

Media Contacts:

Marcie Gordon, Director, Community Engagement and Marketing
919-807-7995, marcie.gordon@ncdcr.gov

AK Brinson, Press Release
919-807-7943, ak.brinson@ncdcr.gov

Emily Grant, Festival Coordinator
919-807-7979, emily.grant@ncdcr.gov

**Kick Off Black History Month at the 17th Annual African American Cultural Celebration**

RALEIGH, N.C. — Join the **North Carolina Museum of History** for its **17th annual African American Cultural Celebration (AACC)**, the state's official kick off event for Black History Month. This festive and educational event for all ages will take place **Saturday, January 27**, from **10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** at the museum in downtown Raleigh. Named a Top 20 Event by the Southeast Tourism Society for a third consecutive year, the festival features more than 75 musicians, storytellers, dancers, chefs, historians, playwrights, authors, artists, reenactors and more. *Admission and parking are free.*

The past is interwoven with the present at the start of the festival, as the Tryon Palace Jonkonnu Drummers, representing an African American celebration whose roots can be traced back to Jamaica and West Africa, pave the way, followed shortly after by a United States Colored Troops reenactment group and color guard, then by the young students of A Drummer's World Drumline from Goldsboro. Michelle Lanier, executive director of the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission (AAHC), Dr. Valerie Ann Johnson, AAHC chair and a professor at Bennett College, and J. Ivy, poet, writer and photographer, will welcome everyone to the festival. True Vine will conclude the opening procession with a performance of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" to start the festival.

Excitement builds throughout the day as dancers, singers, storytellers and other presenters fill the museum building. Among the highlights are Greensboro's Vanessa Ferguson, a contestant on this year's *The Voice*, performing R&B on the Staircase Stage and culinary historian and former Carolina Chocolate Drops member Justin Robinson, who will enlighten attendees on foodways of the African diaspora.

Children will be busy with hands-on activities that include a gallery hunt (with prizes as incentive), a traditional African-games station, a cowrie-shell necklace-making activity and others. Food will be available from Pharaoh's @ the Museum, as well as outdoor food vendors Lee's Kitchen (Jamaican food truck) and The Kupkake Fairy (bakery/dessert tent on the plaza), so enjoy lunch and plan to stay awhile.

“Each year, the planning committee says, ‘We can’t top last year’s event!’ and each year, the event just gets bigger and better,” says Emily Grant, coordinator of AACC. “The celebration has grown from a small afternoon event with a few hundred people to a daylong statewide kick off to Black History Month with thousands in attendance. This year’s theme is **From Africa to the Americas**, which has allowed us to trace the legacy of rich cultural traditions carried from Africa and the West Indies that blended into the unique history and culture of America and North Carolina.”

During the day, take advantage of firsthand opportunities to learn about the state’s African American culture, past and present. **Here’s a sampling of what you can experience:**

- Music and dance groups that include the Jamrock Reggae Band, the Chicago-style step group Steppin N Style and the 100 Men in Black male chorus, to name a few.
- Hands-on activities that include playing mancala and achi, crafting a cowrie-shell necklace, creating a doctor’s head mirror with staff from the Pope House Museum in Raleigh and taking a spin on the **Wheel of History** to test your knowledge.
- Cooking demonstrations from Gina and Blaise Pehot (owners of Yaya’s Fusion) and Clarissa Clifton Lynch, author of *One Hearth, One Pot: For Love of Food and History*.
- A variety of head-wrapping techniques demonstrated by Shabu Jones, owner of Taji Natural Hair Styling.
- Letting off some STEAM with Lollipop and Mop Top, the Hip-Hop Scientist, and meeting and playing alongside the Jonkonnu drummers of Tryon Palace.
- Checking out some of the cars and talking with members of the Eugene Coard drag-racing team about their experiences on and off the track, then taking the seatbelt challenge!

So, mark your calendars for the **17th Annual African American Cultural Celebration**. For a **full schedule** of all **performances** and **presentations**, visit NCMOH-programs.com or call 919-807-7900.

This event is supported by the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission, the City of Raleigh Arts Commission, United Arts Council of Raleigh and Wake County with funds from the United Arts Campaign, North Carolina Writers' Network, *Blue Cross* and *Blue Shield of North Carolina*, CarMax, *The Triangle Tribune*, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and the North Carolina Museum of History Associates.

For information about the N.C. Museum of History, a Smithsonian Affiliate museum, call [919-807-7900](tel:919-807-7900), access ncmuseumofhistory.org, or follow on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Access publicity images here!

About the N.C. Museum of History

The N.C. Museum of History is located at 5 E. Edenton Street in downtown Raleigh. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The museum collects and preserves artifacts of North Carolina history and educates the public on the history of the state and the nation through exhibits and educational programs. Each year more than 400,000 people visit the museum to see

some of the 150,000 artifacts in the museum collection. The Museum of History, within the Division of State History Museums, is part of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

About the N.C. African American Heritage Commission (honorary sponsor)

The N.C. African American Heritage Commission, a part of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, is based at the N.C. Arts Council. The Commission is charged to preserve, protect and promote North Carolina's African American history, arts, and culture for *all* people!

About the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR) is the state agency with a vision to be the leader in using the state's natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational and economic future of North Carolina. NCDNCR's mission is to improve the quality of life in our state by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries and nature in North Carolina by stimulating learning, inspiring creativity, preserving the state's history, conserving the state's natural heritage, encouraging recreation and cultural tourism, and promoting economic development. NCDNCR includes 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums and Jennette's Pier, 39 state parks and recreation areas, the N.C. Zoo, the nation's first state-supported Symphony Orchestra, the State Library, the State Archives, the N.C. Arts Council, State Preservation Office and the Office of State Archaeology, along with the Division of Land and Water Stewardship. For more information, please call 919-807-7300 or visit ncdcr.gov.

###