

THE BOTTOM KNOXVILLE
ANNUAL
REPORT
2021



THE
BOTTOM



BUILDING COMMUNITY CELEBRATING CULTURE ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY

OUR STORY



Named after the Black neighborhood and business center in East Knoxville that was demolished by urban renewal in the 1950s, The Bottom was established in January 2020 as a multi-use community space. Dr. Enkeshi El- Amin, a local sociologist studying race and place, was inspired to build The Bottom after research on Black Knoxville revealed resounding themes of Black dispossession and displacement. The Bottom was conceptualized as a justice and equity project centered on reclamation, reimagination, and transformation. Given the historical obstacles for Black Knoxville residents to claim space, a collective effort is required to hold Black space in Knoxville and to engage in place-keeping practices. Recognizing historic and systemic injustices that have indirectly impacted Black people and places are also required to respond and heal trauma from displacement and disempowerment.

The mission of the Bottom is to build community, celebrate culture, and engage the creativity of Black people through curated events, community- projects, ongoing programming, shared resources, and physical space. At the Bottom--- community leaders, artists, educators, students, cultural workers, activists, and entrepreneurs blend culture, politics, and social issues in strategic and engaging ways. We strive to cultivate a sense of belonging and safety for Black people who come from different class, religious, sexual orientation, and gender backgrounds.

OUR MISSION



OUR TEAM GROWTH



This year brought much growth for The Bottom—growth through relationships and opportunities to support community talent. Originally, the center emerged through the volunteer labor of the founder Dr. Enkeshi El-Amin along with a volunteer advisory committee.

This year, The Bottom hired two full-time staff—Ty Murray (Director of Community Operations) and Jazmin Witherspoon (Director of Literary Programs), and part-time staff—Pumpkin Starr (Director of Development and Strategy).

Previously as The Bottom's first hired support, Ty Murray founded Black Creatives Meetup through the inspiration of her own experience as an artist, musician, performer, aspiring stylist, and emerging local leader in Knoxville. As the Director of Community Operations, Ty has elevated The Bottom towards being an arts and cultural center for creatives. She is the muscle of the center's mission and existence, helping to oversee day-to-day operations & communications.

Pumpkin Starr previously served as a volunteer supporter, advisory member, founder of Maggie Lee's Fish Fry, and strategist for The Bottom's building campaign. The Bottom provided a local home for Pumpkin's work as a popular educator and land & place organizer. After joining the team as the Director of Development and Strategy in 2021, Pumpkin provides radical insight and organizational skills towards The Bottom's mission of being sustainable and aligned with Black place justice and equity.

Jazmin Witherspoon is a local rising star in theater and poetry. She previously hosted The Bottom's creative writing workshop for middle schoolers before stepping into leading the Bookshop. As the Director of Literary Programs, Jazmin is the powerhouse for the Bookstore, hosting authors, book clubs, and other literary programs that seek to foster a love of diversity in reading. She is our in-house bibliophile and liberal arts enthusiast.

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT



It takes a village and ours is mighty! Our wonderful advisory committee keeps us remain accountable to our mission. Made of parents, academics, artists, and activists– our advisory committee met with our Founding Director and Director of Community Operations quarterly to dream of possibilities and dig into how to make our mission as expansive as possible. Our advisory committee was also hands-on towards the center’s needs by hosting events, coordinating happenings, caring for the space, and volunteering for the Bookshop. We appreciate them beyond words!



Volunteerism and community support plays a pivotal part in how the Bottom was able to grow in 2021. Our staff began as volunteers and leaders in the community that saw The Bottom as a launching pad and home for their talents. Not only have our volunteer supporters shown up for The Bottom through labor, but their presence also affirmed that The Bottom was wanted, needed, and beloved. At our first location, “Saturday Spruce Ups” were weekend efforts to paint, spruce, and beautify the space.



After purchasing The Bottom’s permanent home at 2340 E Magnolia Ave, community supporters rallied together to clean and renovate the new space - a process that took months. On Saturday mornings The Bottom was filled with volunteers painting and cleaning to prepare for the Grand Opening. Once the building was move-in ready, volunteers from The University of Tennessee helped fill moving trucks to complete the transition to the new space. Since then, community volunteers have helped maintain the Bookshop at The Bottom and our landscaping.

