

## **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.”*

Born in Lakeland, Florida, LaVon Williams' first claim to fame in Kentucky was as a star basketball player on the 1978 University of Kentucky NCAA championship team. He graduated from UK with a degree in sociology and went on to play professional basketball in Italy and Spain. Though he did not pursue formalized art training, Williams is a fifth-generation wood carver and his grandmother was a quilt maker. After his return to Lexington, Kentucky, in the mid-1980s, he decided to renew this creative tradition, making stained wooden relief pieces and carvings that capture everyday scenes like churchgoing men and women, jazz players, and dancers, all inspired by African-American history and culture. At first he created small pieces to fit on tabletops, but as he gained recognition, his work was displayed in galleries, and he began creating on a larger scale with bolder colors. Williams' work was included in the national touring show *When the Spirit Moves: African American Art Inspired by Dance*. He provided artwork for the 1994 film, *Deep Cover* and created the logo for the Black Libraries Association. In 2009, the Kentucky Folk Art Center assembled a 30-year retrospective exhibit of his work titled, *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.