

**Report for Meeting of the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission  
July 2022**

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**COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENTS & RE-APPOINTMENTS**

- Hon. Pauline Hankins (Brunswick County)
- Elder Fondella A. Leigh (Perquimans County)
- Dr. Leslie McKesson reappointed (Burke County)

**ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES**

- NCAAHC staff positions intertwined in the hiring process: Program Coordinator; Education & Interpretation Specialist; Administrative Associate.
- NCAAHC will now serve as the lead steward of the African American Music Trails of Eastern North Carolina.
- Two requests from the NCAAHC were considered for the 2022-2023 short session budget: funding for the African American Monument on State Capitol Grounds and funding for one full-time position, a Park Manager for North Carolina Freedom Park. These requests were not fulfilled.
- We are delighted to welcome Commissioners of the American Indian Heritage Commission, as well as AIHC staff: Director Kerry Bird and Associate Director Quinn Godwin.

**NCAAHC STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS, FY 2022-2023**

- NCAAHC Strategic Plan Goals, FY 2022-2023:
  1. Continue to expand grassroots technical assistance support to statewide cultural groups.  
  
Action:  
-Create a repository of technical assistance resources.
  2. Collaborate with internal and external partners to develop statewide African American Heritage Tourism Study and Implementation Plan.  
  
Actions:  
-Identify funding for study and SWOT analysis.  
-Collaborate with internal and external partners to execute study and SWOT analysis and craft implementation plan.
  3. Convene grassroots groups around statewide African American heritage needs and professional development opportunities.  
  
Actions:  
-Identify priority groups to convene by 2024.

-Begin planning convenings.

4. Share news, funding resources, and professional development opportunities with stakeholders.

Action:

-Increase sharing of relevant resources for artists, as well as milestones and news related to African American artists rooted in North Carolina.

5. Establish and nurture relationships with university and college programs and departments with disciplines that align with AAHC work.

Actions:

-Execute outreach to identified programs and departments.

-Craft HBCU outreach strategy.

-Continue to explore strategies to widen pathways for future practitioners.

6. Develop strategy for connecting AAHC to K-12 public schools.

Action:

-Hire Education & Interpretation Specialist.

-Develop educator-focused professional development experiences centered on AAHC resources and initiatives.

7. Expand portfolio of public engagement resources.

Action:

-Prepare for the public opening of North Carolina Freedom Park.

-Build opportunities, awareness, and resources around AAHC trails in preparation for Year of the Trail.

-Secure funding for Africa to Carolina public art markers.

-Build infrastructure for preserving, advocating for, and commemorating NC Green Book sites.

## TRAIL UPDATES

### 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.

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To date, fourteen markers have been awarded:

1. New Ahoskie Baptist Church (Ahoskie)—Installed August 2021
2. 1951 Adkin High School Walkouts (Kinston)—Installed November 2021
3. Shelby Sit-Ins—Installed February 2022
4. Cameron Village Sit-Ins (Raleigh)
5. Joseph Holt, Sr. and Elwyna Holt—Holt Family (Raleigh)
6. Ocean City Beach (Topsail Island)—Installed July 2022
7. Elizabeth City Sit-Ins
8. Kinston Sit-Ins
9. Blair Park Municipal Golf Course (High Point)
10. Monroe, NC Wade-Ins—Installed July 2022
11. 1963 Brevard High School Football Team
12. Greensboro 6—Gillespie Golf Course
13. Johnson v. Branch (Enfield)
14. Halifax County Voters Movement (Enfield)

A third round of applications are being accepted until August 2022. NCAAHC staff anticipate opening a fourth and final round of applications, during which the N.C. Civil Rights Trail Coordinator will execute in-person statewide outreach to garner more applicants and to reach applicants in spaces where there is low representation on the trail.

### **Freedom Roads**

NCAAHC Trails Coordinator, Ashley Adams, developed several new physical resources for Freedom Roads, including rack cards to be placed at a series of historic sites. Ashley’s work has included developing historical tabletop waysides chronicling freedom seeking stories at the following sites:

- Stagville State Historic Site
- Brunswick Town/Ft. Anderson State Historic Site
- Somerset Place State Historic Site
- Great Dismal Swamp State Park
- Elizabeth City State University

Waysides were developed collaboratively with the North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites & Properties, North Carolina State Parks, and history professors at Elizabeth City State University. Waysides will be fabricated and installed at these sites by late 2022.

