

**Arts and Outreach Coordinator Report  
by Kyma Lassiter  
January 26, 2021**

## Summary

As our mission states, we are a Commission that preserves, protects, and promotes North Carolina's African American history, arts, and culture for all people. Since its inception in 2008, the NC African American Heritage Commission (AAHC) has excelled in implementing our vision of transforming and enriching people and communities throughout the state, focusing mainly on initiatives and programming which highlight historical moments and figures that have influenced or have had a direct impact on African American lives in North Carolina. Art can be used as a healing source that not only amplifies our work but also aids in how we navigate in sharing traumatic events that have affected African Americans across the state and beyond. To this end, I have created an Arts Integration Plan and it is my hope that through this plan we will increase our efforts in providing more arts-based initiatives, programming, partnership opportunities, and resources. We currently have a strong network of historians and heritage practitioners and now is the time to build and increase our relationships with North Carolina artists and creatives.

Within this Arts Integration Plan, we will discuss the following:

1. What will be the focus and priorities of this plan?
2. What are some steps we have already taken to implement this plan?
3. What are our future goals?
4. What are our immediate next steps?

## Focus & Priorities

There are four main focal points for this plan:

1. Develop connection points with African American arts and cultural institutions in North Carolina
2. Build arts-based programs and experiences
3. Cultivate and steward relationships with African American artists and creatives in North Carolina
4. Connect North Carolina youth to African American arts

There are three main priorities we will concentrate on implementing:

1. Provide networking & professional development opportunities for African American artists and creatives in North Carolina
2. Promote intentional connections to funders and grant opportunities for African American artists and creatives and African American arts organizations in North Carolina
3. Amplify local artists and their work



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## Current Programming

### My NC from A to Z Virtual Program Series

During the Summer of 2020, the AAHC collaborated with the State Library of North Carolina and local libraries in Cumberland, Durham, Lenoir, and Wilson Counties to plan and produce a four-part virtual educational series highlighting African American figures and historic locations in North Carolina referenced in the book. Within the four-part series, two of those programs focused on arts-centered themes:

**My NC from A to Z: Meet the Artist with Dare Coulter** (October 2020)—Twins and teens learned directly from Black, North Carolina-based artist and illustrator Dare Coulter as she shared her artistic process, and led participants through creating their own piece of art. This program was produced in partnership with the Cumberland County Library.

**My NC in My Backyard: S is for Songs with Bill Myers** (January 2021)—Elementary-aged children learned about the rich history of musicians from North Carolina and their legacy in Wilson from music legend and bandleader Bill Myers. This program was planned in partnership with the Wilson County Public Library.

### NC Green Book Project: The Chitlin' Circuit Revue at Hayti Heritage Center

The AAHC collaborated with the Hayti Heritage Center in Durham, NC to produce programming for the NC Green Book Project. AAHC Arts & Outreach Coordinator, Kyma Lassiter worked closely with Hayti Heritage Center's Program Director, Quentin Talley to produce a virtual documentary screening of *The Green Book; Guide to Freedom* and a virtual musical program entitled *The Chitlin' Circuit Revue*, highlighting performance venues and locations patrons frequented in Durham, NC. Featured artists included national recording artists, The Hamiltones and Mavis "Swan" Poole. The event was co-hosted by local historian Darrell Stover and spoken word artist, Dasan Ahanu.

## Cultivating Relationships

### North Carolina Museum of Art Liaison

During the Summer of 2020, Arts and Outreach Coordinator, Kyma Lassiter began serving as the primary liaison between the AAHC and the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA). In this role, Kyma has led events related to African American arts and culture at the NCMA while also serving on its Community Advocacy Board. She has also provided recommendations of African American artists and cultural practitioners to include in their future programming. Kyma will also be working with NCMA Director and CEO, Valerie Hillings to identify intentional connections to funding opportunities specifically for African American artists and creatives throughout the state.



