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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Georgia Archives and the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society
(AAHGS) Metro Atlanta Chapter Present
African American History & Genealogy Symposium 2025**

On Thursday, January 30 – Saturday, February 1, 2025, the Georgia Archives and the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS) Metro Atlanta Chapter present our 2025 African American History & Genealogy Symposium. The three-day event will focus on the topic of African Americans in Georgia, highlighting the Civil Rights Movement and genealogy.

This free event will take place in person at the Georgia Archives, located at 5800 Jonesboro Rd., Morrow, GA 30260, and is made possible in large part by a generous grant from the Clayton County Tourism Authority. Doors open at 8:45 AM each day.

Space is limited for some sessions and registration is required for each day. Registration will close by January 29, 2025, at 11:59 pm. Please register here: <https://forms.office.com/r/4zQxJ5D3VZ>. For any questions regarding registration, please email Robin Klemm at robin.klemm@usg.edu.

Thursday, January 30, 2025: Civil Rights Movement

9:30 AM to 10:30 AM - Dr. Kenja McCray, Assistant Professor, Clayton State University, “Nobody Knows Our Names”: Reframing Genealogies of the Long Black Freedom Struggle Through Women’s Activism and Leadership”

Dr. McCray will present on her forthcoming book, *Essential Soldiers: Women Activists and Black Power Movement Leadership*, which highlights the unique leadership contributions of female Pan-African nationalists during the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Her research challenges traditional narratives that portray the movement as male-dominated and violent, instead uncovering collaborative and service-oriented leadership by women. Drawing from oral histories and archival resources, Dr. McCray will explore connections between the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power, offering attendees fresh insights into the long Black freedom struggle and the enduring legacies of Black Power leadership.

10:45 AM to 11:45 AM - Katie Mitchell, author of *Prose to the People: A Celebration of Black Bookstores*, "The Right to Read from Ruggles to Revolution: The Legacy of Black Bookstores in Civil Rights"

This presentation explores the pivotal role of Black-owned bookstores in shaping the Civil Rights Movement, tracing their impact from David Ruggles' pioneering establishment in the 1830s to the activism hubs of the 1960s and beyond. Reading was once illegal for Black people in America, making the right to read a hard-fought victory. Black bookstores not only advanced literacy but also became vital centers for political education, community organizing, and resistance, helping propel the Civil Rights Movement forward. These literary spaces fostered Black empowerment and cultural preservation in the face of oppression. By examining

the evolution of Black bookstores from abolitionist outposts to Black Power epicenters, this presentation uncovers their enduring legacy as catalysts for social change and bastions of African American literature and thought.

Friday, January 31, 2025: Civil Rights Movement

9:30 AM to 10:30 AM – Dr. Robert Pratt, Professor, University of Georgia, “Bending Toward Injustice: The Election of Barack Obama, the Political Legacy of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the Myth of a Post-Racial America”

This presentation explores the historical and political significance of Barack Obama’s election as the 44th President of the United States and the challenges it revealed regarding race and democracy in America. While Obama’s 2008 victory was hailed by some as evidence of a post-racial society, others viewed it as a turning point that fueled efforts to undermine his presidency and restrict voting rights. The session will examine the backlash to Obama’s election, including attempts to limit voting access following the Supreme Court’s 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*. It will also discuss the ongoing fight for voting rights, including the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2023, and its implications for American democracy.

10:45 AM to 11:45 AM - Dr. Vicki Crawford, Endowed Chair, Africana Studies and History and Director of the Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr. Collection, “The Relevance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr in Our Times”

As one of the most transformative leaders of the twentieth century, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., remains a preeminent figure, whose thought, philosophy, and deep commitment to social justice continue to endure beyond his lifetime. This presentation will explore the relevance of Dr. King in our times by focusing specifically on his concept of the “World House” as conveyed in published works and various primary documents contained in the Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr Collection.

