

# Angela Michele Thorpe

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## **EDUCATION:**

**Master of Arts in History, Museum Studies Concentration**, May 2014  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC

**Bachelor of Arts in History**, December 2011  
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL  
Minor: African American Studies

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**North Carolina African American Heritage Commission**, NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources, Raleigh, NC

### **Acting Director (September 2018-Present)**

- Worked with ten commissioners to determine organizational goals and programmatic priorities for fiscal year 2018-2019, in alignment with guiding legislation for the African American Heritage Commission.
- Work closely with commissioners to activate their participation in events and activities across the state that align with AAHC mission, vision and goals, including Historic Highway Marker Dedication ceremonies, speaking and panel moderation opportunities at symposia and conferences and general representation at critical cultural and heritage meetings in North Carolina.
- Initiated public partnership with the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture's "Freedman's Bureau Transcription Project." Partnership is designed to create awareness around project; encourage North Carolina constituent participation in project; and develop partnerships with HBCUs to connect them with the effort, specifically around lesson plan and curriculum development.
- Launched "Africa to Carolina," a departmental initiative to mark the eight sites of enslaved peoples' disembarkation in North Carolina. Initiative combines research, community engagement, public art and programming to implement new statewide heritage tourism model.
- Engaged in private partnerships with Visit NC and the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, and the Conservation Trust for North Carolina. Partnerships serve to plan and implement a North Carolina Civil Rights Trail and a digital African American cultural asset map, respectively, thus launching critical North Carolina African American heritage tourism products.
- Initiated partnership with the North Carolina Arts Council to implement Nina Simone Birthplace National Treasure Campaign awareness programming. Partnership seeks to raise awareness around fundraising efforts for the Nina Simone birthplace, via collaborating with partners that vary across foci and geography to ensure statewide impact and encourage cultural tourism.
- Work to support Governor Roy Cooper's "Hometown Strong" initiative by strategically developing heritage projects and grassroots partnerships in Edgecombe, Lenoir, Pasquotank and Halifax Counties, resulting in regional impact.
- Oversee, implement and manage execution of two Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grants: "Green Books' Oasis Spaces: African American Travel in NC 1936-1966," (\$148,450 awarded July 2017) and "A Tale of Two Ships: Developing a Research & Interpretation Plan," (\$33,558 awarded July 2018).
- Planned grassroots partnerships with Historic Halifax State Historic Site and Roanoke River Partners, and musician and heritage practitioner Justin Robinson to develop Underground Railroad Symposium (to occur in March 2019 in Halifax) and Black String Music Reunion & Festival (to occur in May 2020 in Mebane), respectively. These heritage projects serve to solidify locales as cultural assets key to African American historical and musical heritage in North Carolina.
- Supervise and oversee all human resources needs of all personnel associated with the African American Heritage Commission, including: one full-time temporary administrative assistant; one part-time temporary research assistant; five contractors; three interns and all volunteers.
- Provide technical support directly to individuals, diverse cultural organizations and DNCR agencies with missions and goals in line with programs, mission and vision of the AAHC.

### **Associate Director (June 2017-September 2018)**

- Led the development of 5-year strategic plan that includes feedback from seven stakeholder groups from eight communities across North Carolina, data and feedback synthesis, and a comprehensive report that will refine organizational mission and vision in alignment with the guiding legislation for the commission.
- Implemented and managed execution of \$148,450 Institute of Museum and Library Services grant for "Green Books' Oasis Spaces: African American Travel in NC 1936-1966." Included organizing advisory board meetings; executing early project deliverables; and overseeing all human resources needs for project, including leading and managing the hiring process for project research assistant.