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### North Carolina Arts Council Liaison

During the Summer of 2020, Arts and Outreach Coordinator, Kyma Lassiter began serving as the primary liaison between the AAHC and the North Carolina Arts Council (NCAC). In this role, Kyma has worked closely with Vice Chair, Tamara Holmes Brothers to strengthen the relationship with the AAHC and NCAC as well as work towards connecting the AAHC with artists and creatives in North Carolina. The following program is example of our efforts:

#### **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Arts Equity Forum: A Conversation with North Carolina**

**Organizations of Color**—The AAHC supported NCAC in planning and implementing an ongoing series of virtual listening sessions as an effort to understand how disparities of race, class, and access have created barriers for artists, arts organizations, and statewide constituents.

**Strategic Planning Partners: North Carolina Artists of Color Professional Development Workshop** - The AAHC supported the NCAC in planning and implementing this workshop which focused on the needs of working artists and artists of color. It offered skills and strategies to build careers and navigate the business of being an artist. It also was an opportunity for artists from all disciplines to take stock of their current situation, identify immediate challenges and work with professionals in the field to maximize their potential to achieve their short and long-term career goals.

### Historic Sites Arts Engagement

During the Spring of 2021, the AAHC has set a plan to work closely with the Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum to help strategize around creating spaces and opportunities for artists to work on these sacred grounds whether through creating residencies, cultural festivals, or performance opportunities.

### Future Goals

1. Establish a digital email list specifically for artists and creatives to receive monthly newsletters through our Mailchimp platform. (July 2021)
2. Establish a digital space on the AAHC website for artists and to connect with resources and opportunities. (July 2021)

### Immediate Next Steps

1. Review detailed plan of action with AAHC Director, Angela Thorpe. (March 2021)
2. Connect with Historic Site Director, Lacey Wilson to strategize around creating space for artistic opportunities at Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum.
3. Connect with Commissioners for additional resources and recommendations related to the arts within their respective regions. (April 2021)

4. Cultivate relationships with African American artists and creatives in North Carolina to obtain contact information for the digital email list (June 2021)
5. Cultivate relationships with the following arts institutions in North Carolina that focus on highlighting African American artists and creatives. (June 2021)
  - Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Arts+Culture
  - Oliver Nestus Freeman Roundhouse Museum
  - YMI Cultural Center
  - Delta Arts Center
  - Triad Cultural Arts
  - Kinston Music Park/Community Council for the Arts

## 2021 Black History Month AAHC Programming

### Black History Month Read-In

As Arts and Outreach Coordinator, I have led the planning process for our 2021 Black History Month Read-In which will highlight African American children's book authors in North Carolina. This will be a virtual program series produced in collaboration with the State Capitol of North Carolina, State Library of North Carolina, Liberation Station and Richard B. Harrison Community Library. The virtual program series will consist of interviews conducted by students from Top Teens of America (Wendell Chapter) where they will interview five African American children's book authors based in North Carolina. Reading selections from each author will also be filmed and the video series will be released weekly throughout the month of February on the AAHC's YouTube page.

### NC Black History Month Playlist

Our 2021 Black History Month playlist will highlight African American musicians of all genres from North Carolina and will be shared across our networks through our listserv and website. Featured artists on the playlist include John Coltrane, Roberta Flack, 9<sup>th</sup> Wonder, Rhiannon Giddens, Shirley Caesar, Thelonious Monk, Rapsody, Maceo Parker and many more.

### Teaching Artist Workshop with Visual Artist Michelle Davis Petelinz

During the month of February, the AAHC will work with local visual artist and owner of Kindred Spirit Studios, Michelle Davis Petelinz and offer a virtual art program for middle school-aged children at East Garner IB Creative Arts and Magnet Middle School. The program, led by Michelle Davis Petelinz, will consist of two virtual workshops where students will learn about the life and work of Harlem Renaissance artist and North Carolina native, Romare Bearden. Students will also create a collage inspired by Bearden's work.