



## LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

**Sandra Gioia Treadway**  
*Librarian of Virginia*

### **2015 Virginia Women in History Program Honors Eight Outstanding Women**

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**For Immediate Release**

The first African American woman to become a certified public accountant in Virginia, the first woman to preside over the House of Delegates' powerful budget-writing committee, and an African American poet who uses language to raise awareness of social issues are among eight Virginia women recognized by the Library of Virginia as part of its Virginia Women in History program. The eight are also featured on a handsome poster and in the Library's 2015 Virginia Women in History panel exhibition, on display on the second floor of the Library of Virginia, during the month of March. The exhibition will then travel to libraries, schools, and cultural institutions across the state. Copies of the 2015 poster and learning activities tied to the Virginia Standards of Learning were distributed to public and private schools and cultural institutions across Virginia.

The 2015 Virginia Women in History program culminates on March 26 with an inspiring evening program recognizing the honorees. The ceremony begins at 6:00 PM at the Library of Virginia and will be hosted by May-Lily Lee, with a reception to follow. The program and reception are free. To RSVP, contact 804-692-3999.

The women honored this year are:

**Nancy Melvina "Vinnie" Caldwell** (August 4, 1868–February 11, 1956), Carroll County

The daughter of a farmer, Caldwell became involved in local politics and won election to the House of Delegates from Carroll County.

**Nikki Giovanni** (b. 1943), Blacksburg

A devoted teacher widely acclaimed for her verse, Giovanni uses bold language to address social issues based on her experiences as an African American woman.

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**Ruth Coles Harris** (b. 1928), Richmond

Harris passed the two-day examination to become a certified public accountant at a time when there were fewer than 100 African American CPAs in the nation. She became the first black woman in Virginia to be certified. Harris is this year's recipient of the VABPW Foundation Business Leadership Award.

**Dorothy Shoemaker McDiarmid** (October 22, 1906–June 8, 1994), Fairfax County

An able and highly respected legislator, McDiarmid was one of the most influential women ever elected to the House of Delegates.

**Rebekah Dulaney Peterkin** (September 24, 1849–July 26, 1891), Richmond

The daughter of an Episcopal minister, Peterkin advocated creation of a hospital to provide acute care free of charge to the working poor.

**Vivian W. Pinn** (b. 1941), Lynchburg

In 1963, Pinn entered the medical school at the University of Virginia and graduated as the only woman and the only African American in her class. In 1982 she became chair of the department of pathology at the Howard University College of Medicine—the first African American woman to hold such a position in the United States.

**Elizabeth Bray Allen Smith Stith** (ca. 1692–February 22, 1774), Isle of Wight County

A planter and philanthropist, Stith established a £140 trust fund in 1753 to create a free school for six poor boys and girls in Smithfield.

**Karenne Wood** (b. 1960), Fluvanna County

A Virginia Indian scholar and advocate, Wood helped ensure that the history and culture of native Virginians were acknowledged during the 2007 commemoration of Virginia's colonization.

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch*/Richmond.com is the media sponsor for the 2015 Virginia Women in History program. The Virginia Business and Professional Women's Foundation Fund sponsors the Business Leadership Award and programming for Virginia Women in History. To learn more about the program, visit [www.lva.virginia.gov/public/vawomen/2015](http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/vawomen/2015).

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March 2, 2015