2340 EAST MAGNOLIA

The Bottom's launching pad was at 202 Randolph Street in the basement of Marc Nelson Denim. Founder, owner, and East Knoxville native-- Marcus Hall—offered the space with discounted rent to support the Sew it Sell it program in 2020. For approximately one year, 202 Randolph Street was the home for the original Bookshop, community meetings, fundraisers, Black business pop-ups, Sew It Sell It camps, and Black Creatives meetups. Located in the neighborhood in which The Bottom is named after, 202 Randolph Street served as the first base for The Bottom—a pivotal opportunity that led to our current existence.

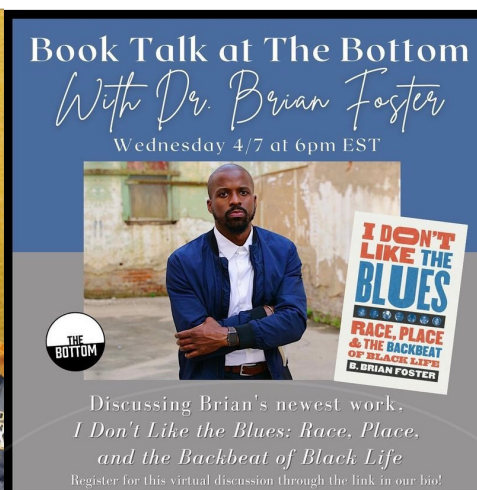


As our neighborhoods continue to change rapidly, it is becoming even more inaccessible for Black Knoxvilleans to own homes and community centers. In 2021, our team wanted to reclaim community space in our gentrified community (a community of a formerly poor urban area that is changed in character by wealthier people moving in, improving housing, and attracting new businesses, while displacing current inhabitants in the process).

Emboldened by Appalachian philanthropic organizer, Margo Miller, and community donors---The Bottom found a new home at 2340 East Magnolia. Built in 1921 and originally named “The Gathering Place”, the building that serves as our new community center was purchased and renovated through a labor of love, volunteerism, and community. We are proud to call it home! In October, we hosted a joyous Grand Opening that welcomed all of our supporters and family to celebrate.

BOOKSHOP AT THE BOTTOM

Our Bookshop at the Bottom grew exponentially from a small collection of Black affirming literature. In 2021, the Bookshop expanded to have a monthly subscription program, author talks, story time events hosted by local artists and musicians, writing workshops, and a store filled with Black empowering merchandise. The Bookshop's collection has grown over five times as large with works from local authors, used books, and local vendors/makers. The Bookshop has cultivated relationships with schools, publishers, businesses, and higher education institutions that have benefited from our no-cost initiatives for youth summer reading, book giveaways, literary studies, and author events.



The Bookshop has also focused on engaging different styles of learning and literary interest. This has been accomplished through offering audiobooks and hosting movie screenings. Not only has the Bookshop established itself as a community resource for Black literary and cultural engagement, it has also grown a regional presence. Through our website and Bookshop.org collaboration, our Bookshop has an expansive supply to offer an alternative from companies that threaten local independent bookstores and Beyond supply, our Bookshop makes Black history, culture, and critical thought accessible while encouraging literary engagement.

SEW IT SELL IT



Sew It Sell It is a sewing and entrepreneurship program where participants have the opportunity to express their creativity, learn vocational skills and develop a sense of self-reliance by sewing and selling a product. Through the program, students design a product and conceptualize a micro business around that product. The program serves children between the ages of 12 and 16. No prior sewing skills are necessary and all equipment and supplies for the program are provided to students.

In addition to learning the basics of sewing, through a number of workshops led by business professionals, local entrepreneurs, community leaders and university faculty, students learn business and professional skills from branding and marketing, to giving a great pitch. This year, our program also expanded its vocational offerings to include workshops on screen printing embroidery and pottery! A group of students worked offsite at the University of Tennessee's print lab. We also hired a program intern to help coordinate the program this year.

The goal of Sew It Sell It is to supplement youth in our communities with creative, practical and business management skills that they can continue to use on their own outside of the program.

The 2021 cohort of the program included 15 young entrepreneurs, as young as 11 years old and as old as 17 years old. Five of them were returning students from previous years. They created products including headwraps and headbands, hoodies, tote bags, wallets, and pillows. Everyone sold out at market day, which despite the pandemic was attended by about 100 to 150 people.

In 2021, Sew It Sell It expanded into a multidisciplinary cohort for returning campers. Also, we were so grateful to welcome an intern to help make camp a success.



