

NCABS, Inc. 2020 Annual Report

It goes without saying that the challenges, losses and postponements experienced by NCABS, Inc. members throughout the year 2020, have been disappointing, to say the least. After ending the 2019 year with our Kwanzaa broadcast performance on NPR of "A Season's Griot"... NCABS began the 2020 year on the final Saturday in January with our participation in the NC Museum of History's Annual African American Cultural Celebration. About fifteen (15) of our members from across the State of NC held the audience's attention for an hour by entertaining multi-aged folks...whose eyes and faces exuded jolly smiles.

In mid-February, we had our Annual HBCU collegiate Storytelling meeting on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte. We held a late-morning luncheon meeting... and then the performance portion of the event was well-attended by a large community audience and youthful ones with drummers, who joined in to also share stories, song and dance.

On the last Saturday in February, NCABS was hosted by the Chatham County Public Library for their first "NCABS Storytelling Spectacular!" The audience was visibly ecstatic and entertained by our performance, and the attendees who frequent this library in this small, rural community (just south of Chapel Hill) reportedly send back notes of THANKS to the library staff!

On that same evening, many of our local Wake Co. NCABS members attended a festive "Appreciation Retirement Gathering" for Emily Grant, the NC Museum of History Museum's long-time coordinator of the Annual African American Cultural Celebration. And THEN two weeks later came the virus, and many, many Storytelling engagements were lost/ cancelled! In June, four NCABS members were hired to do a "ZOOM Juneteenth" for a local company, and Pinkie Strother's Art Studio was transformed into the Storytelling stage for this performance. Teri Burnette arranged the Zoom staging and production.

During the rest of the Spring, Summer and Fall of 2020, the pandemic was responsible for the cancellations of annual celebrations that had been on our annual schedules. "Zoom" then became the order of the day! Even though there was a severe reduction of community events, several of our members were able to tell stories in their own parts of the State.

On October 7th, the groundbreaking for the long-planned NC Freedom Park was held in Raleigh. This park is to be a tribute to the contributions of the Black community in the State, and its mission is to honor the African American experience and the struggle for FREEDOM in North Carolina. Several local

NCABS members attended the ground-breaking, and Beverly Burnette, a Freedom Park Advisory Board Member (and NCABS president) participated in the ground-breaking ceremony. Prior to his death, the Park was designed by the late Phil Freelon, who was the architect for the Smithsonian African American History Museum in D.C. When completed, this leisure park will permit school children and the community to sit, rest, reflect...and will be a "presence" in the Capital City near the North Carolina Archives.

Storyteller and school librarian Jackie Ruffin Pittman reportedly is excited to work with leaders in her Scotland Neck, NC community to try to attain the statute of Harriet Tubman, as it travels the South. Receiving funding this "visiting stature" would be a remarkable historical "feat" for that rural community. This Fall, the Western Wake Co. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority has had as their service project to assist persons with HIV-AIDS. These ladies have had Storytellers and African musicians perform uplifting and entertaining stories on ZOOM and on Facebook. NCABS has been pleased to participate.

NCABS/NABS.inc ,member/Head Librarian Wanda Cox-Bailey, who plans to retire at the end of the year, has been in training for her NEXT job! She will manage the "Dr. Pope House" (on the National Historic Register) in downtown Raleigh near Shaw Univ. Dr. Pope was a Black Raleigh physician, when in the spring of 1919, in the midst of Jim Crow segregation, and at a moment of extreme racial tension, he courageously ran for mayor of Raleigh. Wanda's new job will be a great connection that may enable NCABS to share the hiSTORY of the Pope House and family, as well as be a "performance venue" for other history-sharing endeavors in the community.

As we make it " 'round the bend", and end this calendar year, we sincerely look forward to a MORE robust, healthy and active 2021!

Sending our NCABS BEST WISHES to ALL!

Respectfully submitted by:
Beverly Fields Burnete,
President of NCABS, Inc.
November 7th, 2020