

LEH Bright Lights Award Recipients 1985–2026

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
2026	Michael Doucet, founder of BeauSoleil

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, Coshatta 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, retired Executive Director of the Louisiana Center for the Book and the Louisiana Book Festival
 2026 Don Marshall, retired Executive Director of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and Foundation

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
 2026 The RosaMary and Keller Family Foundations

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
The Thibodeaux Massacre: Racial Violence and the 1887 Sugar Cane Labor Strike, John DeSantis
- 2019 *A Cajun Girl's Sharecropping Years*, Viola Fontenot
- 2020 *Solitary: My Story of Transformation and Hope*, Albert Woodfox
- 2021 *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015*, Andy Horowitz
- 2022 *Economy Hall: The Hidden History of a Free Black Brotherhood*, Fatima Shaik
- 2023 *Necropolis: Disease, Power, and Capitalism in the Cotton Kingdom*, Kathryn Olivarius
- 2024 *The Great Power of Small Nations: Indigenous Diplomacy in the Gulf South*, Elizabeth Ellis
- 2025 *The Carceral City: Slavery and the Making of Mass Incarceration in New Orleans, 1803-1930*, John Bardes
- 2026 *American Populist: Huey Long of Louisiana* by Thomas Patterson

Documentary Film Awards

- 2008 *Reconstructing Creole*, Jennifer John Block
- 2009 *Louisiana Story: The Reverse Angle*, Tika Laudun and Charles Richard
- 2010 *All Over But To Cry*, Jennifer John Block
- 2011 *Walker Percy*, Winston Riley
- 2012 *No One Ever Went Hungry*, Kevin McCaffrey
- 2013 *T-Galop*, Conni Castille
- 2014 *Bayou Maharajah*, Lily Keber
- 2015 *Big Charity*, Alexander John Gustrom
- 2016 *Shape of Shreveport*, Chris Charles Scott
- 2017 *Small Town Rage: Fighting Back in the Deep South*, David Hylan and Raydra Hall
- 2018 *Deeply Rooted: John Coykendall's Journey to Save our Seeds and Stories*, Christina Melton
- 2019 *A Man and His Trumpet: The Leroy Jones Story*, Cameron Washington
- 2020 *Mossville: When Great Trees Fall*, Alexander Glustrom
- 2021 *Professor Longhair: Rugged and Funky*, directed by Joshua Bagnall
- 2022 *The Neutral Ground* directed by C. J. Hunt and produced by Darcy McKinnon
- 2023 *Roots of Fire* directed and produced by Abby Berendt Lavoie and Jeremy Lavoie
- 2024 *The Precipice* directed by Ben Johnson and produced by Linda Midgett
- 2025 *Ancestral Artistry: The Influence of Africans and Creoles of Color on Louisiana Architecture*
- 2026 *What We Can Know About Edmond and Basile*, produced and directed by Sascha Just

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)
2026 Kevin Rabalais

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
2026 Debra Jo Hailey

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
2026 Pam Atchison, retired director of Shreveport Regional Arts Council (SRAC)

Museum Exhibition of the Year

2018 *Storyville: Madams and Music*, The Historic New Orleans Collection
2019 *Changing Course: Reflections on New Orleans Histories*, New Orleans Museum of Art
2020 *Per(Sister): Incarcerated Women of Louisiana*, Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane
2022 Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, permanent exhibition
2024 *Creole New Orleans, Honey!*, The Louisiana State Museum at the Cabildo
2026 *Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration*, The Historic New Orleans Collection

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

Best in Digital Humanities

2021 *Slow Burn: David Duke*, podcast produced by Slate and hosted by Josh Levin
2023 Freedom on the Move, database of fugitives from enslavement
2025 *A Closer Walk: New Orleans Music History, Block by Block*, 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