

# JUNETEENTH: 'TALES OF KOEHLER HOLLOW' WINS GOLD 2025 IBPA BILL FISHER BOOK AWARD BEST FIRST BOOK NON FICTION

*Co-Authors Naomi Hodge-Muse and Christopher A. Brooks Celebrate Award on First Anniversary of Juneteenth Release*

RICHMOND, VA, UNITED STATES, June 19, 2025

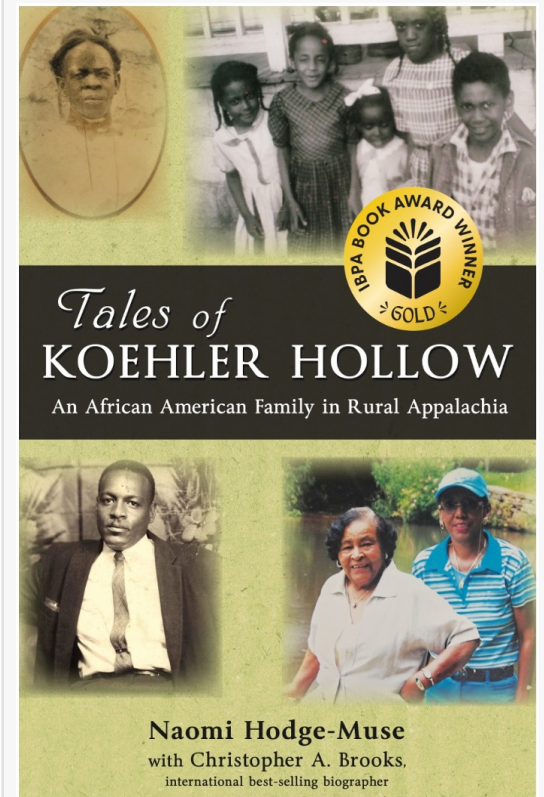
/EINPresswire.com/ -- On the 1st year anniversary of its Juneteenth release we are pleased to announce "Tales of Koehler Holler: An African American Family in Rural Appalachia," was recently awarded the Gold 2025 IBPA Bill Fisher Book Award for Best First Book Non-Fiction. The story as told by Naomi Hodge-Muse, was co-written with best-selling international biographer Christopher A. Brooks, a foremost author of numerous publications focusing on the African continental and Diasporan experience. The IBPA Book Awards are administered by the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA), the largest book publishers' association in the US with over 3,500 members. The book is available on [www.Unsungvoicesbooks.com](http://www.Unsungvoicesbooks.com).

Christopher A. Brooks stated: "It is truly an honor to be acknowledged in this way. Bringing the story of the once enslaved Amy Finney and her family to a larger

readership was and continues to be a very rewarding experience. I share this award with Naomi and her ancestors for enabling me through the written word to tell their extraordinary story. And I am also grateful to my publishers at Unsung Voices Books for believing in this story."

Naomi Hodge-Muse stated: "What a thrill it is to receive this award. And what a thrill it was to work with Christopher to bring my family's story to life. The fact that it resonated in such a way fulfills my hope that there is now a better appreciation of what it was like for an African American family during those years."

Amy Rath, Publisher of Unsung Voices Books stated: "We're extremely proud to see Naomi's and Christopher's work commended with the Bill Fisher Award. The committee recognized the



"Tales of Koehler Hollow" Wins IBPA Bill Fisher Book Award

importance of the story of the Finney/Hodge family as well as the authors' skill in crafting it. We're honored to have published it as the cornerstone of our catalog."

About "Tales of Koehler Hollow:"

At the core of "Tales of Koehler Hollow" (pronounced "holler," or "holla") is the family matriarch Amy Finney (1850 – 1936), a formerly enslaved woman in southwest Virginia (modern-day Henry County). In 1890, Amy purchased land about one mile from the main house in which she had once worked in bondage, thus founding a family legacy that continues to this day. This area outside of Martinsville, Virginia, would come to be known as Koehler, and the valley where Amy's property is, became known as "Koehler Hollow."

Amy's great-great-granddaughter, Naomi Hodge-Muse is the current owner of the Koehler Hollow homestead and its surrounding land. In this book, Naomi recounts family lore from Amy's time as a child to the present—from Reconstruction and the early years of emancipation through the Depression, the 1950s and turbulent 1960s and 70s. This provides the reader with a rare glimpse of life in black Appalachia over the last 150 years. Through the narratives, the characters come alive. We see Amy's son, George Finney (known as "Poppa") and his wife, Rosa ("Momma Rosie") build a stable and sustainable life in the holler for their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

About Naomi Hodge-Muse:

Naomi Hodge-Muse has served as the president of the Martinsville chapter of the NAACP, and Voter's League and was appointed by two Virginia Governors to the New College Institute Board of Directors. Hodge-Muse continues a family tradition of community activism and leadership in the Commonwealth, which has included detailed historical research. She is a proud graduate of Virginia Union University. "Tales of Koehler Hollow" is her family's story and a history of the African American experience in Appalachia over the past 150+ years. Tales of Koehler Hollow is her first book.

About Christopher A. Brooks:

Christopher A. Brooks is a professor of anthropology at Virginia Commonwealth University. He has produced numerous award-winning publications focusing on the African continental and diasporan experience. Brooks, an internationally recognized biographer, has authored a series of books exploring the HIV pandemic in Africa and America. His most recent book in that series is "Dual Pandemics: HIV and the Coronavirus in Several Kenyan Communities" (Linus 2024). He is also the author of "Roland Hayes: The Legacy of an American Tenor" (with Robert Sims).

About Unsung Voices Books:

Unsung Voices Books publishes books to know other people the world over. Their publishing program centers around perspectives from writers from marginalized and underrepresented groups and ways of life and stories that enrich our understanding of the places that make up our world."

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