Appalachia is a region unique and special, with a heritage and culture stretching back centuries and steeped in traditions that we attempt valiantly to maintain, and yet we are also a people and a region changing as rapidly as the technology that connects many of us across this land. The “voices” of Appalachians are diverse and spread far and wide, and they originate not just from the geographic region alone. We represent groups that are divergent yet common, whether we call ourselves Affrilachians, Appalachians, or Southern Mountaineers. The 2016 ASA Conference will focus on the changing face of the region, the diverse groups that constitute who we are, the educational and community institutions that either accommodate or react to the changes that challenge us and call for our best selves, and our efforts to protect the very mountains that are the principal source of our commonality and identity. We invite your submissions for any sessions, individual papers, performances, films, posters, or other types of presentations that address the theme, Voices from the Misty Mountains: Diversity and Unity, a New Appalachia.

Sylvia Bailey Shurbutt, Shepherd University, Conference Chair
Rachael Meads, Shepherd University, Program Chair

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The keynote speaker is past Kentucky Poet Laureate, writer, and cultural activist Frank X Walker, whose keynote address will be “Escape from Negro Mountain: Writing History, Righting Wrongs,” while the plenary session presenters will look through other lenses to reflect the region. Cherokee storyteller Lloyd Arneach will open the conference with a traditional Cherokee blessing and share stories from Appalachia’s indigenous peoples, the first Appalachians. Affrilachian poets Ricardo Nazario y Colón, Kelly Norman Ellis, and Bianca Spriggs will share poetry, echoing those “coal black voices” that just a few years ago brought a new dimension to Appalachian literature and to Appalachia. Writer, editor, folklorist, and performer John Lilly will share “Lessons from Goldenseal: Reflections on Preservation of History and Folklife,” while award-winning “liar” and storyteller Adam Booth will enthrall us with stories of the region. Cultural and multicultural ethnographic intersections of Appalachian clogging and African-American dance will be explored by dance scholars Matthew Olwell, Emily Oleson, and Becky Hill in the special panel “Appalachian Percussive Dance Traditions in Historical and Cultural Context: Researching The Meaning of Buck Dance and Reel ‘Em Boys, Reel ‘Em.” One of the highlights of the conference will be the photographic art of Builder Levy, an award-winning photographer, whose books, Images of Appalachian Coalfields, The Builder Levy Photographer, and Appalachia USA, have revolutionized our understanding of the region. These diverse rhythms and voices will set the tone for the conference papers, presentations, films, music, dance, community presentations, posters, panels and discussion groups that conference goers will provide, as we congregate in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, the oldest town in West Virginia, a town that continues to reflect the charm, ambiance, and eighteenth-century architecture of its original heritage.

At the heart of the conference will be the eleven concurrent sessions featuring films, research, performances, panel discussions, and discussions led by community activists, artists, scholars, farmers, organizers, students, and citizens like you exploring the diverse cultures, viewpoints, and issues facing our region. Please consider attending and adding your voice to the conversation by presenting. Details about the conference and how to propose a session are outlined here. Proposals for sessions may be submitted online through the ASA website, http://www.appalachianstudies.org/, from September 1 through the October 15, 2015 deadline. Submitters will be notified about the status of proposals after November 16, 2015.