1:30 PM to 3:30 PM - Exclusive Georgia Archives Tour

This program includes an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the Archives, offering a rare glimpse into the preservation and curation of historical documents. Attendees will have the opportunity to view and study original documents that are significant to African American history. This is a special chance to connect with the past and gain deeper insights into the heritage and contributions of African Americans. **Space is limited. Please be sure to register for the tour by January 29, 2025.**

Saturday, February 1, 2025: African American Genealogy (Two Tracks)

Track 1: African American Genealogy Basics Workshop

These sessions will cover the fundamentals of beginning your family history research, with a special focus on African American genealogy. You’ll learn how to critically analyze records, ensuring you gather accurate and comprehensive evidence. Practical tips on organizing your research findings, including software recommendations and strategies for building a research toolbox, will also be provided. The day concludes with a hands-on research session, giving attendees the chance to apply their newfound knowledge alongside experienced genealogical experts and Archives staff. **Space is limited. Please be sure to register for the workshop by January 29, 2025.**

9:30 AM to 10:30 AM Tamu Taylor presents “Begin with YOU: Getting Started with Your Family Tree”

You have an interest in researching your family tree, but where do you begin? This presentation will give you the basic principles and methodology of African American genealogy by covering the steps to begin tracing your family history.

10:45 AM to 11:45 AM Tamu Taylor “Don’t Take That Record at Face Value! Analyzing Records and Evaluating the Evidence”

Now that you have found a record of your ancestor, do you stop there? Did that green leaf on Ancestry send you to a tree with the motherlode of information about an ancestor? Don't take that record at face value! Learn how to analyze documents and exhaust all possible clues for evidence before accepting the document as part of your research.

1:00 PM to 2:00 PM Dawnya Lindsey, “Genealogy Research Organization Tips and Tools”

Discover effective methods and practical tips for organizing your genealogy research findings. Get recommendations on useful software and streamlined processes that will help you better utilize your research in family and group workshops. Additionally, learn how to build a comprehensive research toolbox to support your genealogical journey.

2:15 PM to 3:15 PM Hands-on Research

Attendees will enjoy a hands-on research session in the Georgia Archives Reference Room with experienced genealogical experts from the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS) and members of the Georgia Archives’ staff.

Track Two: Exploring Genealogy

9:30 AM to 10:30 AM Tammy Ozier, “Finding More in the Freedmen’s Bureau: Looking at Correspondences”

Building on her session from the 2022 African American History & Genealogy Symposium ([view here](#)), this updated presentation delves into the diverse records of the Freedmen’s Bureau, with a particular focus on correspondences. Tammy will provide an overview of the Bureau’s records, share updated tips for accessing these invaluable resources, and highlight advanced search techniques for uncovering genealogical details, even in regions lacking a field office. Attendees will also see practical examples of records, showcasing the depth of information available to genealogists.

10:45 AM to 11:45 AM Dr. DL Henderson, “Perpetual Segregation: Chronicling the Black Side of Atlanta’s Oakland Cemetery”

Dr. DL Henderson, a historian, genealogist, preservationist, and author, will present research from her new book, *Perpetual Segregation: Chronicling the Black Side of Atlanta’s Oakland Cemetery*. While the story of Atlanta’s oldest cemetery has been told before, it has never been explored from an Afrocentric perspective. Dr. Henderson examines the remnants of slavery, the policies and politics of discrimination, and the racial inequities of justice and opportunity as reflected in the South’s landscapes and cemeteries. Her interdisciplinary

research combines historical and genealogical methods to uncover symbolically buried and unacknowledged black history in the cultural landscape of the city and the cemetery.

1:00 PM to 2:15 PM Johnette Brooks, “How to Find Your WWI African American Ancestors”

This presentation examines the erasure of African American Army servicemen from many "official" U.S. Army history books on WWI. Despite this oversight, several African American soldiers documented their experiences, preserving valuable first-hand accounts. The session will explore resources such as government-published books on the Black experience, Discharge Service Records, Muster Records, and more, which collectively highlight the contributions of Black soldiers during the war. Attendees will learn about new research sources to trace the lives of these servicemen after returning from France and discover how to access and share these records with the public for broader use.

2:30 PM to 3:30 PM Gloria Elder and Deborah Strahorn, Kuumba Storytellers of Georgia, “Preserving the Power of African American Families”

This presentation explores the vital role of storytelling and genealogy in preserving African American family legacies. Gloria Elder will share insights from capturing the oral history of the Smith family. Deborah Strahorn will delve into the rich history of the Scott family, founders of the Atlanta Daily World, and their efforts to document and connect their family’s past. Together, they will highlight the importance of genealogical research in maintaining and strengthening the legacy of African American families for future generations through storytelling.

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The Georgia Archives is a unit of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The Georgia Archives identifies, collects, manages, preserves, provides access to, and publicizes records and information of Georgia and its people, and assists state and local government agencies with their records management.

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