

LaVon Williams

“ . . . the history lesson here of, of African-Americans in the South... you’ve got the music, you have the coming and going of the people, you have the wisdom of the people, you have these feet which means people are planted, are rooted in this place and can’t be moved.”

LaVon Williams was born in Lakeland, Florida. He came to Kentucky to go to the University of Kentucky. He was a star UK basketball player. He played on the 1978 team that won the NCAA championship. After college, he played professional basketball in Italy and Spain.

Williams did not study wood carving, but people in his family have been wood carvers for five generations. Williams moved back to Lexington, Kentucky, in the 1980s. He decided to follow this creative tradition. He makes stained wooden relief pieces and carvings. His art captures everyday scenes like churchgoing men and women, jazz players, and dancers. His images are inspired by African-American history and culture.

At first he created small pieces to fit on tabletops. Then he began creating larger pieces with bolder colors. He created artwork for the 1994 film, *Deep Cover*. He created the logo for the Black Libraries Association. In 2009, the Kentucky Folk Art Center had a solo exhibit of his work. They called it *LaVon Williams: Rhythm in Relief*. Williams sees his woodcarving as a way to pass on the heritage of his ancestors and share that with his community.



What do you think these images represent?