- Collaborated with a small team to identify funds and prepare materials for an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant entitled “A Tale of Two Ships: Developing a Research & Interpretation Plan”; resulted in \$33,558 grant award, made July 2018.
- Supervised, oversaw and responded to human resources needs of some African American Heritage Commission personnel including: one full-time temporary administrative assistant; one part-time temporary research assistant; and six contractors.
- Implemented and oversaw messaging and digital communications strategy, which included the development marketing and branding materials like logos, rack cards, brochures, rack cards and promotional giveaways; and the development of digital communications products, including the first organizational website and an email newsletter.
- Worked with Associate Director and Chief Financial Officer of the Conservation Trust for North Carolina to oversee, execute deliverables and manage invoice processing for memorandum of agreement with AAHC.
- Worked to organize and execute formal meetings of ten African American Heritage Commissioners.
- Collaborated with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to launch and announce the Nina Simone Birthplace National Treasure Campaign, an eighteen-month national partnership and fundraising campaign.
- Implemented “Freedom Roads Educator Trainings,” a program with statewide impact designed to connect constituents across North Carolina to the Freedom Roads initiative; educate around Underground Railroad history and cultural assets in North Carolina; and re-activate educational component of initiative.
- Directly provided technical support and professional development support to African American heritage practitioners, diverse cultural organizations and communities statewide as they work to preserve North Carolina’s African American heritage.
- Collaborated with AAHC and departmental staff to develop statewide family programs, lectures, educator trainings, and professional development workshops centered on African American history, art and culture; collaborated with Executive Director to identify funding for these projects.
- Presented to members of the North Carolina General Assembly to share funding request for African American Monument on the State Capitol Grounds.

**President James K. Polk State Historic Site, Pineville, NC**  
**Historic Interpreter II (May 2015-June 2017)**

- Identified and raised funds for large-scale events like the President James K. Polk Birthday Celebration, the Music, Dance ‘n’ Que Festival fundraiser, Bubble Day! and Slave Dwelling Project Weekend; managed event budgets, which ranged from \$1,000 to \$6,000.
- Initiated and managed private partnerships with diverse cultural organizations, including Slave Dwelling Project Weekend, which included the Slave Dwelling Project and the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture as national and regional partners; and Mexican heritage-centered community listening sessions, which included the Levine Museum of the New South and Mama’s Coffee Shop as regional and grassroots partners.
- Organized and implemented interdisciplinary programs that had regional impact, including African American arts and culture series “Shaping the Tar Heel Sound” and enslaved peoples food-ways programs “How to Feed Your Southerner” and “Historic Cooking with Cheryl Henry.”
- Planned and implemented cultural tourism projects, including one music festival, one family fun day, three living history days and interpretive tours centered around various themes.
- Designed and launched comprehensive social media awareness initiative for site; led to over 30% increase in Facebook engagement and over 115% increase in Twitter engagement in twenty-two months.
- Oversaw marketing and messaging strategy to publicize programs, promote organizational milestones and increase public awareness, including print, television and social media marketing; also developed web content for, and managed, site’s support group website on Weebly platform.
- Worked with six friends group members to set priorities around marketing and messaging, African American interpretation, community outreach and membership.
- Planned and implemented educational initiatives for all grade levels, which included lesson plan development, traveling trunk development, and creating and leading children’s tours.
- Supervised and trained two-part-time staff members, five interns and a cohort of fifteen volunteers.

**The HistoryMakers, Chicago, IL**

**Oral History Researcher (August 2014-May 2015)**

- Worked to support private partnerships via outreach and ongoing communication with partners for The HistoryMakers’ special programs, including national initiative *Back to School with The HistoryMakers* and the “*An Evening With...*” PBS celebrity interview series.
- Planned and facilitated three webinars to introduced education professionals across the nation to The HistoryMakers’ Digital Archive, and helped develop lesson plans centering on the online tool.
- Oversaw promotional efforts to local, state and national outlets and forums, including the *Washington Post*, The Root, TV One and the *Chicago Sun-Times* to elevate the visibility of The HistoryMakers.
- Directly provided technical support to individuals and organizations that required assistance with African American historical research or navigating The History Makers’ Digital Archive.

- Worked with small team to create research-based content related to African American history and culture for organization's social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter.
- Managed data collection related to digital and physical oral history interview transcripts using organization's FileMaker Pro database and on-site archive.
- Processed and evaluated video footage and oral history transcripts, and uploaded them to The HistoryMakers' Digital Archive.

## **CONSULTING EXPERIENCE**

### **Bryant Family Homestead Marker, Chatham County, NC**

#### **Project Consultant (April 2018-October 2018)**

- Conducted research to develop content for Bryant Family Homestead Marker, a permanent granite marker on the history of R. Gade and Maude Bryant, and their contributions to Chatham County's African American community.
- Consulted with various members of the Bryant Family, as well as community stakeholders, to determine priorities and parameters for marker, as well as marker location.
- Led process of researching stonecutters and monument creators, and selected final marker type.

