

**Cecil J. Williams**  
**Arts**

Cecil J. Williams is a photographer, publisher, author and artist with a comprehensive collection of the civil rights era appearing in 126 books, 17 newspapers, and 12 television documentaries. His photographs have perpetually preserved the African American experience throughout the first half of the 20th Century. He is a native of Orangeburg and a graduate of Claflin University with a B.A. degree in Art. By the age of nine, he had already begun his career in photography, having fallen in love with this profession through the acquisition of a hand me down camera from his family.

An important aspect of his photographs is the indisputable visual evidence they offer to African American culture, heritage and history. Each significant South Carolina desegregation milestone - from Briggs vs. Elliott, the rise of student activism, the 1960 sit-ins, Harvey Gantt's integration of Clemson, the Charleston Hospital Workers' Strike, the Orangeburg Massacre and the rally to remove the Confederate battle flag from atop the capitol is pictured by Williams not only in his books but hundreds of other books as well.

Cecil J. Williams' photographic images of the civil rights movement provide one of the most comprehensive collections of the era. Besides being a Jet Magazine stringer correspondent, his photographs have been published in 126 books, hundreds of newspapers and featured in 11 television documentaries. Recently, in December 2006, he authored "Out-of-the-Box in Dixie" a sequel to "Freedom and Justice," published in 1995 by Mercer University. Both publications are considered by many historians as the Holy Grail of the origin of America's civil rights movement.

In the 60s thru 80s, Williams was official yearbook photographer for South Carolina State University public relations and yearbook. He has been the yearbook photographer for Claflin University since graduating from the university in 1960. Williams was also official photographer for the South Carolina NAACP, and the National Conference of Black Mayors. Williams' photographs have been exhibited at Furman University, University of South Carolina, Rice Museum in Georgetown, Claflin University, Stanback Museum in Orangeburg, Museum of the New South in Charlotte, and McKissick Museum, Columbia. Recently his work was exhibited at the McCrory Museum and State Museum in Columbia and at Clemson University. Other awards include being listed by Outstanding Young Men of America and Who's Who in American Colleges & Universities. He also received the Freedom Fighter Award presented by the Orangeburg Branch NAACP and in 2005, received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Breakfast Community Service Award.

Williams was honored in the South Carolina Hall of Fame and also featured in the 2007 Bellsouth African American History Calendar. In October 1995, he received the Presidential Citation, awarded by Dr. Henry N. Tisdale of Claflin College, for outstanding contributions to the college and community. The students of Claflin College also dedicated their 1996 yearbook to Williams. In Feb. 1994, he received a Commendation by the S.C. General Assembly, (H.4729), for a Photographic Exhibit - "Quiet Heroes." In August 1994, he received the Freedom Fighter Award, presented by the Orangeburg Branch NAACP.

Williams attends St. Luke Presbyterian Church. He is married to Barbara Johnson Williams, an educator at Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School.