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**Houston Arts Alliance's Folklife + Traditional Arts
Presents
Winter Celebrations Part Three:
*Honoring Houston's African-American Trail Riders***



HOUSTON – As central as the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is to the identity of Houston and her citizens, the trail rides, which act as a highly anticipated prelude to the “main event,” still remain somewhat shrouded in mystery for most Houstonians. Perhaps the trail riders with the most fascinating traditions and folklore are our region’s African-American trail riders, who celebrate Texas’s black cowboy heritage not only at “rodeo time,” but year-round.

In recognition of these trail riders, Houston Arts Alliance’s Folklife + Traditional Arts program presents the exhibition/installation ***Winter Celebrations Part Three: Honoring Houston’s African-American Trail Riders***, February 10 – 16, 2016, at MATCH, 3400 Main Street, Monday – Thursday, noon to 6 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, noon to 7 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. **The opening reception on Thursday, February 11, 2016, from 6 - 8 p.m. will feature food, drink and a zydeco dance with Marcus Ardoin and Da Zydeco Legendz. All events are free and open to the public.**

The Texas Gulf Coast is home to a rich, black cowboying tradition. The counties that surround Harris — especially Waller, Fort Bend, Brazoria and those further south along the Coastal Bend — are still home to a thriving ranch economy. African-American cowboys helped build that economy, and it is this legacy that spurred the creation of the Rodeo’s black trail ride associations.

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The Rodeo's first African-American trail ride group was the Prairie View Trail Ride, founded in 1957 by Jamie Francie, Jr. Due to its success, the organization outgrew its camp sites and meeting places, and Francie encouraged fellow trail rider Fred Gray to start a second group in the southwest part of town. Noting that Brazoria County had a strong agricultural economy, he recommended that Gray focus his ride in that sector of the region. With that, the Southwestern Trail Ride Association was born.

The primary focus of the exhibition *Honoring Houston's African-American Trail Riders* is the Southwestern Trail Ride. This group begins its ride, as most groups do, by hosting a huge celebration featuring zydeco music. Over the last 20 years, with the increase of the Creole population in this part of Texas and the music's association with rural life, zydeco has become the signature music of the black trail rides.

Bank of America is the lead presenting sponsor for the entire *Winter Celebrations* series and for the free Family Day that was on January 18, 2016. Additional support is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Southwest Airlines, the Houston Endowment, Sara and Bill Morgan.

For more information, visit houstonartsalliance.com/folklife

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About Houston Arts Alliance

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a nonprofit, public-private initiative that invests in Houston's arts and cultural sector, advances Houston's reputation as an arts and culture destination, and works to elevate the quality of life for all Houstonians through arts and culture. As the city's designated local arts agency, HAA provides programs and services for the arts and cultural sector and awards approximately 225 grants annually to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and individual artists. The Alliance is the custodian of the city's art collection; takes permanent and temporary art to Houston's public spaces; presents free Folklife + Traditional Arts programming; nurtures up-and-coming arts organizations through its capacity building programs; connects the business community with the arts; convenes the field as necessary, and provides the latest information and research on cultural policy, economic development and Houston's folklife.

HAA's primary partner is the City of Houston. Approximately 55% of HAA's budget comes from Hotel Occupancy Tax and 30% from the City of Houston's Percent for Art Program, which supports commissions of new civic art projects as well as conservation of existing artworks. The remaining 15% of HAA's budget comes from private fundraising (grants/contributions/other revenue) for programs and special projects. HAA is committed to raising funds for only those projects and initiatives that the Arts Alliance is uniquely positioned to provide the community.

For more information, visit houstonartsalliance.com. For events in the region, visit Artshound.com.

About HAA's Folklife + Traditional Arts Program

Houston Arts Alliance Folklife + Traditional Arts Program focuses on promoting and presenting the lively cultural traditions of the nation's fourth largest city. The program works in diverse neighborhoods and communities to explore and highlight the contemporary traditions that make Houston one of the most vibrant urban landscapes in the United States. Program goals include research, documentation and public projects that explore the wide variety of established and emerging cultural communities that come together in the greater Houston area.