



# SANDHILLS SANKOFA NEWS

The Official Newsletter of Sandhills Family Heritage Association

## Highlighting Black Women's Connections to the Land

By Professor Paula C. Johnson September 2008



My current research project, *Georgia Rose: Visions of Black Women Gardeners* is an educational project which explores Black women's lives in relation to their connections to the land. In *Georgia Rose*, I seek to provide greater awareness about the instrumental roles Black women play as creators, custodians, and conveyors of family and cultural traditions through their involvement in gardening, farming, and related activities. In doing so, *Georgia Rose* will provide information about Black women's particular involvement in gardening, agricultural and environmental endeavors.

In July 2008, I came to Spring Lake, North Carolina and met with several members of the Sandhills Family Heritage Association (SFHA), who agreed to participate in the *Georgia Rose* project. SFHA members Ammie Jenkins and Mavis Fleming embody the significance of the *Georgia Rose* project as Black women who share a deep reverence for the land, gratitude for its bounty, and recognition of their roles as stewards of knowledge and traditions for future generations.



SFHA epitomizes the meaning of *Sankofa*, which is imperative to create strong foundations for future generations of Black people by maintaining cultural linkages between the past and present, and maintaining connections to the land. SFHA offers intergenerational programs in gardening and farming, economic development, and other educational programs that foster awareness of Black cultural heritage, teach skills for self-sufficiency, and inform members on land ownership rights.

Both of these two women, who are founding members of the Sandhills Family Heritage Association, give voice and meaning to the little-known stories of Black women's connection to the land. They are among the stories that will be told in *Georgia Rose: Visions of Black Women Gardeners*. The project, through its information, range of perspectives, and photographs, will reveal Black women's humanity, knowledge, and creativity in connection with the land. In the end, *Georgia Rose: Visions of Black Women Gardeners* will be a celebration of Black women and their indelible contributions to the American landscape.

**Paula C. Johnson** is a scholar, activist, photographer, and gardener. She is a professor of Law at Syracuse University College of Law and newly appointed to the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission. She is the author of *Inner Lives: Voices of African American Women in Prison* (NYU Press 2003). Her photographs have been widely exhibited in galleries, universities, and community spaces in the United States.

# SANDHILLS AFRICAN AMERICAN GARDEN HERITAGE

## Each Garden Tells A Story



Photo by Sandhills Family Heritage Association

**Ms. Willieteen Jackson**  
**Flower Garden**



Photo by D'Addario Jackson

**Ms. Rutha Chamblee**  
**Family History Garden**



Photo by Paula Johnson

**Ms. Mavis Brower Fleming**  
**Vegetable Garden**



Photo by Jo Gravely

**Ms. Veda Prince**  
**Herbal Remedies Garden**



Photo by Sandhills Family Heritage Association

**Ms. Ammie McRae Jenkins**  
**Lavender and Butterfly Garden**

# SANDHILLS AFRICAN AMERICAN GARDEN HERITAGE

## Gardening and Gleaning

**Sankofa Gardening and Gleaning Project:** The Sandhills Family Heritage Association (SFHA), in partnership with the Resourceful Communities Program of The Conservation Fund, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, North Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management, and the North Carolina Arts Council collaborated on this project to create culture-based economic development programs that preserve, share and continue cultural traditions rooted in responsible land use and land ownership within the historically African American farming communities of the Sandhills region of North Carolina.

There is an urgent need to document and preserve the knowledge and wisdom of as many community seniors as possible. SFHA recruited five youth and nine community seniors to participate in this project that taught our young people about their family tradition of gardening and gleaning.

The Gardening and Gleaning Project was funded by The Rockefeller Foundation and focused on cultural heritage preservation that reconnects our youth to their ancestral lands by fostering new relationships with community seniors. Local youth were partnered with senior adult gardeners to teach traditional land stewardship and gardening and gleaning practices.

**SFHA's Gardening and Gleaning Book documents the work of Sandhills youth and senior participants in the project. The book will be added to the Sandhills African American Heritage Collection and is available for sale. To purchase a copy, Call 910-309-2198.**

### Gleaning

Gleaning is a Biblical practice and an African American family tradition that has been handed down through generations and continues to be widely practiced today in the Sandhills of North Carolina. Most of the food is gathered and given to those in need.



Photo by Sandhills Family Heritage Association

**Two grandmothers teach young apprentices how to pick peas in Mr. Odell Cameron's garden. "I did not know there was so much work involved in picking peas. It was really a 'Pea Picking Experience. I also learned what gleaning means." - Sheila Renee Spence**

# SFHA SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

## Ms. Hattie McNeill Hailey Sandhills Sankofa Queen Contest 2005



At age 91, I am making a bold step by participating in the Queen Sankofa Contest where I will pay honor to the McNeill-McGregor-Hailey families and my community in Harnett County.

