



African Americans in Winslow: Scenes From Our History



The Hayes Family



Henry Lee Hayes (1928-2004) was born in Hermanville, Mississippi, where he quit school to work when he was nine years old. He married Mary C. Echoles in 1949, and together they raised seven children: Mildred, James, Mary Alice, Henry Lee Jr., Sherri, Brenda, and Louise.

In 1956, they moved from Sunflower, Mississippi, to Winslow, where Hayes worked for the Nagel and Duke City Lumber Companies. Over the years he also worked for the State Highway Department, the City of Winslow, and for Goodwill Industries in Flagstaff. He retired from the Postal Service in 1990 after twenty-five years as a Star Route Mail Carrier (now Contract Delivery Service).

Seen above left at the Winslow Little League Park in 1969, Hayes coached Little League for sixteen years. He also served as president of the Winslow chapter of the NAACP and on several regional boards, including the Northern Arizona Council of Governments and Navajo County Workforce Investment Board.

Hayes was an Assistant Pastor for the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ. He once formed a gospel group with B.B. King while still in Mississippi, and he continued to sing in Winslow as a longtime member of the Faithful Few.

Despite chronic health problems, Hayes continued to work as much as possible, to further his education, and to serve his community. He felt that "it feels great to be alive and to feel that I can be of benefit to society . . . Of most importance is God's guidance in showing me the way." (Image courtesy of Mary Alice Hayes)



Daughters Mary Alice Hayes and Brenda Hayes Graham are well-known gospel singers in Northern Arizona. The Hayes Sisters have performed at special events throughout the region, including backing Diana Ross as members of the World Choir during the 1996 Super Bowl halftime show in Tempe.

Winslow artist Tina Mion was a featured artist in the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery's *Portraiture Now* exhibition, which included her portrait of the Hayes Sisters entitled *Glory* (2004). At left, Brenda and Mary Alice are seen singing *I Believe I Can Fly* at the opening of the exhibition on June 23, 2006. Mion submitted the painting because she wanted to see the sisters "alongside America's icons . . . representing generosity and kindness, unsung and unselfish."

The Hayes Sisters sing regularly at the Faith Temple Church of God in Christ. At right, Mary Alice and Brenda are seen performing with Tommy Dukes at the Winslow Chapter of the NAACP's Martin Luther King Day Celebration in 2018.