### **African American Music Trails of Eastern North Carolina**

The African American Music Trails of Eastern North Carolina, which were developed in partnership with the NCAAHC and the N.C. Arts Council, have come under the stewardship of the NCAAHC. Currently, the NCAAHC is planning for trail

reactivation. Early reactivation work will take the form of booking and installing trail-related traveling exhibits in early 2023, refreshing and developing new digital content, and community engagement around the future of the trail.

## PROJECT UPDATES

### **An Eagle on His Button (NPS Network to Freedom Grant, 2021-2022)**

This funding enabled [digital educational resources centered on the U.S. Colored Troops](#) to be developed in partnership with Tryon Palace and Carolina K-12. Educators from across the state will receive training on how to apply these resources to the classroom in October of 2022. Currently this work is being led by the NCAAHC Trails Coordinator.

### **“Africa to Carolina: Next Steps in the Journey” (Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant, Awarded July 2020; Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Planning Grant, Awarded July 2022)**

Following a thorough national search, Amber Pelham, a graduate of the Public History graduate program at New York University and a Hampton University alum, was selected as the two-year Research Fellow for the AAHC’s “Africa to Carolina: Next Steps in the Journey” project. Amber began her role at the end of January 2021.

Amber performed additional research on the slave trade in the colony of North Carolina and has developed robust drafts of an introductory exhibit centering on the relationship between the Transatlantic Slave Trade and North Carolina. The exhibit underwent a thorough, stakeholder-centered review process in the Summer and Fall of 2021, as well as a thorough review by the North Carolina Historic Sites Exhibit Coordinating Committee in early 2022.

Slightly variable versions of this exhibit will be installed at Bath State Historic Site, Brunswick Town/Ft. Anderson State Historic Site, Edenton State Historic Site, Somerset Place State Historic Site, Tryon Palace, Roanoke Island Festival Park, and the NC Maritime Museum at Beaufort in the Spring and Summer of 2022.

The project will also fund the development of an “Africa to Carolina” web portal. This website will be designed to showcase information and resources that we know and have currently, with the intention of building upon it after the conclusion of the project in alignment with the larger goals of the Africa to Carolina initiative. A seasoned web contractor, Phil Bicking, joined the project team to build the web portal in July 2021. The web portal will go live by December of 2022.

“Africa to Carolina” was selected as a semifinalist for the **Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation’s Inclusive Public Art Initiative**. If selected as a finalist in 2023, funding would enable the project to expand to place public art markers in coastal disembarkation communities.

### **“A Tale of Two Ships: Part Deux” (Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant, Awarded June 2021)**

Funding will enable the AAHC to continue doing archival research on *La Concorde* overseas in France, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. This work will yield academic scholarship, digital content, and expansive interpretation in DNCR institutions.



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Due to pandemic-imposed travel restrictions, the project team pushed overseas travel to early 2023. The NCAAHC will recruit for project staff in the fall of 2022. In the meantime, and in alignment with the grant award, the project team collaborated with the *Queen Anne's Revenge* Conservation Lab to plan the third annual *LaC/QAR* research convening in February 2022.

NCAAHC associate director, Adrienne Nirdé, is working with the North Carolina Museum of History and the North Carolina Maritime Museum at Beaufort to install exhibit updates in these institutions that reflect the history of *La Concorde*.

**Green Books "Oasis Spaces" Project (African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund Grant, Awarded July 2021)**

The AAHC will lead the planning project to conceptualize development of a national marker and digital mapping program for existing Green Book sites. Working in conjunction with colleagues from the SC African American Heritage Commission, we will work to identify, develop, and build out infrastructure for the project. After piloting the project in North Carolina and South Carolina, the resulting framework for identification, research, online tool development, mapping, and marking sites could be scaled up for national implementation beyond the life of this planning project. Stakeholder work sessions for this project commenced in June of 2022 and will conclude in August of 2022. A series of toolkits, plans, and blueprints will be created as a result of this work.

**NCAAHC Resource Library (North Carolina Humanities American Rescue Plan Grant, Awarded September 2021)**

This award funds "Growing Our Griots: Strengthening North Carolina's Black Heritage-Keepers" in alignment with the NCAAHC Strategic Plan and as a follow up grant to an NC CARES: Humanities Relief Grant the NCAAHC received in 2020. "Growing Our Griots" will provide a multi-part virtual professional development series to African American heritage practitioners in 2022.

The project will also create technical leaflets centered on common heritage-based technical assistance questions and concerns. The leaflets will be made available online via the NCAAHC's website in August of 2022.