

Meeting of the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission January 19, 2024 Director's Report

Prepared by Adrienne Nirdé, Director, NC African American Heritage Commission

COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENTS

New Appointments

- Robert Freeman (Cabarrus County) for a term expiring September 30, 2026

Reappointments

- Dr. Tamara Holmes Brothers (Wake County) for a term expiring September 30, 2026
- Deloris Rhodes (New Hanover County) for a term expiring September 30, 2026
- Reverend Dr. Pierre Crawford (Gaston County) for a term expiring September 30, 2026

ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

- Newly filled NCAAHC staff positions:
 - o Khadija McNair, Freedom Park Manager
 - o Folaranmi Afolayan, Administrative Assistant
- Currently vacant staff positions:
 - o Associate Director (currently posted through January 22, 2024)
 - o Education & Interpretation Specialist (currently posted through January 22, 2024)

MAJOR PROJECT UPDATE

Freedom Park

August 23, 2023 marked the grand opening celebration of North Carolina Freedom Park. AAHC staff in collaboration with the NC Freedom Park Board and DNCR staff planned the celebration. As the first park in North Carolina dedicated to honoring the African American struggle for freedom, it stands as a beacon of hope and a reminder that the ideals of perseverance, equality, and freedom are universal aspirations that can unite us all. With the hiring of our first Freedom Park Manager, Khadija McNair at the top of January 2024 we are very excited to begin planning for field trips and programming in earnest.

North Carolina Civil Rights Trail

In the spring of 2020, the AAHC received funding from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation to develop and launch the NC Civil Rights Trail in partnership with Visit NC and the NC Office of Archives & History. The project will identify and mark (digitally and physically) North Carolina sites key to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, or critical to advancing civil rights in the state. This project has created one interactive, evergreen digital map of North Carolina civil rights sites, and will ultimately yield fifty physical, community-based markers by the end of 2024.

To date, 32 markers have been awarded:

1. New Ahoskie Baptist Church (Ahoskie)
2. 1951 Adkin High School Walkouts (Kinston)
3. Shelby Sit-Ins
4. Cameron Village Sit-Ins (Raleigh)
5. Joseph Holt, Sr. and Elwyna Holt—Holt Family (Raleigh)
6. Ocean City Beach (Topsail Island)
7. Elizabeth City Sit-Ins
8. Kinston Sit-Ins
9. Blair Park Municipal Golf Course (High Point)
10. Monroe, NC Wade-Ins
11. 1963 Brevard High School Football Team
12. Greensboro 6—Gillespie Golf Course (Greensboro)
13. Johnson v. Branch (Enfield)
14. Halifax County Voters Movement (Enfield)
15. Griggs v. Duke (Reidsville)
16. James H. Jones (Jackson)
17. MLK Jr. (Montreat)
18. Hargaves Community Center (Chapel Hill)
19. Huber Arthur Eaton (Wilmington)
20. Watts Grill (Chapel Hill)
21. Slade’s Chapel (Morganton)
22. Warren Co. Community Center (Warrenton)
23. East Tarboro (Tarboro)
24. Fayetteville Protests (Fayetteville)
25. Magnolia House (Greensboro)
26. Willis “Bill” Graves Jr. (Raleigh)
27. R.N. Harris Elementary School (Durham)
28. The Freedom House (Edenton) – *awarded in Round V*
29. Hobson R. Reynolds (Winton) – *awarded in Round V*
30. Johnson C. Smith University Sit-ins (Charlotte) – *awarded in Round V*
31. Oscar Dove (New Bern) – *awarded in Round V*
32. St. Peter’s AME Zion (New Bern) – *awarded in Round V*

The William G. Pomeroy Foundation has agreed to extend funding for the trail through 2024. We will be holding two additional application cycles during this time with an aim to connect with applicants where there is low representation on the trail.

AAHC in collaboration with Visit NC worked on the production of a podcast in conjunction with the US Civil Rights Trail which launched in October 2023. The episodes are now live on the US Civil Rights Trail [website](#).

“A Tale of Two Ships: Part Deux” (Awarded June 2021)

The project team will be completing travel in January and March 2024 to complete the next phase of this project. This travel will include visits to France and Martinique to continue archival research on *La Concorde* to yield academic scholarship, digital content, and expansive interpretation in DNCR institutions. Following this travel, in collaboration with the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* Conservation Lab, a fourth research convening will be hosting in Summer 2024.

African American Music Trails

On October 21, 2023, AAHC first its first African American Music Trail Festival at the Rocky Mount Mills in Rocky Mount, NC. Featured artists included Tish SongBird, the Nu Gospel Trumpeters, Joe Brown & the Band, and Troya amongst others. The event served as an opportunity for AAHC to connect with community members in addition to serving as a template for future programming of the trail.

On December 5, 2023, a celebration of the African American Music Trails was hosted at Tryon Palace in New Bern as part of the Music at the Mansion series, co-hosted by First Lady Kristen Cooper. The evening featured Joe Brown & the Band, a local group with deep roots in eastern North Carolina.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Select Traditional Press Coverage

- Bumgarner, Steve. “Navigating Jim Crow: The Green Book and Oasis Spaces in North Carolina’ Traveling Exhibit.” *Yes! Weekly*, 9 Oct. 2023, https://www.yesweekly.com/literature/navigating-jim-crow-the-green-book-and-oasis-spaces-in-north-carolina-traveling-exhibit/article_386023ba-66c9-11ee-8948-7ff918e7b4b2.html.
- Edwards, Christy. “Asheville Community Center Hosts Green Book Exhibit Highlighting Black Life during Jim Crow Era.” *The City of Asheville*, 25 Oct. 2023, <https://www.ashevillenc.gov/news/asheville-community-centers-host-green-book-exhibit-highlighting-black-life-during-jim-crow-era/>.
- Ladner, Addie. “Celebrating Roots.” *Walter Magazine*, 1 Sept. 2023, pp. 96–96.
- Moore, Jamaul. “Marking History.” *Walter Magazine*, 1 Sept. 2023, pp. 74–79.
- Piggott, Sharryse. “After 20 Years, North Carolina Freedom Park Opens to the Public.” *WUNC*, 23 Aug. 2023, <https://www.wunc.org/news/2023-08-23/after-20-years-north-carolina-freedom-park-opens-to-the-public>.
- Schoenbaum, Hannah. “North Carolina Unveils Its First Park Honoring African American History.” *Associated Press*, 23 Aug. 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/freedom-park-african-american-history-north-carolina-25918d4683551b5317283ea5d6d03b64>.