

PRESS RELEASE

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WeGOJA Foundation Awarded Grant from the 1772 Foundation

Columbia -- The WeGOJA Foundation has received funding from the 1772 Foundation to expand the oral history initiative “Black Carolinians Speak: Portraits of a Pandemic” to 35 counties in North Carolina and to develop other associated projects. The initiative was launched in May 2020 by the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission to capture African American expressions of the Coronavirus pandemic.

With this funding of \$50,000, the Foundation will work collaboratively with the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission to capture stories and archive the data on the state's oral history platform "Your Story is North Carolina's Story." A virtual exhibit of both states' submissions will be developed by the Spring of 2022.

“We are grateful to the 1772 Foundation for supporting what has become one of our most complex and meaningful projects, and for having the confidence in us to record this history,” said Dawn Dawson-House, executive director of the WeGOJA Foundation. “With their support, we are better able to share these submissions with the public so the African American voice is reflected in both states’ stories. We are also able to preserve these historical moments so that researchers and future generations can know precisely how Carolinians coped with a pandemic.”

“Black Carolinians Speak: Portraits of a Pandemic” already has captured more than 175 voices and expressions in South Carolina. Hours of interviews with African Americans who work in medicine, education, government, the faith community, law enforcement and other professions were held from the Spring of 2020 to the Spring of 2021. Also submitted were paintings, drawings, photography, poetry and recordings of performing art.

These expressions will be displayed in a public exhibit opening Friday, July 16, at the South Carolina Archives and History Center at 8301 Parklane Road in Columbia. A virtual tour of the exhibit will be posted on SCAAHC and WeGOJA websites by August. SCAAHC also will host public programming around the state beginning in August to discuss the pandemic’s impact.

The process to capture North Carolina voices will begin later this spring or early summer.

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