Ethel Willis was 27 years old when she began taking care of the five small children in the Wyman family. She quickly became part of the family, retiring from the position after 28 years of service. In 2004, Virginia and Deehan Wyman visited the University of Washington Press with two checks to establish a book series in Ethel’s name. Today, the V Ethel Willis White Endowment sponsors scholarly works and original creative writing by African American writers and scholarly works on African American history and culture.

One of the first books released with the endowment’s support was “On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of World War II.” Author Jack Hamann examines how three African American soldiers were convicted of first-degree murder in the lynching of an Italian POW at Fort Lawton, although there was no evidence linking them to the crime. As a result of Hamann’s research, the case was reopened and the convictions were overturned in time for two of the wrongly-convicted men to receive their honorable discharges.

Another of the nine books published thus far thanks to the endowment is “Seattle in Black and White: The Congress of Racial Equality and the Fight for Equal Opportunity” by Joan Singler, Jean Burning, Bettrylou Valentine and Martha Adams. Energized by the national civil rights movement, an interracial group of Seattle residents joined together to form the Seattle chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality. These four founding members recount Seattle’s role in the national movement to create a more just society.

And coming soon with the endowment’s support is “Portland's Black Panthers: Empowering Albina and Remaking a City.” In the 1960s, African American activists formed a local branch of the Black Panthers in Portland’s Albina District to rally their community. Authors Lucas Burke and Judson Jeffries highlight the group’s efforts to open a health clinic and start free breakfast programs for neighborhood kids.

“African American celebrities risked their careers to support the civil rights movement, not only advancing the cause in front of the cameras but also working tirelessly behind-the-scenes to raise money for legal defense funds, lead membership drives for the NAACP and personally engage with workaday activists to boost morale. We are honored to publish Emilie Raymond’s new book with the support of the V Ethel Willis White Endowment and the Capell Family Endowment for books on social justice.”
TELLING OUR STORIES THROUGH THE NORTHWEST WRITERS FUND

Established in 2013, the University of Washington Press's Northwest Writers Fund supports the work of some of the region’s most talented nonfiction writers. The fund was launched with a generous matching gift from longtime press supporters Janet and John Creighton. Several UW Press Advisory Board members contributed, including Linda and Peter Capell, Ruth and Alvin Eller and Mike Repass, as did other friends and supporters in the community.

Six authors have benefited thus far from the fund, which enables them to carve out the time they need to complete their research and writing. The first two books published with the fund’s support are coming out this fall: “Too High and Too Steep: Reshaping Seattle’s Topography,” by David B. Williams, and “Reclaimers,” by Ana Maria Spagna (see below for more about these two books). A third book, “Once and Future River: Reclaiming the Duwamish,” by Tom Reese and Eric Wagner, will be out in the spring, and the other three will follow in late 2016 and early 2017.

That is what the fund is all about, giving writers the opportunity to discover our stories and share them with readers.

Williams speaks eloquently of the fund’s impact on his work and through it, on the larger community. He says the fund “provided me the time and gave me the inspiration to find primary documents, longtime residents and local experts who have helped me tell the stories of this place. And that is what the fund is all about, giving writers the opportunity to discover our stories and share them with readers.”

To ensure continuing support for great books about our region, Mike Repass recently made a major gift to establish the Michael J. Repass Fund for Northwest Writers as a first step toward creating an endowed fund. This new fund will focus on books about the history and cultures of Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

NORTHWEST BOOKS COMING SOON

“Too High and Too Steep: Reshaping Seattle’s Topography” explores the radical ways in which the people of Seattle have altered the landscape to better accommodate their visions for the city. Garth Stein praised “Too High and Too Steep” as a “wonderful, fascinating and surprisingly poignant rendering of the birth of Seattle ... required reading for anyone interested in the Northwest and the history of American cities.”

“Reclaimers” is a beautifully wrought account of ordinary people up and down the West Coast doing extraordinary work to reclaim and restore their land and rivers. In uncovering their heroic stories, Ana Maria Spagna seeks a way for us to make right in a time of unsettling ecological change. As the poet Kim Stafford writes, “These stories restore our faith in sacred land, and in ourselves. Dawn may yet illuminate what has been reclaimed.”