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NC Museum of History opens display to honor the legacy of North Carolina’s African American service members

This temporary display, on view throughout Black History Month, is a collaboration between NCDMVA, NC Museum of History, Elizabeth City State University School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and State Archives of NC to collect, preserve, and display NC’s Black veterans’ stories for future generations.

Raleigh, NC — To coincide with Black History Month programming, the North Carolina Museum of History has opened a new temporary display, “We Wanted to Fight: Black North Carolinians in World War II,” to commemorate the history of African American military service in North Carolina.

On view in the museum lobby beginning Feb. 1, the panel display honors the legacy of brave African American service members across North Carolina.

The temporary display is part of a joint grant project of the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, the North Carolina Museum of History, Elizabeth City State University School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the State Archives of North Carolina Military Collection in recognition of the African American Military and Veterans Lineage Project.

“All of our service members and veterans have a story to tell,” said North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Secretary Walter Gaskin. “Black Americans have always answered the call to serve, and this program during Black History Month is a fitting tribute to their stories, patriotism and deep commitment to this country and to the great state of North Carolina.”
“Uncovering and sharing often-untold stories is at the heart of what the North Carolina Museum of History does,” said North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Secretary Reid Wilson. “This collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the State Archives will give all North Carolinians the opportunity to learn of the proud and courageous tradition of service of Black Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States.”

The State Archives of North Carolina preserves and makes accessible the personal accounts of North Carolina’s military veterans so future generations may hear their stories and better understand the realities of war. This project taps into the stories of African American military service members from North Carolina through a collection of interviews, correspondence, photographs and artifacts.

To coincide with the museum display’s opening, the State Archives has published “Trials and Tribulations: North Carolina African American Soldiers and the Racial Divide,” a booklet that commemorates the history of North Carolina Black Americans’ military service.

Visitors to the museum can view the display through February 28 during regular museum hours.

The exhibit is free. For more information, visit https://www.ncmuseumofhistory.org/.

More information on the African American Military and Veterans Lineage Project can be found here.

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