### **North Carolina Museums Council Free On-Site Consultation Service, Museum of Milton, Milton, NC**

#### **Marketing Consultant (November 2017-December 2017)**

- Conducted multi-day site assessment of the Museum of Milton, a budding local history museum in Caswell County, to respond directly to technical support request centered on institutional marketing and messaging.
- Worked closely with museum director to understand institutional marketing and messaging needs, staff capacity, and current institutional marketing strategy and budget.
- Researched local and surrounding counties to understand area age, racial, and economic demographics in an effort to develop relevant and realistic marketing strategy for the Museum of Milton.
- Wrote in-depth report, inclusive of a new marketing strategy and messaging tools, to modify and enhance museum marketing and messaging efforts based on staff capacity, institutional budget, area demographics and institutional needs.

### **Durham and the Rise of the Baseball Card, Museum of Durham History, Durham, NC**

#### **Consulting Curator (January 2016-April 2016)**

- Conducted research to develop content for *Durham and the Rise of the Baseball Card*, a permanent exhibit on Durham's influence on the history of the baseball card (1880s-1940s), installed in the Durham Bulls Athletic Park.
- Curated selection of historic images of baseball cards, baseball players and baseball teams for use in exhibit. Images obtained from libraries and professional baseball card collectors.
- Collaborated with exhibit designer to design nine exhibit panels.
- Collaborated with baseball card expert to curate additional "mini-exhibit" of historical baseball card facts, displayed near Durham Bulls Athletic Park executive offices.
- Served as museum representative in promoting exhibit to local outlets.
- Worked with board members to set priorities and parameters for exhibit.

### **Warnersville: Our Home, Our Neighborhood, Our Stories, Greensboro Historical Museum, Greensboro, NC**

#### **Project Consultant (August 2013-August 2014)**

- Collaborated with community stakeholders; local commissions; grassroots, diverse cultural organizations; and heritage practitioners to develop framework, content and design scheme for temporary exhibit on history, culture, life and transformation in Warnersville, Greensboro's first planned African American community.
- Networked with community stakeholders and attended community events to recruit thirteen Warnersville residents to form community-based exhibit advisory team.
- Coordinated hands-on training for advisory team related to museum best practices, artifact care and temporary exhibition development processes.
- Maintained ongoing communication with exhibit advisory team via email and social media platforms.
- Attended community events and built relationships with community stakeholders to solicit loans for one dozen objects and fifty archival documents and images related to Warnersville.
- Developed and managed content for WordPress website that engaged museum constituents with oral histories and archival materials related to life and culture in Warnersville; responded to technical assistance requests related to website and project at large.
- Winner of 2016 AASLH Award of Merit.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

**Angela Thorpe, “Rethinking Diversity” series, History@Work (November-December, 2014)**

## **CONFERENCES & SYMPOSIA**

**Jonkonnu Symposium: Enslaved Lives, Traditions and Cultures in the Americas, New Bern, NC (November 2018)**

Panelist, “From Africa to America: African Culture and Traditions in the Americas”

**UNC-G Harriet Elliot Lecture Series Panel Discussion, Greensboro, NC (March 2018)**

Panelist, “History for the People: African American and Civil Rights Histories in Museums”

**North Carolina Museums Council Conference, Greensboro, NC (March 2018)**

Panelist, “Women’s Forum: Issues Affecting Women in Museums”

**North Carolina Museums Council Conference, Wilmington, NC (March 2017)**

Moderator and panelist, “How to Listen: Listening Sessions as Tools for Community Engagement”

**North Carolina Museums Council Conference, Winston-Salem, NC (March 2016)**

Panelist, “The First Five Years: Life After University”

Panelist, “Civil War Museums and Historic Sites: After Charleston”

## **AWARDS**

**Arts and Science Council Professional Development Scholarship, Charlotte, NC (October 2015)**

**American Alliance of Museums Diversity and Inclusion Fellowship, Washington, DC (January 2016)**

## **BOARDS & COMMITTEES**

**Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Member, Inclusive Public Art Advisory Committee**

**Black Communities Conference, Member, Conference Advisory Board**

**North Carolina Museums Council, Ex-Officio Board Member**

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

**Association of African American Museums, General Member**

**National Trust for Historic Preservation, General Member**

**North Carolina Museums Council, Member, Programs Committee**