

NEWS FROM THE
SOUTH
CAROLINA
AFRICAN
AMERICAN
HERITAGE
COMMISSION



Call & Response

www.WeGOJA.org

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Mission Statement

The mission of the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission is to identify and promote the preservation of African American historic sites, structures, buildings, and culture of the African American experience in South Carolina, and to assist and enhance the efforts of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.



Pride · Future · Courage · Purpose · Culture

The South Carolina African American Heritage Foundation is now WeGOJA Foundation!

On Monday, August 3rd, the executive committee of the former South Carolina African American Heritage Foundation hosted a star studded, live streamed press conference to share news about their successful, year-long campaign to rebrand the organization. This initiative was made possible with grant funding from the [National Trust for Historic Preservation African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund](#), provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Established in 2008, WeGOJA Foundation is a non-profit 501 c3 organization that supports the identification and documentation of African American heritage sites in South Carolina for the archival record, public awareness, education, and enjoyment.

Its executive director and board collaborate with civic, government, and business leaders to further its mission to support the efforts of the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission (SCAHC).



Pride · Future · Courage · Purpose · Culture

Who Are We?

The name **WeGOJA** (pronounced we-GO-juh) is a fusion of words from three languages. Their speakers were people of African descent who were unwilling immigrants, brought to the Americas as a result of the Atlantic Slave Trade. They became major contributors to the growth, development, maintenance and success of Carolina colony, later South Carolina.

“**We**” is from the **Gullah** language and means “Our.” Historically, Gullah Geechee people hail from what is now southern coastal North Carolina, coastal South Carolina and Georgia, northern coastal Florida and extending inland about thirty miles. West Africans who were enslaved in this geographical area were literate in many Old World languages. They were denied the opportunity to learn English formally; English was the main language of their enslavers. To communicate, a language evolved that meshed West African languages with English and influences from the British Caribbean. This language became known as Gullah.

“**G**em sa bop” (pron. THEM suh bop) is from the **Wolof** language and means “Believe in Yourself.” Wolof is spoken widely in Senegal and the Gambia region. Countless Africans from these countries, including the Wolof, were enslaved and brought to South Carolina. The Wolof heavily influenced the shaping of the Gullah language.

“**O**jo Iwamtu” (pron. o-joe e-WAHM-to) is from the **Yoruba** language and means “Future.” Yoruba people primarily inhabit southwestern Nigeria, and similarly to the Wolofs, countless Yoruba bondsmen and bondswomen were brought to South Carolina. Yoruba also heavily influenced the shaping of the Gullah language.

“**J**om” (pron. Jome) is **Wolof** and means “Purpose,” and it also means “Courage.”

“**A**sa” (pron. AH-suh) is **Yoruba** and means “Culture.”

*Many thanks to Dr. Dior Konate for contributing her expertise in West African languages.
She is Associate Professor & Coordinator of History at South Carolina State University, Orangeburg, SC.*



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Greetings:

Thank you for joining us on this momentous occasion. Special thanks to the Honorable Congressman James E. Clyburn, National Trust African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund executive director Brent Leggs, WeGOJA board members, and our supporters for helping us to celebrate this incredible achievement.

The mission of WeGOJA is to support the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission (SCAAHC). Established in May 1993, the SCAAHC identifies and promotes the preservation of African American historic sites, structures, buildings and culture of the African American experience in South Carolina and enhances the efforts of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH).

Created in 2008, the South Carolina African American Heritage Foundation—now WeGOJA—has worked with the Commission to establish SC historical markers, assist with nominations for the National Register of Historic Places, and publish the *African American Historic Places in South Carolina* guide, *Teachers Guide to African American Historic Places*, and *How Did We Get to Now*, a two volume survey of historic African American schools. In 2017, we developed *The Green Book of South Carolina*, a mobile travel guide listing over 400+ historic sites, churches, cemeteries, cultural centers, and other destinations to serve travelers, educators, and other diverse audiences. Our current project, *Black Carolinians Speak: Portraits of a Pandemic*, captures how the ongoing public health crisis has impacted African Americans statewide and represents the first phase of a broader oral history initiative at SCDAH.

Particularly in today's climate, we are obligated to ensure that the African American voice and experience in South Carolina are not overlooked or minimally included in conversations about the state. Whether we're talking about history, education, government or tourism, we can make sure African American perspectives have a seat at the table. We can broaden awareness by identifying, documenting, preserving and sharing the places associated with the African American experience.