The Queen Sankofa Contest honors community elders who have gained knowledge and wisdom from their ancestors and from their own life experiences and want to pass it on to benefit future generations. It is my honor and privilege to pass on to future generations a family legacy of faith in God and good family values that I learned from my ancestors.



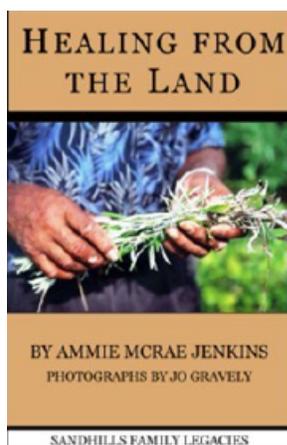
In 2003, I participated in a Healing From the Land Book Project that documents rural Black families' use of natural plants and herbs to treat injuries and prevent illnesses. Here I am holding two of my favorite home remedies for swelling and arthritis that are featured in the book.

Excerpt from "Healing From The Land"  
by Ammie McRae Jenkins

**"I used horehound that grew near the edge of our yard to make horehound tea for colds. You boil that stuff, drink it, go to bed, sweat, and get up the next morning and you'd be alright." -Ms. Hattie McNeill Hailey**

All Photos by Sandhills Family Heritage Association

To Purchase  
a copy of this book, call  
910-309-2198



# Speaking of A Person's Faults



Photo by Sandhills Family Heritage Association

When speaking of a person's faults, pray don't forget your own.

Remember those of house glee should never throw a stone.

If we have nothing else to do but talk of those who sin

It is best that we commence at home and from that point begin.

We have no right to judge a man until he is fairly tried.

If we don't like his company, we know the world is wide.

Some may have faults and who has not, the old as well as young. We may perhaps far ought we know have fifty to their one.

I'll tell you of a better plan and try it works right well. To try my own defect secure and hear of others tell.

And though I sometime hope to be no worst than some I know. My own short comings will bid me let the faults of others go.

Remember curses sometimes like our chickens roost at home. Don't speak of others faults until you are sure, quite sure, really sure, you have none of your own.

**"Let him who is without sin cast the First Stone"**

**John 8:7**

Ms. Hailey remembered this poem that her mother taught her when she was a little girl. She recited it for her Sankofa Queen Contest presentation at the Sandhills Sankofa Festival in 2005.

# SANDHILLS FAMILY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION'S

## ***Sankofa Youth - Outreach Education Program***

Sankofa Youth is a youth-led enrichment program that provides opportunities for youth to learn, lead and grow. SFHA has a long history of youth programs, such as Farming Apprenticeships, Young Entrepreneurs, and Young Historians. Sankofa Youth continues this tradition by engaging youth in our work and preparing them to assume leadership positions in their communities. The following are images from past events and meetings.

All Photos by Sandhills Family Heritage Association



Youth learning about Journalism in the Brush Arbor.



Youth on a Heritage Tour in the Spring Lake Area.



Herb Project at Farmer's Market site.



Planting herb seeds to grow at home.



Learning about Entrepreneurship & handmade crafts.



Events held at the Farmer's Market site to enrich the youth and community with conversations and interactions with local Professionals.

# **Sankofa Youth-Outreach Education Program**

Continued...

Like everything else in the world, the pandemic halted a lot of our planned activities starting in early 2020. But this did not stop our efforts to keep the youth involved in the community! Throughout the times we were unable to meet in person, the youth were still able to volunteer at the ongoing Food Distributions in the area, spearheaded in partnership with the Dunn-Lillington AME Zion District.

As mandates are lifted on restrictions of gatherings and as technology continues to evolve, the adult leaders continue to research for engaging curriculum and activities. As our program is still mostly virtual we have decided that a part of this year's activities will include the "Local Gems Interview Competition"!



The "Local Gems Interview Competition" is a youth-led series of interviews conducted on a one-to-one ratio (one youth to one interviewee) along with the guidance of at least one adult leader. The interviewees are local entrepreneurs, from different fields known, by the adult leaders. This series of interviews will be held virtually. Each youth will be teamed up with an interviewee based on availability. The youth will be given questions to practice along with the ability to submit their own questions for approval by an adult leader. The interviews will then be recorded and judged based on a rubric during a Sankofa Youth meeting. The youth with the best interview will receive a monetary stipend!

**Destiny Winborn, Sankofa Youth Secretary, interviewing Ms. Nisla Love for the Local Gems Interview Competition**



*Thank  
you!*

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for supporting SFHA Programs of H.O.P.E.!**

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