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Heritage Commission Seeks African American Perspective of the Coronavirus

Columbia -- The South Carolina African American Heritage Commission has opened a web portal to capture African American impressions of the Coronavirus' impact on their lives, and to establish a permanent record of the African American experience during this historic event. The portal "[Black Carolinians Speak: Portraits of a Pandemic](#)" invites African Americans in South Carolina to submit stories, photography, video, art work, poetry and other material that illustrates their impressions of the pandemic.

"The goal is to gather as much information as possible about how this pandemic affected us, how did we respond, how did we cope," said SCAAHC Chairperson Jannie Harriot. "Future generations are going to be as curious about the Coronavirus' effect on our community as we are today about the Spanish flu of 1918. They will likely seek to understand how this global pandemic redefined what it meant to be Black in South Carolina and how the crisis altered the rhythms and traditions of African American life in the Palmetto State."

Data from the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control suggests that African Americans have been disproportionately impacted by the Coronavirus. As of this week, 56 percent of those who have died from the virus in South Carolina were Black, but African Americans are only 27 percent of the state's population. The pandemic has also exacerbated existing inequalities and disparities in education, health, and employment.

The Commission welcomes comments from all African American citizens across the state of South Carolina. Some professions such as healthcare, law enforcement, tourism, as well as the faith-based and service industries were seriously impacted by COVID 19, and the Commission is particularly interested in those voices. Additionally, the Commission welcomes comments from students and teachers from across the state due to the disruption that occurred in the educational process.

All material submitted to the portal will be housed in the SCAAHC's collection at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Project leaders also plan to schedule oral history interviews with interested persons.

"We don't want this historic event to be chronicled without the African American voice," Harriot said. "It's our obligation to make the historic record as complete as possible by including the Black perspective."

About the SCAAHC

Established through a joint resolution passed by the South Carolina General Assembly on May 14, 1993, the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission (SCAAHC) is devoted to preserving and promoting the rich history and culture of African Americans in the Palmetto State. Since its inception, the Commission has enhanced the efforts of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History to document and educate the public about the Black experience in South Carolina through cultural

programs, curriculum development, teacher training workshops, the publication of books and online resources, and the preservation of historic spaces.

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