

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **LIVING ARCHIVE PROJECT WILL DOCUMENT LOCAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON UNDER-REPRESENTED COMMUNITIES IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY**

Partnership made possible with \$250,000 investment from The Duke Endowment

**Charlotte, NC – January 11, 2021** – Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is pleased to announce a new collaboration between the Library, Johnson C. Smith University, the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University and Levine Museum of the New South. The group will embark on a three-year initiative to gather, preserve and share local histories—stories, documents, visual imagery and memories—about the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities in Mecklenburg County. The Living Archive is made possible with a generous \$250,000 planning grant from The Duke Endowment.

Combining education, the arts, community engagement, leadership development and the power of co-created, grassroots knowledge, the project will put documentary storytelling tools into the hands of neighborhood residents to capture experiences across Mecklenburg County. Long-term, the stories and materials collected through the Living Archive Project will be open-sourced and shared through exhibits, digitally interactive experiences, performances, town meetings and other means that promote ongoing collaboration. The partners expect to hire a project manager in early 2021 and begin a series of community listening sessions this spring to identify recurring themes and residents who can help drive this effort within their neighborhoods.

“As The Duke Endowment moves closer to its 100th anniversary in 2024, we know firsthand how personal stories can help us understand the experiences that shape us,” said Rhett Mabry, the Endowment’s president. “This initiative will shed an important light on the pandemic’s toll, and we are honored to support the work.”

The collaboration is a unique marriage of each organization’s mission, strengths, relationships and expertise. “Johnson C. Smith University has deep roots in the Beatties Ford Road corridor, and a long history of collecting personal narratives in this community,” shared Johnson C. Smith University’s Director of Library Services and Curation Monika Rhue. “We’re excited about this opportunity to expand the collection and bring greater exposure to these experiences.”

On the power of the documentary arts, Director of the Center for Documentary Studies (CDS) at Duke University, Wesley Hogan stated, “We are working to make sure that no one’s story is lost, misrepresented or ignored. We’re honored to be working with these dynamic partners in Charlotte as CDS builds capacity for diverse storytelling across North Carolina.”

Levine Museum of the New South President and CEO Kathryn Hill recognizes the value and legacy of diverse perspectives and said, “As we document and exhibit life in this region, these narratives will add critical context to that history and build a rich archive for future generations.”

Embedded throughout Mecklenburg County, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library serves the entire community through diverse programs, resources and services. “These stories can be an important resource as we work toward a more equitable future. We’re excited to convene residents throughout the region to participate in listening sessions and share their experiences,” said Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Chief Community Officer, Jenni Gaisbauer.

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Center for  
Documentary  
Studies

AT DUKE  
UNIVERSITY



Johnson C. Smith University



### **About Charlotte Mecklenburg Library**

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is one of America's leading urban public libraries, serving a community of more than one million citizens in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Through 20 locations, targeted outreach and online resources, the Library delivers exceptional services and programs, with a mission to improve lives and build a stronger community. For more, visit [cmlibrary.org](http://cmlibrary.org).

### **About the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University**

Created in 1989 through an endowment from the Lyndhurst Foundation, the Center for Documentary Studies (CDS) at Duke University was the country's first institution dedicated to documentary expression as a mode of inquiry and catalyst for social change. CDS is today the preeminent place to learn, make, and share documentary across all mediums—photography, film, video, writing, audio, experimental and new media—for people of all ages and backgrounds. We provide cutting-edge learning experiences; produce and support original work that connects life, learning, and art; and present work by artists who create new ways of seeing and understanding the human experience. Learn more at [documentarystudies.duke.edu](http://documentarystudies.duke.edu).

### **About The Duke Endowment**

Based in Charlotte and established in 1924 by industrialist and philanthropist James B. Duke, The Duke Endowment is a private foundation that strengthens communities in North Carolina and South Carolina by nurturing children, promoting health, educating minds and enriching spirits. Since its founding, it has distributed more than \$4 billion in grants. The Endowment shares a name with Duke University and Duke Energy, but each is a separate organization. Learn more at [dukeendowment.org](http://dukeendowment.org).

### **About Johnson C. Smith University**

Johnson C. Smith University is an independent, historically Black university located in Charlotte, NC that continues to gain a national reputation for integrating the liberal arts with business, the sciences and technology in innovative, socially conscious ways to empower tomorrow's diverse entrepreneurial citizens and leaders. Learn more at [jcsu.edu](http://jcsu.edu).

### **About Levine Museum of the New South**

Levine Museum connects the past to the future to realize the promises of a New South. The Museum builds a stronger, more equitable community by connecting people to Charlotte and to each other through history, culture and celebration. Exhibits and programs foster empathy, ignite dialogue and inspire action. Learn more at [museumofthenewsouth.org](http://museumofthenewsouth.org).

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