

MONETA SLEET JR.



ONE



Moneta Sleet Jr. was born right here in Owensboro, Kentucky on February 14, 1926. His mother was a teacher and his father was the business manager of a vocational school in Paducah. His sister, Emmy Lou would grow up to be a librarian.



The Sleet Family: Parents, Ozetta Allensworth Sleet and Moneta Sleet Sr. and Children, Emmy Lou Sleet and Moneta Sleet Jr.

Sleet loved going to school, but due to Jim Crow laws, he and Emmy Lou could not attend the school closest to their home. Instead, they had to walk several blocks to the segregated all Black school.

When Sleet was around 10 years old, his parents gave him a box camera. Enthralled by this gift, Sleet began taking pictures constantly. Little did he know that he would later become one of the world's most prolific photojournalists.

While attending Western High School, Sleet's chemistry teacher, Mr. Ernest Thurston, taught him about the darkroom process of developing film. Sleet also served as the editor of the school newspaper and graduated as valedictorian of his class.



Western High School's mascot the mighty Bulldog!

DISCUSSION
QUESTION



HOW DO YOU THINK MONETA SLEET WAS ABLE TO PERSEVERE?

MONETA SLEET JR.



TWO

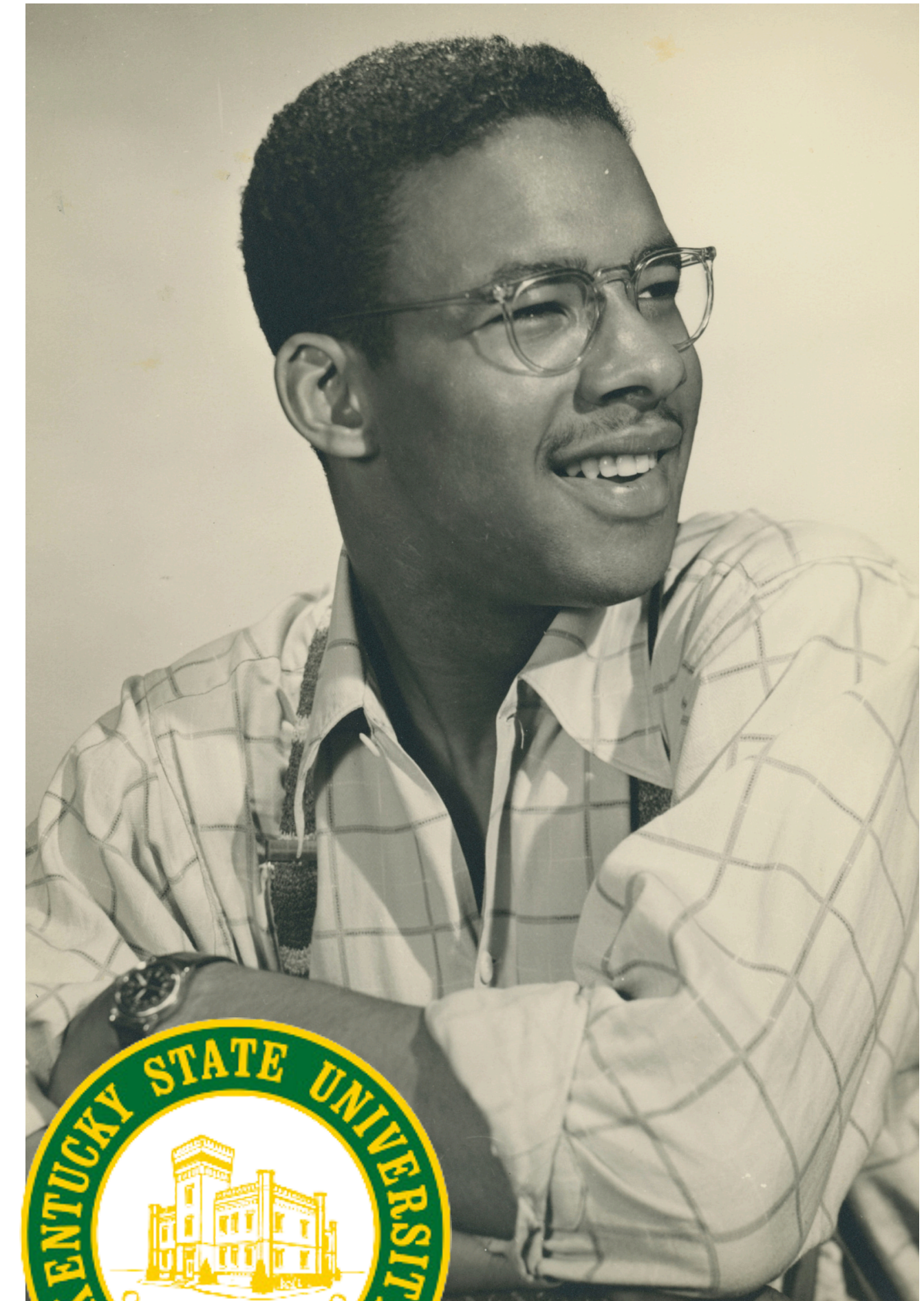


After graduating from Western High School, Sleet attended Kentucky State, a historically Black college located in Frankfort, Kentucky.

His father introduced him to Dr. Williams, a Dean at Kentucky State and a professional photographer. Williams hired Sleet to be his assistant, granting him access to professional photography equipment and studio space. Sleet graduated Cum Laude with a degree in business.

In 1944, during World War II, Sleet served in the Pacific Theater in the 93rd Engineers, an all Black unit of the United States Army.

Following the war, Sleet moved to New York City where he earned a master's degree in journalism from NYU.



Moneta Sleet Jr. while at Kentucky State

DISCUSSION
QUESTION



HOW DO YOU THINK SERVING IN WORLD WAR II SHAPED MONETA SLEET'S VIEWS ON LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES?

MONETA SLEET JR.



THREE



Sleet began working for *Ebony* magazine in 1955. For the next 41 years, he captured photos of celebrities like Muhammad Ali, Dizzy Gillespie, Stevie Wonder, Haile Selassie, Billie Holiday and more. However, his biggest contribution to American history is his extensive coverage of the Civil Rights Movement. His contributions to documenting the Civil Rights Movement provided immeasurable insight into the struggle for equal rights.



