**Michelle Washington Wilson Awarded Prestigious Grant from New Jersey State Council on the Arts**

**Atlantic City, NJ** – July 31, 2024 – Michelle Washington Wilson, a renowned storyteller, teaching artist, and folklorist, has been awarded a significant grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. This grant, part of the Council’s Folk & Traditional Arts program, will support her project “With These Two Hands: Preserving and Sharing the Traditional Foods of African Americans in South Jersey.”

Michelle, who has been a storyteller for over 40 years and a professional culinarian for 30 years, will use the $9,941 grant to document and preserve the rich culinary traditions of African American farm workers who traveled to New Jersey farms and seafood houses in the oyster industries during the 1950s and 60s. These traditions, often passed down in church kitchens and backyard barbecues, are vital to the Southern Soul Food heritage.

“I am deeply honored to receive this grant and excited to embark on this project,” said Michelle. “This is not just about preserving history; it’s about engaging our community in a meaningful way. By involving local residents, churches, and community groups, we can ensure that these traditions are not only remembered but also actively practiced and celebrated.” The grant was announced at the Council’s 58th Annual Meeting in Trenton. Michelle was one of five individual artists to receive a grant for Folk & Traditional Arts.

Michelle is a working storyteller, teaching artist, and folklorist who presents at schools, colleges, libraries, museums, hospitals and rehabilitation facilities, conferences, churches, and storytelling festivals. She is a graduate of Monmouth University and The Academy of Culinary Arts. Her project aims to highlight the foodways of African American farm workers in the 1950’s and 6o’s and their contributions to New Jersey’s culinary landscape. “With These Two Hands” will focus on the traditional foods and recipes that have been passed down through generations, preserving a crucial part of the state’s cultural heritage. “Michelle’s work is invaluable in preserving the rich cultural heritage of our community. Her dedication and passion are truly inspiring,” said Ralph Hunter, Founder, Director of the African American Heritage Museum of Southern, New Jersey. For more information about Michelle Washington Wilson and her work, please contact her at:

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