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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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**New artist residency program launched by South Dallas Cultural Center**

DALLAS — Dallas' Office of Arts and Culture's (OAC) South Dallas Cultural Center (SDCC) is pleased to announce the official launch of the Juanita J. Craft House Artist Residency Initiative- an immersive, interactive program for artists of all disciplines to meaningfully connect them with South Dallas neighborhoods. The residency initiative supports artists by offering non-living studio space and connecting them with residents, organizations and institutions to develop a unique artwork, art series, or body of work centering community activism. This opportunity opens space for artists to capture the immediacy of the moment where historical neighborhoods are rapidly changing due to socio-economic shifts, to collect various visions of South Dallas for future residents, visionaries and developers.

"I am a native of South Dallas and dreamed of making an impact on my neighborhood," said South Dallas Cultural Center Manager John Spriggins. "I know the power of a residency and at the time, there weren't many artist residencies in Dallas that focused on supporting artists of the African Diaspora. Residencies like Project Row Houses in Houston and Rebuild Foundation by Theater Gates in Chicago provided the inspiration, where specifically Black artists went into Black communities and developed art projects with a community focus, making a cultural impact. My hope is to connect creativity with community in South Dallas. It is the right time to launch the residency with all of the changes happening in the area."

Spriggins has lead the cultural center since 2017. The pandemic offered him the opportunity to hyper-focus on the development of the Juanita J. Craft House Artist Residency Initiative, which will begin accepting applications in April 2021.

In Fall of 2020, Spriggins worked with artist Nitashia Johnson to pilot the program. Johnson was raised in South Dallas and graduated from Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in 2008. Some of her work includes, *The Smart Project*, a creative after-school program for artistic teens and her 2018 photographic book series, *The Self Publication*, created to uplift the Black community and dismantle harsh stereotypes associated with the culture. Johnson's unique voice and community-oriented work made her an excellent candidate to pilot the residency.

"The art of storytelling has always influenced my multimedia artwork," said Johnson. "My eagerness and love for the world and others have pushed me to produce a body of work highlighting environmental spaces, communities, and individual muses. When I started working on the residency project which I've titled *The Beauty of South Dallas, Capturing the Now Before the Future*, I was excited yet nervous about where to begin. South Dallas is a large area, and I wanted to make sure to capture the spirit of the

people and the land.” To inquire about the Juanita J. Craft House Artist Residency Initiative, or to learn more SDCC programming, please visit <http://sdcc.dallasculture.org/> or contact John Spriggins.

To share your personal South Dallas photos and memories as part of Nitashia Johnson’s *The Beauty of South Dallas, Capturing the Now Before the Future*, visit <https://www.thebeautyofsouthdallas.com/>.

South Dallas is experiencing rapid trends and changes with infrastructure, housing and socio-economic shifts. Since the 1950s, South Dallas has been predominately populated by African Americans with 15 neighborhoods which vary from working middle class to working poor. Now, like many other near-downtown-neighborhoods around the country, its proximity makes it appealing for urban renewal and redevelopment. The area is being carved into trendy districts. The impact of this transformation is determined by perspective and this residency encourages artists of the African Diaspora to explore this with new working methods, such as developing socially engaging art experiences that interact with and are immersed within the neighborhoods of the South Dallas area.

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