

THE
AFRICAN AMERICAN
HERITAGE & CULTURAL CENTER
OF NEW BERN
Post Office Box 1354, New Bern, NC 28563-1354

PRESS RELEASE

For Release Immediately

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See attached Pix of AAHCC Leadership, Speakers & Musician

“A MUSICAL JOURNEY – SPIRITUAL & INSPIRATIONAL”

February 8 COMMUNITY FORUM
Celebrating Black History Month

New Bern, North Carolina (February 8, 2020) - “A Musical Journey – Spiritual & Inspirational”, the AAHCC February 8 2020 program celebrating *Black History Month* at St. Peter’s AME Zion Church of New Bern. The African American Heritage and Cultural Center of New Bern partnered with leadership of St. Peter’s AME Zion Church on Queen Street to present the inspirational and musical program which was free to the community.

The program opened with AAHCC Vice President Ann Herndon welcoming the guests for this remarkable COMMUNITY FORUM celebrating *Black History Month*. Reverend Carol Bonner Becton offered the Invocation. Presiding Elder Dr. Erlinda Dobson introduced guests to St.

Peter's Church Pastor Garry Slade who spoke of "hush harbors", the secret and sacred places of worship for African American slaves pre-Emancipation. He spoke of St. Peter's history as the first church in the South to join the AME Zion Church, its destruction during the Great Fire of 1922 and of its rebuilding, now being referred to as "The Mother Church". His invitation is "the doors of St. Peter's are open, and all are welcome to join us".

Pastor Slade introduced St. Peter's Minister of Music and New Bern musician Fletcher "Jelani" Allen. Jelani performed a moving program with spirituals and traditional African American songs, "A Musical Journey". A gifted pianist and singer, his program engaged the guests and demonstrated his love of a wide range of traditional and inspirational music.

Elder Dobson returned to the podium to offer "My Journey", speaking of her path from early service to her current position as the first woman Presiding Elder for the North Carolina AME Zion Conference. Following her comments, Mrs. Sheila "Lady J" Johnson presented questions on behalf of guests to Elder Dobson.

Dr. Katherine Adolph, AAHCC Board Secretary closed the program with a reflection of the deep connection shared by all in the room, all in the community. She invited the guests to bring forward family and personal stories about the progress of African Americans in the region. "An ORAL HISTORY LIBRARY is being developed by AAHCC. It will incorporate artists and musicians in documenting the history of African Americans in Eastern North Carolina through interviews with the keepers of our stories. Please let us know if you, a family member or friend is available to share their story. "

Following the program, AAHCC and members of the St. Peter's congregation hosted a reception in the church Fellowship Hall. Surrounded by historical posters, textiles and artifacts, and a collection of original artwork by New Bern Artist Lee Hood, guests relaxed and enjoyed lite fare and good conversation for the balance of the afternoon.

“The **COMMUNITY FORUM** on February 8th offers an opportunity for the greater community to join in our celebration of *Black History Month*” said Ann Herndon, AAHCC Vice President. **When asked “where is the African American Heritage and Cultural Center” the answer was “today, it is here at St. Peter’s Church”**. St. Peter’s is in the heart of New Bern’s Five Points Neighborhood and stands as a tribute to the strength and spirit of New Bern’s residents.

AAHCC COMMUNITY FORUMS are presented on the second Saturday of each month and are FREE to participants and guests. AAHCC Secretary Kathy Adolph and Ann Herndon, Vice President serving as AAHCC Interim President design the monthly programs and welcome partnerships with other organizations for future events. Recent events have featured musicians, historians, readings by NC’s Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green, and local artists at 919 Broad Street. As Kathy has said, “today’s FORUM, and all previous COMMUNITY FORUMS are made possible with support from AAHCC leadership and its volunteers, our generous donors, and with a grant from The Harold Bate Foundation.”

ABOUT AAHCC

A strategic group of community leaders, elected officials and nonprofit organization leaders gathered early in 2018 to discuss the continuing need to increase the visibility of the heritage of

eastern North Carolina's African American community. Beyond the recorded history of the region that is included in traditional educational environments exists an important legacy of remarkable and determined individuals who contributed to the development of this region. These early AAHCC leaders established a North Carolina 501(c)(3) nonprofit to collaborate with existing nonprofits, organizations and groups and present a broad spectrum of the African American Experience. Future AAHCC programs will include developing an oral history library, and presenting FREE COMMUNITY FORUMS each month with creative performances, seminars and lectures, exhibitions of artwork including murals, artifacts and personal collections, along with music, food and live art events.

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The African American Heritage & Cultural Center of New Bern is a 501(c)(3) NC nonprofit organization based in New Bern and serving communities throughout Eastern North Carolina. Contact information:

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Photo of Speakers and AAHCC Leadership

AAHCC February 8, 2020 COMMUNITY FORUM

Photo taken at event in St. Peter's AME Zion Church, Queen Street, New Bern, NC

Photo Credit: Norman J McCullough, Photographer



Left to Right:

James Copland IV, AAHCC Treasurer

Tahira Copland, AAHCC Board Member

Dr. Katherine Adolph, AAHCC Secretary

Ann Herndon, AAHCC Vice President

Dr. Erlinda C. Dobson, President Elder NC AME Zion Conference

Pastor Garry Slade, St. Peter's AME Zion Church

Reverence Carol Bonner Becton, AAHCC Board Member

Ms Sheila "Lady J" Johnson

Fletcher "Jelani" Allen, Musician and St. Peter's Minister of Music

Mike Williams, AAHCC Board Member