Civil Rights leaders march on Montgomery, 1965



Muhammad Ali at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky



Dizzy Gillespie

Photo Credit Johnson Publishing Company Archive. Courtesy Ford Foundation, J. Paul Getty Trust, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Smithsonian Institution.



Haile Selassie Emperor of Ethiopia

DISCUSSION
QUESTION ?

IF YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO PHOTOGRAPH ANYONE IN THE WORLD WHO WOULD IT BE? WHY?

MONETA SLEET JR.



FOUR



In 1969, Moneta Sleet Jr. won the Pulitzer Prize for his iconic photograph taken at Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral, featuring King's widow, Coretta Scott King, and daughter, Bernice.

Sleet became the first Black man to win the coveted award.



Coretta Scott King at the funeral of Martin Luther King at Ebenezer Baptist Church, comforting their 5-year-old daughter, Bernice.

Photo Credit: Johnson Publishing Company Archive. Courtesy Ford Foundation, J. Paul Getty Trust, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Smithsonian Institution.

DID YOU
KNOW ?

INITIALLY, NO BLACK PHOTOJOURNALISTS WERE SELECTED TO DOCUMENT THE FUNERAL. HOWEVER, UPON LEARNING OF THIS, MRS. KING INSISTED THAT SLEET BE INCLUDED IN THE PRESS COVERAGE. SHE EMPHASIZED THAT IF MONETA SLEET WERE EXCLUDED, NO PRESS WOULD BE ALLOWED.

MONETA SLEET JR.



FIVE



In 1950, Sleet married Juanita Harris, who he called “Neet.” Together the couple had three children Gregory, Michael and Lisa.



Moneta Sleet Jr. and his wife, Juanita



Sleet family celebrating together



Michael Sleet and his teacher, photo taken by Moneta Sleet Jr.

Photo Credit Johnson Publishing Company Archive. Courtesy Ford Foundation, J. Paul Getty Trust, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Smithsonian Institution.

DISCUSSION
QUESTION



HOW WAS FAMILY INSTRUMENTAL IN SLEET'S WORK?

MONETA SLEET JR.



SIX

The photography of Moneta Sleet Jr. is rooted in the values of family, education, and equality. For decades, he captured pivotal moments in entertainment, Civil Rights, and sports, using his photography to create a powerful historical narrative of Black America and the world. Amid both triumph and adversity, Sleet's lens celebrated the resilience and spirit of the human experience.

