
- 2008 John R. May, PhD, professor of English, LSU Baton Rouge, for his remarkable summer film festival at Ascension Parish Public Library in Gonzales
  - 2009 Karen McPheeters, director, Farmington Public Library in New Mexico  
Gail Garcia, community relations manager, Iberia Parish Library
  - 2010 Todd Mouton, Louisiana Crossroads  
Virginia Carter, PhD and Kathleen Pool, Kentucky Humanities Council, PrimeTime partner
  - 2011 Jane Hood and the Nebraska Humanities Council, PrimeTime partner
  - 2012 Janine Farver and Patricia Putman, Florida Humanities Council, PrimeTime partner
  - 2013 Elaine Black and the Georgia Public Library Service, Prime Time partner  
Patrice Melnick, Festival of Words, Grand Coteau
  - 2014 Ashley Hardee Boudreaux and Debra S. Lee, M.Ed, NBCT, Sabine Parish Schools

### **Humanities Teacher of the Year**

- 1998 Lloyd Sensat, Jr., Hahnville High School  
Norma Stigal, Phoenix Elementary School, Alexandria
- 1999 Patsy Causey, Baton Rouge Center for Visual and Performing Arts  
Melanie La Fleur, Many High School
- 2000 Caroline Ancelet, Acadiana High School, Lafayette  
Gaye Rice Ingram, Cedar Creek School, Ruston
- 2001 Sue Clausen, Neville High School, Monroe  
Jane Bartlett, Lusher Alternative Middle School, New Orleans
- 2002 Howard Hunter, High School  
Beverly Kelley, Middle School  
Cherice Harrison-Nelson, Elementary School
- 2003 Sharon Cormier, High School  
Bryan Gowland, Middle School  
Rachel Brittain, Elementary School
- 2005 Sharlene Algaier, Woodlake Elementary School, Mandeville
- 2006 Jan Gardner, teacher at C.E. Byrd High School, Shreveport  
Judith Allain, teacher at St. John Elementary School, Franklin
- 2007 Diego Gonzales, Benjamin Franklin High School, New Orleans
- 2008 Catherine Green, Caddo Middle Magnet School, Shreveport  
Emmitt Glynn III, Episcopal High School in Baton Rouge
- 2009 Cathy Mills, Episcopal School of Acadiana, Lafayette  
Jennifer Williams, Isidore Newman School, New Orleans
- 2013 Vicki Bell, Queensborough Elementary, Shreveport

### **Legislative Awards**

- 2007 Congressman Bobby Jindal  
State Senator Willie Mount  
State Senator Butch Gautreaux
- 2009 State Senator Cheryl Gray  
State Rep. Joe Harrison
- 2010 State Senator Lydia Jackson  
State Senator Joel Chiasson