BLACK CREATIVES MEETUP



Black Creatives Meetup is a long-term investment into Black artists and makers in our community.

As an on-going program, we will continuously provide support, resources and a safe space for our creative community to incubate and develop. We meet monthly, hold various artistic events, and offer workshops and developmental opportunities.

Through our Black Creatives Meetup Initiative, we are listening and responding to creative voices and helping emerging artists further establish themselves by providing resources and a safe space to learn, develop and create.



The mission is to offer free or low cost creative development programming led by Black artists/Black arts and cultural organizations that will supplement our general monthly meetups, and ensure that we're offering new ways and opportunities to grow throughout the year.



By providing programming for Black creatives to develop themselves as artists, and by intentionally seeking to work with Black artists/Black-led arts and cultural organizations, we are directly investing into a community that has been historically underrepresented. We are cultivating a sense of artistic pride in Black communities that live in Knoxville. We are listening and responding to creative voices that have long been unheard. We are helping emerging artists to expand and establish themselves.

COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Bottom partnered with the University of Tennessee Knoxville's Division of Diversity and Engagement to offer a community fellowship. We believe that the work of scholars and other professional staff can enrich civic and community life. And by pursuing such work in dialogue with the public, university research, teaching, and creative expression is elevated. In a semester-long fellowship, Black faculty/staff serve as a resource and collaborator on a public facing, community identified or agreed upon project. The fellow works directly with The Bottom's team to develop a project moving it from ideation to completion.

The projects produced by this program aim to document and/or advance the local Black community. The final project could include recurring programming, public forums, advocacy campaigns, workshops, events, publications or public exhibitions among others. This fellowship is especially designed for Black junior faculty (non-tenure and tenure track) and professional staff who might benefit from deliberate connections and invested liaisons with the multifaceted local Black community. Each semester one fellow is chosen.



2021 Community Fellow,
Dr. Radney

Our first fellowship project, led by Dr. El-Ra Radney, comprises the excavation of local Black Knoxville newspapers. Titled *Knoxville's Black Press & The 'Afro-American Crusade'*, this project seeks to uncover and reconstruct an important window into Knoxville's Black society (circa, 1900s - 1950s) through the lens of Black redemption narratives that measure the vitality of Knoxville's Black Metropolis.

In post reconstruction Jim Crow America, The Black press gave African-Americans the news through the lens of their own eyes. African-American newspapers provided crucial information to Black people seeking employment, housing, and places to shop that would not discriminate against them. These newspapers fostered and facilitated several strategies of Black agency to change the racial status quo of the country. In addition to being a crusader for African-American freedoms, the press became a means of responding to the anti-Black bias reporting found in white newspapers.

KNOXVILLE COLLEGE GRADUATES



One of the preeminent themes of the black press was its legacy of spirited activism. African American publishers and journalists understood that their duty was not only to report the news but to help black communities forge cohesive political movements.

As we uncover Knoxville's Black society life in the first half of the 20th century, we are interested in how our findings might help us to understand the contours of Knoxville's Black metropolis and possibly expand on the idea of a broader Black renaissance.

EVENTS & HAPPENINGS

HIGHLIGHTING: MAGGIE LEE'S FISH FRY & BUSINESS INCUBATORS

Our space is our folk's place to gather, fundraise, and launch their own passions. Staff Member Pumpkin Starr named seasonal fundraiser events after their grandmother and her practice of selling fried fish and gathering her neighborhood. Maggie Lee was a caregiver of many and her fish fry was income support for her large family of her own children and extended family (biological and non-biological). Inspired by Pumpkin's grandmother, The Bottom began hosting fundraisers to highlight local Black-owned businesses and support Knoxville's Black Mamas' Bailout, a mutual aid group that fundraises to bail out and support mothers and caregivers in recovery from cash bail imprisonment. Along with the fundraiser events, we hosted the pop-ups of Knoxville businesses to increase the local presence of their emerging businesses and promote cooperative economics.



