

**Arts and Outreach Coordinator Report**  
**by Kyma Lassiter**  
**January 19, 2022**

It has been my pleasure to serve as the Arts and Outreach Coordinator for the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission (NCAAHC) for the past year and as its Constituent Affairs Liaison since 2018. During my time with the NCAAHC, I have enjoyed working on multiple projects and partnerships that support our organization's mission of preserving, promoting, and protecting African American arts, artists, and creatives in North Carolina for all people. I have highlighted these efforts in the report below.

## **CONSTITUENT AFFAIRS**

### **Constituent Correspondence**

The NCAAHC receives numerous inquiries regarding African American heritage and culture in our general email inbox from constituents across the state and beyond. These inquiries include but are not limited to speaker or presenter requests, information related to African American cemetery preservation, and information regarding a NCAAHC initiative such as the Green Book Project. These requests were streamlined via email to engage a NCAAHC staff member, Commissioner, or sometimes an outside party who had the knowledge or expertise to assist the constituent based on each request.

### **Commissioner Communique**

During each month, news and updates were shared with all Commissioners via email with information related to the NCAAHC. This monthly communique included information on NCAAHC initiatives, statewide programs and events related to African American heritage and culture, exciting opportunities Commissioners participated in on behalf of the NCAAHC and much more.

### **Commissioner Engagement Plan**

As the NCAAHC Constituent Affairs Liaison, Kyma Lassiter worked closely with NCAAHC Associate Director, Adrienne Nirde to establish a Commissioner Engagement Plan to activate or reactivate our current Commissioners to engage more closely within the NCAAHC. The plan focused on the geographical locations and expertise of each Commissioner to determine how and where they are best suited to assist in speaking with legislators, constituent engagement, sharing awareness related to African American heritage and culture and arts engagement.

## **ARTS & OUTREACH**

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

During the Summer of 2020, the NCAAHC 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:

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**My NC from A to Z: Meet the Artist with Dare Coulter** (October 2020)—Tweens 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 NCAAHC collaborated with the Hayti Heritage Center in Durham, NC to produce programming for the NC Green Book Project. NCAAHC 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.

#### **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 NCAAHC and the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA). In this role, Kyma led events related to African American arts and culture at the NCMA while also serving on its Community Advocacy Board. She has provided recommendations of African American artists and cultural practitioners to include in their future programming such as the following:

#### **Transforming Lives Through Arts: Innovation Mentorship Program at the North Carolina Museum of Art:**

During the summer of 2021, the NCAAHC partnered with the North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) and the Boys & Girls Club of North Carolina to create and launch a new signature arts outreach program focusing on middle school students to inspire the next generation of artists and museum workers. By focusing this program on middle school students, it has the potential to make a critical impact during a formative developmental age. This program is designed to feature a series of six-week artists residencies in the clubs that bring artists, art materials, and arts integrated lesson plans into after school programs in rural communities east of Highway I-95. It also supports diverse artists, tapping into community-based artists who practice in different media and are at varying stages of their development. This paid opportunity to interact within their local communities offers artists a reciprocal empowerment opportunity to grow and impact change. This partnership will be a three-year initiative where the AAHC will contribute as needed, by aiding in identifying African American teaching artists and additional contacts throughout Eastern North Carolina for programming space and after-school programs that tailor to the needs of African American and BIPOC youth.

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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 worked closely with Vice Chair, Tamara Holmes Brothers to strengthen the relationship with the NCAAHC and NCAC as well as work towards connecting the NCAAHC with artists and creatives in North Carolina. The following programs are an example of our efforts:

**Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Arts Equity Forum: A Conversation with North Carolina Organizations of Color**—The NCAAHC 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.

**Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Professional Development Workshop (2021):** The NCAAHC supported the North Carolina Arts Council, Strategic Planning Partners, and The McColl Center in planning and implementing this two-part virtual workshop series which focused on the needs of working artists and artists of color. The workshop series took place during two weekends in July 2021 and 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.

### Website Development

During the Summer of 2021, Naja Robinson, a recent graduate of Elizabeth City State University was hired as a summer intern through the department's HBCU/MIHE Internship Program. Naja was selected from a pool of candidates for our "Highlighting the Contributions of African American Artists and Creatives" initiative and is currently working to develop a digital space on the AAHC website which will feature iconic African American artists and creatives from North Carolina. Future work on the website will consist of a local artist directory, upcoming arts related events, funding opportunities, and additional artist resources

### NCAAHC Arts Newsletter

During the Spring of 2021, the NCAAHC contracted Naja Robinson, a recent graduate of Elizabeth City State University and former HBCU/MIHE Intern, to initiate a call for sign-ups for our new NCAAHC Arts Newsletter. Through social media posts, listings in our general newsletter, and with marketing assistance from the North Carolina Arts Council we obtained over fifty registrations from local artists and arts organizations. As a thank you to those who registered, the NCAAHC offered a special giveaway of artist care packages filled with tailored supplies for visual and literary artists. The NCAAHC Arts Newsletter is distributed monthly where the first newsletter installment was issued in July of 2021 and a total of six newsletters have been shared within the listserv.



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## 2021 Black History Month NCAAHC Programming

### Black History Month Read-In

As Arts and Outreach Coordinator, Kyma led the planning process for our 2021 Black History Month Read-In which highlighted African American children's book authors in North Carolina. This was 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 consisted of interviews conducted by students from Top Teens of America (Wendell Chapter) where they interviewed five African American children's book authors based in North Carolina. Reading selections from each author were also filmed and the video series was released weekly throughout the month of February on the AAHC's YouTube page.

### NC Black History Month Playlist

Our 2021 Black History Month playlist highlighted African American musicians of all genres from North Carolina and was shared across our networks through our listserv and website. Featured artists on the playlist included 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 2021, the NCAAHC worked with local visual artist and owner of Kindred Spirit Studios, Michelle Davis Petelinz and offered 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, consisted of two virtual workshops where students learned about the life and work of Harlem Renaissance artist and North Carolina native, Romare Bearden. Students also created a collage inspired by Bearden's work.

## 2022 Black History Month NCAAHC Programming

### Black History Month Read-In

This year we are encouraging our audiences to stay in and read in at home by providing a reading list of African American books and authors curated by Shelves Bookstore based in Charlotte, NC. Shelves Bookstore owner, Abbigail Glen, has curated a reading list of 4 categories (Adult Fiction, Adult Non-Fiction, Young Adult, and Children) that will highlight African American authors of all genres across the diaspora. The curated list will be shared with our previous partners, the State Capitol of North Carolina, State Library of North Carolina, and Richard B. Harrison Community Library for additional distribution. We will also share the list by creating a promotional YouTube video with a student from Top Teens of America (Wendell Chapter).

### Black History Month Spotify Playlist

Our 2022 Black History Month Spotify Playlist will highlight independent African American musicians of all genres from North Carolina and will be shared across our networks through our listserv, social media platforms, and website. The list is curated by music journalist and former television news producer, Shameika Rhymes, based in Charlotte, NC and features over 125 songs from multiple artists across the state.

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**Ocean City Beach Citizens Council Digital Content**

The NCAAHC will be producing video content on the history and legacy of Ocean City, a prominent African American community established during the 1940s in North Topsail Beach, NC. Carla Torrey and Kenneth Chesnutt, of the Ocean City Beach Citizens Council will participate in the video content and share information, photos, and locations that have been affected by climate change over the years within this community. The video will be shared on the NCAAHC’s YouTube page and through our social media platforms.