For Immediate Release

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SUBJECT: Family of Black Business Owners in East Alabama to Unveil Historic Marker, Commemorating 56 Years of Legacy and Leadership

SUMMARY: ***Growing up in Alabama—deep in the heart of Dixie—was a battleground where Black men and women had little more than a snowball's chance in hell. Yet, against all odds, my parents, iconic Civil Rights legends, fought tirelessly for justice, equality, and the right to be seen as fully human. Now, 36 years after their passing, their struggles, victories, and unwavering courage will be remembered, respected, and honored. Their legacy lives on, not just in history books, but in the lives they changed and the barriers they shattered.***

ROANOKE, ALABAMA – February 17, 2025 – A remarkable chapter in Alabama's Black business history is set to be permanently enshrined with the unveiling of a Historic Marker honoring the enduring legacy of Wilkie and Hattie Lee Clark, trailblazing entrepreneurs and community champions. This event, steeped in history and significance, will commemorate 56 years of unwavering service and economic resilience in the face of adversity.

At the helm of this historic initiative is Charlotte Clark-Frieson, the only child of Wilkie and Hattie Lee, who has spent more than three decades fulfilling a promise made to her mother, to ensure her father's contributions are etched into the historical fabric of Alabama.

"This marker is more than just a commemoration—it's a movement," says Clark-Frieson, a seasoned writer, historian, and business leader who has dedicated her life to preserving her family's story. "It's about reclaiming the narrative of Black economic progress, and it's a call to action for revitalizing our community."

The March 8th ceremony, coinciding with what would have been Wilkie Clark's 105th birthday, will serve as a rallying point for local leaders, historians, business pioneers, and community advocates to ignite a renewed focus on Black economic empowerment.

A Legacy of Resilience and Progress
For decades, Wilkie and Hattie Lee (Peters) Clark stood as pillars of strength, defying the systemic racism that sought to stifle Black business growth in the South. Their funeral home, established on land they owned outright, was not just a business but a beacon of self-sufficiency—a symbol of what was possible when Black communities owned, operated, and controlled their own economic destiny.

"At one time, East Roanoke was a thriving Black neighborhood, a place of promise," Clark-Frieson reflects. "My parents worked tirelessly to create opportunities for themselves and those around them. But today, much of that progress has eroded. And in spite of all the "racial progress" claimed by uninformed leaders and pundits, black citizens — particularly in Alabama — still sit at he very lowest extreme of the economic spectrum. Our best and brightest young minds feel they must leave to find success elsewhere. That has to change."

The unveiling of the Historic Marker is not merely a celebration of the past—it is a declaration of the future. Clark-Frieson and her family are leveraging this moment to spark a movement aimed at revitalizing Black economic prosperity, calling on investors, Black banks, economists, and advocates to support initiatives that will rebuild and strengthen East Roanoke.

An Invitation to Be Part of History
Distinguished guests, community leaders, and members of the public are warmly invited to witness this historic occasion. The event will feature honorary speakers, historical reflections, and a vision-forward discussion on restoring Black business districts and fostering sustainable economic growth.

We are eternally grateful to Ms. Leanne Waller-Trupp, Historic Marker Program Coordinator, and the Black Heritage Council of the Alabama Historical Commission, in Montgomery for all of their support and assistance in getting this HIstoric Marker Commissioned.

"We'll celebrate, but after that, the real work begins," says Clark-Frieson. "This is a call to action. We invite everyone who believes in progress to stand with us."

****Join us on March 8, 2025**

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To learn more about the remarkable history of the Clark Patriarch & Matriarch, visit the following link: https://www.clarkhistoricsite.org

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