EVENTS & HAPPENINGS

**THE 5TH WOMAN PRESENTS
POETRY FROM
THE BOTTOM**

Open Mic January 15

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/69597231923>
Meeting ID: 695 9723 1923
Room open at 7:30pm
Show starts at 8:30

UNMUTED WORKSHOP 3: Trial & Feedback

Thursday January 7th at 6pm

JOIN US ON SATURDAY, FEB. 13 AT 11 AM FOR
Virtual Story Time:
WITH DR. TAMARA PIZZOLI,
READING BOTH OF HER STORIES:

Tallulah the Tooth Fairy CEO
Tallulah the Tooth Fairy CEO and the Corona Challenge

**WRITING WITH JAZ: A WORKSHOP FOR
MIDDLE SCHOOLERS**

Featured by The Bottom

Middle Schoolers, get your pen and paper ready! Join actor, writer, and activist Jazmin Witherspoon for a morning of creative exploration through personal narratives. This 1-hour workshop will guide you through a series of prompts that will help you develop strong brainstorming and writing skills while telling your unique story. Registration is free! Find the link in the bio or at The Bottom's website! See you there!

When: Saturday, February 20th, 2020
Time: 11:00 AM
Where: Virtually Via Zoom

THE BOTTOM & UTK'S CCYAL PRESENTS

**WRITING
FOR CHILDREN**

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Liz Garcia Julia Watts

APRIL 24 | 11AM - 12:30PM

LINK IN BIO FOR REGISTRATION

**BLACK CREATIVES
VIRTUAL MEET UP**

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 26TH AT 6PM - ZOOM LINK IN BIO!

**INDIE
BOOKSTORE
DAY** Weekend Celebration!

Friday 4/23 & Saturday 4/24

FOOD FUN • GIVEAWAYS • BOOKS & MORE!

**EVENTS • MUSIC
KIDS ACTIVITIES •**

**Black Creatives Meet Up
& Jam Session**
Fri. 4/30 • 5pm-8:30pm

202 Randolph Street, Knoxville TN 37917

WE'RE PARTNERING WITH FRVR RECORDINGS TO BRING A NEW TAKE ON JAM SESSIONS, LETS CREATE TOGETHER!

JOIN US ON SATURDAY, MAY 15 AT 11 AM FOR
Virtual Story Time
WITH ANNA MCQUIN

Reading
Lola at the Library
& more from
Lola's series!

Hosted BY: **TIKI**
LINK IN BIO FOR REGISTRATION!

**Black Queer Dance Party
at The Bottom**
Wed. 6/30 • 5-9pm

Hosted by Brandi
Music by DJ Ty Dye
202 Randolph St.

**SPRUCE UPS
@ THE BOTTOM!**

Calling all hands on deck to help paint, refresh & organize our new space!

Saturday 7/10 • 9am - 5pm
2340 E Magnolia Ave • sign up for other dates!

SEW IT SELL IT
MARKET DAY

Come out and support our young, creative entrepreneurs of Sew It Sell It on Market Day

JULY 31

THE BOTTOM
202 RANDOLPH ST.
KNOXVILLE, TN
37917

10:00A.M. - 2:00P.M.

thebottomknox@gmail.com
sewitsellit@gmail.com

EVENTS & HAPPENINGS

Saturday Oct. 9th

Join us for our

GRAND OPENING

AN ALL DAY CELEBRATION!

2340 E. Magnolia Ave

10am - 7pm

THE BOTTOM

Black Creatives Meetup

Friday 10/29 | 6pm-9pm



Come kick it & create in our new space!

2340 East Magnolia Ave

THE BOTTOM

THINKING WITH SYLVIA WYNTER:
"WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A HUMAN BEING?"



THURSDAYS: OCT. 14TH - NOV. 4TH

A 4-week series & reading group exploring Colonialism, Racism, and achieving another world beyond Man and whiteness. Led by Dr. David Kline, Dept. of Religious Studies at UTK

6PM-7:30PM | 2340 E MAGNOLIA AVE

THE BOTTOM

LOVE IS THE ANSWER

COMMUNITY SHOWCASE

Open Mic Poetry Night @The Bottom
Saturday, November 27, 2021

MC / Guest Artist:
Rhea Carmon

5PM DJ Dynamic Ray
& Chilli Potluck

6PM Open Mic

KNOXVILLE

2340 E. Magnolia

FREE ADMISSION
\$5 Suggested Donation

To Sign Up to Share Creatively
Text (865) 293-7437

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THE BOTTOM

Strips & Strangs

String Quilt Workshops

with Gary White




Saturday Nov. 6th, 13th & 20th • 2-4 PM

2340 E Magnolia Ave

THE BOTTOM

Saturday Nov. 20th @ 7PM

PASSING



NELLA LARSEN

Movie Night Screening of Passing, based on the book by Nella Larsen

THE BOTTOM

WINTER COOKIES WITH NELLY

FREE COOKIE DECORATING FOR KIDS!
SATURDAY DEC. 18TH AT 10AM



SWEET NELLY'S
- SINCE 2014
CUPCAKES & COOKIES

2340 E. MAGNOLIA AVE

THE BOTTOM

Shante' Swain Presents

STORYTIME WITH SANTA

Saturday, December 4th
9:30 AM & 11:30 AM

The Bottom Bookstore
2340 E Magnolia Ave,
Knoxville, TN 37917

Bring your little ones for a holiday story, treats, and fun!