We invite you to take action by visiting us at www.WeGOJA.org! Donate and join sponsors such as AT&T, Duke Energy, Healthy Blue, Sonoco Foundation, the SC Arts Commission, SC Department of Education, South Carolina Humanities, the USDA, and others who believe in our mission to "Preserve Our Places in History."



About the Author

A native of Hartsville, South Carolina, Jannie Harriot currently serves as the chairperson of the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission and Executive Director of the newly renamed WeGOJA Foundation.



Jonathan Green, "Communal," Used with special permission.

Black Carolinians Speak: Portraits of a Pandemic

The South Carolina African American Heritage Commission recognizes that this is an especially difficult period for all residents of our state. African Americans, as reported by the media, have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the social and economic distress it has caused. The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing disparities in education, health, and employment. Future generations 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.

The goal of this initiative—Black Carolinians Speak: Portraits of a Pandemic—is to gather first person testimonies, letters, music, images, art and other documents that capture the African American experiences in South Carolina during the global pandemic of 2020.



Share Your Story at: www.greenbookofsc.com/speak

All documents and information collected will be housed in the Commission papers at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.



For the most up-to-date news, statistics, and information about the South Carolina state government's response to the ongoing public health crisis, visit the South Carolina DHEC website at: <https://www.scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

Green Book Spotlight

First published in 1936 by New York postal worker and entrepreneur Victor Hugo Green, the original *Negro Motorist Green Book* was created to provide African American travelers with vital information to avoid the embarrassments, difficulties, and dangers caused by southern Jim Crow customs and de facto segregation in other sections of the country. Aided by a cadre of informants—most of whom were Black postal workers—Green and his small, dedicated staff began to list businesses that accommodated Black customers nationwide beginning in 1938. Roughly 200 Black owned businesses and other institutions in South Carolina were listed prior to its final edition in 1967.



Listed in the *Negro Motorist Green Book* from 1939 to 1941, Ruth's was one of six Columbia area beauty parlors listed in the Jim Crow era travel guide during its history. Opened in the late 1930s by Mrs. Ruth Collins Perry (pictured top right), daughter of two successful Black entrepreneurs, the salon operated intermittently until the 1990s.

Photos courtesy of Ramon M. Jackson, PhD, 2019 and *The State*, 1995.

Preserving Our Places in History

We are pleased to announce that the nomination for this historic house on 1221 Pine Street in Columbia, former location of Ruth's Beauty Parlor—a Black owned salon once listed in the *Negro Motorist Green Book*—was unanimously approved for review to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places!

Special thanks to Ms. Carlie Todd for all of her hard work! Several of her classmates in the UofSC Public History program have submitted nominations for other structures as well. By early 2021, we expect to have at least four other Green Book sites approved for review by the Department of Interior.



A Travel Guide to S.C.
African American Cultural Sites

Visit Our Website!

The Green Book of South Carolina

www.greenbookofsc.com

Join the conversation on social media:

[@SCAAHC1993](https://twitter.com/SCAAHC1993)



South Carolina African American Heritage Commission
Presents
Drumbeat

The Rhythm of African American History and Culture in South Carolina



Sundays at 5:00pm
Livestreaming on Facebook

WeGOJA Foundation: <https://www.facebook.com/SCAAHistory/?ref=bookmarks>
South Carolina African American Heritage Commission: <https://www.facebook.com/SCAAHC1993/>

Sponsored and Produced by the WeGOJA Foundation

As Jemmy and his fellow enslaved companions marched toward Spanish Florida after mounting the Stono Rebellion near Charleston on September 9, 1739, they carried a banner that read "Liberty," sang and played African drums – to galvanize their spirits for battle and to communicate their intentions to enslaved African people on plantations along the route. It is in this spirit of history, culture, and communication in the quest to be free that we debut **Drumbeat**, a live streaming program.

Drumbeat will explore the people, places, things, ideas and issues of African American history and culture in South Carolina. The show will be produced and hosted by Bhakti Larry Hough, one of the state's most accomplished and versatile mass media and cultural arts professionals. He is a charter member and former chairman of the **South Carolina African American Heritage Commission** and is president and artist-in-residence at **Bhakti's New World Arts** in Bishopville.





Complete and return to:

WeGOJA Foundation

P O Box 1053

Hartsville, SC 29551

or contact

Foundation's Executive Director, Jannie Harriot

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