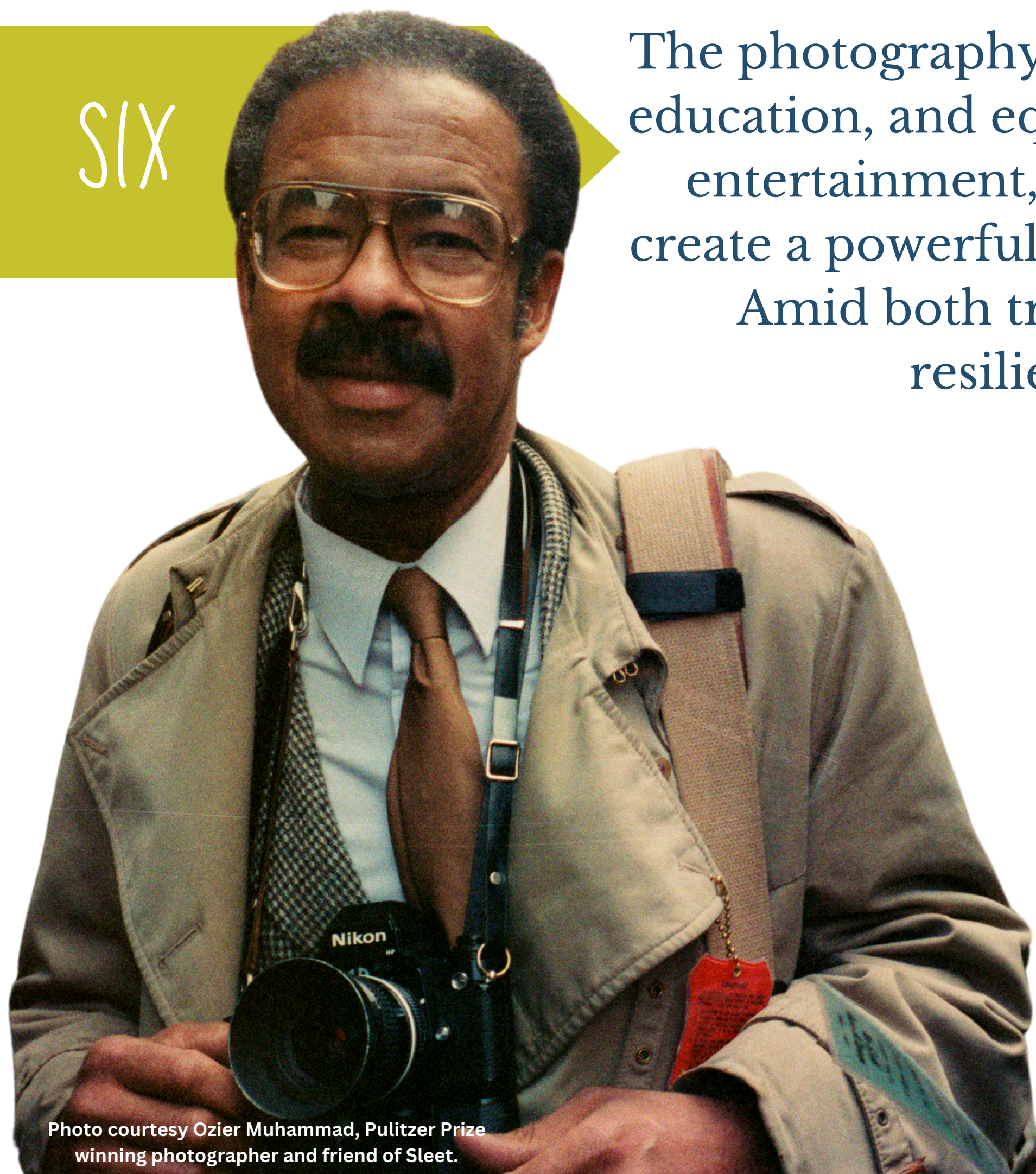


Photo courtesy Ozier Muhammad, Pulitzer Prize winning photographer and friend of Sleet.



Mandingo Princess, Monrovia, Liberia

Photo Credit Johnson Publishing Company Archive. Courtesy Ford Foundation, J. Paul Getty Trust, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Smithsonian Institution.



Dinah Washington and Sammy Davis Jr.



Children of a coal mining family in West Virginia

DISCUSSION
QUESTION ?

WHAT DO YOU HOPE IS YOUR LEGACY?