Please RSVP for the FREE event at shanteswain.com

Each family will receive a gift certificate towards a purchase at The Bottom Bookstore while supplies last.

THE BOTTOM

UJAMAA MARKET

WEDNESDAY DEC. 29TH • 11AM - 6PM



CELEBRATING COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS WITH A LOCAL MAKER & ARTIST POP-UP MARKET!

GRAB 'N GO LUNCH BY HOOD PALATE: 11AM-2PM

THE BOTTOM

KUUMBA KARAOKE



DECEMBER 31

9PM-12AM

KUUMBA (CREATIVITY)

BLACK CREATIVES MEETUP KARAOKE EDITION

JOIN US FOR A LIL KARAOKE & LOTS OF GREAT VIBES!
WEAR YOUR NEW YEAR'S BEST - RSVP ONLINE

THE BOTTOM

SIP 'N SEW



DECEMBER 27

5PM-7PM

KUJICHAGULIA (SELF-DETERMINATION)

MAKE A GARMENT, MAKE A FRIEND & SIP A LIL SOMETHING!

TICKETS INCLUDE INSTRUCTION, SUPPLIES & COMPLIMENTARY WINE OR TEA

\$25
RSVP ONLINE

THE BOTTOM

GUN SAFETY WITH POP TENN



DECEMBER 28

6PM-7PM

UJIMA (COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY)

GUN SAFETY WITH POP TENN

JOIN PROTECT OUR PEOPLE TENNESSEE (POP TENN) FOR A COMMUNITY GUN SAFETY WORKSHOP

THE BOTTOM

MEDIA & PRESS COVERAGE



"Community center captures the magic of The Bottom, a neighborhood destroyed by urban renewal policies"

"The Bottom, a community center in East Knoxville, opened its new doors on Saturday. The center's new space includes a tea room, a podcasting center, a sewing room and a book store.

The Bottom's creator, Dr. Enkeshi El-Amin, said it's a place for Black Knoxvilleans to gather and feel safe.

"I'm talking safety from oppression, microaggressions," said Dr. El-Amin. "Come as you are, whoever you are."

"We can have creativity, we have celebration, we have dialogue," said Pumpkin Starr, the Bottom's Strategist. "We can have whatever we want, really."

Starr said her goal is to carve out 'Black space.' "Our motto is, 'Create space to take up space,'" Starr said."



"The Bottom reopening in East Knoxville puts 'reclaiming Black space' at its heart"

"Black history is everyone's history,"

El-Amin told Knox News that she's not the first to do this kind of work for Black Knoxville. She's continuing the work of those who were here long before her and she hopes for an abundance of places like The Bottom."

"As Black people, even when we get the worst of the worst, we turn it around and make homes and communities," El-Amin said. "We do it on the block, in a schoolhouse, in a church. That's what our people have always done in Knoxville."

DAILY BEACON

'A wonderful place for Black Knoxville': The Bottom celebrates one year in new location

"We definitely have the support of our community. We have people that love us, they help us out by either providing funds or even just their presence."

"I love The Bottom,"... "I love bringing my kids to The Bottom, I love everything about it. I think it's such a warm space and it has cultural events that I would be interested in."

They hope that The Bottom will continue to grow, even past the people who currently operate it. They want the legacy of The Bottom to endure and serve Black Knoxville for a long time.

