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PRESS RELEASE

Mellon Grant Provides \$750,000 to WeGOJA Foundation for Historic Preservation

Columbia, SC – March 30, 2023 – The WeGOJA Foundation has received a \$750,000 Humanities in Place grant from the Mellon Foundation to build the foundation’s organizational capacity and develop resources that assist in preserving historic spaces.

The funding covers two years of project work and will result in a comprehensive program that helps property owners and advocates meet their preservation goals – from acquiring official state historical markers and listings on the National Register to finding expertise and resources for preservation planning and restoration work.

“We are delighted to have received significant funding from the Mellon Foundation,” said Dr. Larry Watson, a history professor at South Carolina State University and the University of South Carolina, and Chairman of the Board for the WeGOJA Foundation. “This support helps us meet a longstanding goal of fully serving a constituency that can be overwhelmed by the complex process of preservation. We hope to make it easier for people to find the resources they need to save their cultural and historic places and encourage more participation in preservation.”

WeGOJA focuses on creating robust platforms for the public to discover African American history. The Foundation was instrumental in publishing the [African American Historic Places in South Carolina](#) guide, which served as a basis for its award-winning [GreenBookofSC.com](#). The Foundation recently collaborated with Hub City Press and the International African American Museum to publish a [paperback version](#) of the guide. WeGOJA also produces [teacher’s guides](#) to help educators find curriculum-based solutions to sharing African American history in the classroom.

Formerly the South Carolina African American Heritage Foundation, [WeGOJA](#) is also a leader in acquiring official state historical markers for African American sites across the state. In 1993, there were only 36 sites in South Carolina that carried a marker and/or were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Over the decades since, the work and advocacy of foundation members, in their support of the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission, has resulted in more than 400 documented sites.

The work is continuous, however.

“We know there are so many more places in South Carolina that need attention,” Dr. Watson said. “From cemeteries, historic homes and schools, to business districts and churches, the footprint of African Americans in the Palmetto State is vast and should be protected so it can be shared.”

The Foundation currently is working with the Gullah Geechee Chamber Foundation and S.C. Sea Grant Consortium on the development of a Gullah Geechee Seafood Trail and with the Conservation Voters of South Carolina on the feasibility of a proposed Rosenwald School trail.

For more information, visit WeGOJA.org.

About the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through our grants, we seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive. Learn more at mellon.org.