Enlightener

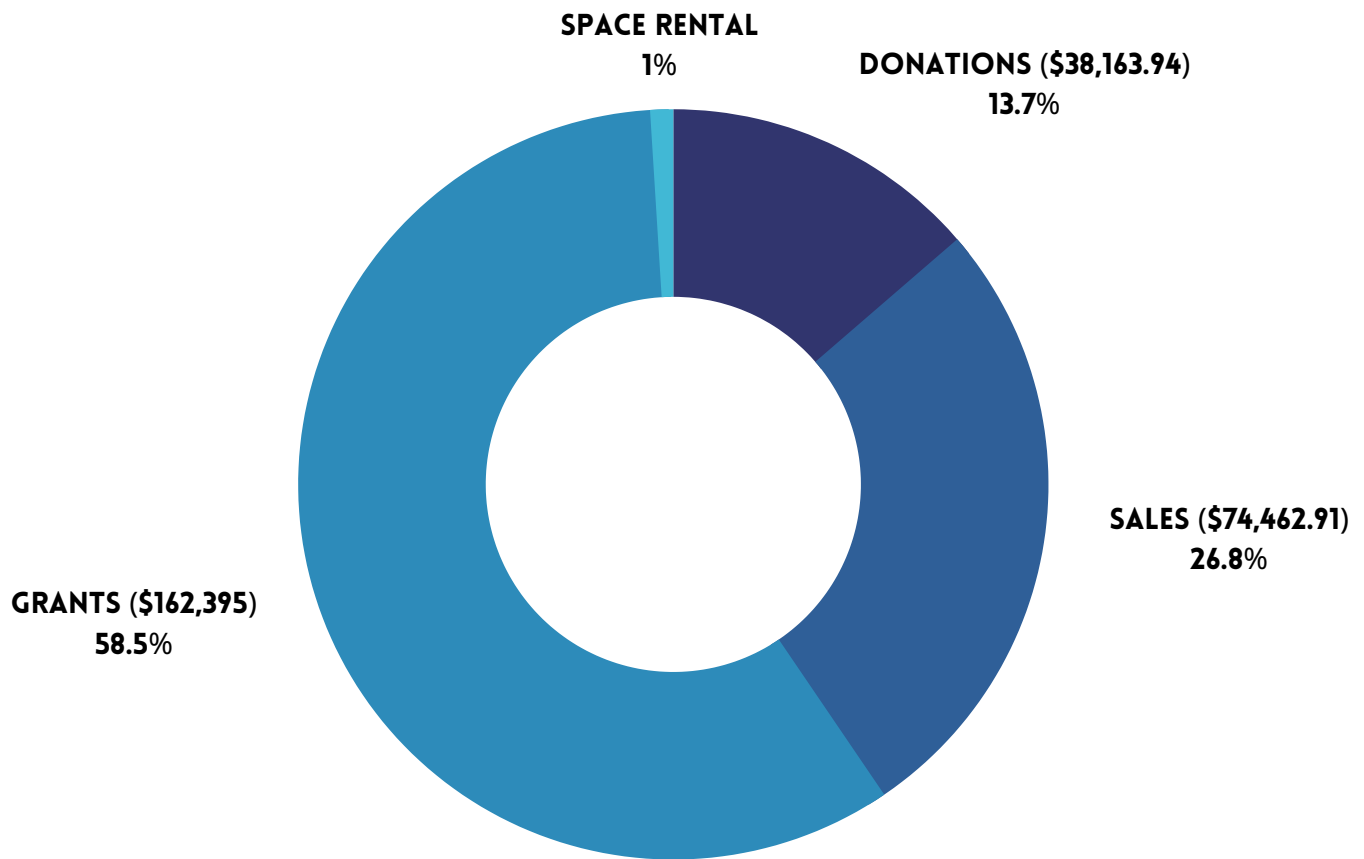
Serving Knox, Blount, Anderson, and Jefferson Counties

"The Bottom Knox Black bookstore celebrates Indie Bookstore Day"

"Enjoy this weekend at The Bottom Knoxville, a black-owned bookstore comprised of books for children, teens and adults by black authors. From the latest from poet Amanda Gourman to classic by James Baldwin can be found at The Bottom at 202 Randolph Street near Knoxville's Old City."

Annual Income Statement

A summary of our sources of income in 2021



This year was a year of growth and expansion for The Bottom. Through individual donations and foundation support, we purchased a house in full. We also grew our Bookshop's size and supply, which contributed to more individual and foundation relationships. We are so grateful for our allies to our mission and supporters of our growth!

FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS



United Way
of Greater Knoxville



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

UT COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK &
DIVISION OF DIVERSITY AND
ENGAGEMENT



CHANGE, NOT CHARITY

ARTPLACE 2020
10 YEARS



solidaire

THE BOYD
FOUNDATION