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GULLAH-GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR:  
SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC HEARINGS

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I N D E X

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2  
3 June 5, 2009 - Laing Middle School -  
Mount Pleasant.....3

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1 (The proceeding commenced at 6:40 P.M.)  
2 DR. GREEN: Good evening. My name is Nicole  
3 Green, and I'm a commissioner from South Carolina. On  
4 behalf of all of the commissioners of the  
5 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Corridor, I'd like to welcome  
6 you here tonight. Thank you so much for being here.  
7 This is a special night, where we get to hear your  
8 ideas and concerns -- hi. Welcome, all of you. We get  
9 to hear from you, the public, on what you think is  
10 important about the Gullah-Geechee heritage and  
11 culture.  
12 First of all, I'd like to introduce the other  
13 commissioners in the room. First of all, our chairman  
14 is with us this evening, Mr. Emory Campbell. Chairman  
15 Campbell, would you --  
16 (Applause.)  
17 We also have Mr. William Saunders with us,  
18 commissioner from South Carolina.  
19 (Applause.)  
20 And we also have Mr. Michael Allen, National Park  
21 Service Gullah-Geechee liaison.  
22 (Applause.)  
23 And we're going to be talking a lot tonight about

24 what's important to you, getting your feedback, talking  
25 a little bit about the General Management Plan and the

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1 input we need from you to complete that General  
2 Management Plan.

3 But the first thing I want to do is call Mr. Allen  
4 up to say a few words and also introduce the person  
5 that's going to do the invocation.

6 MR. ALLEN: First, we realize the importance  
7 of the gathering here, not only physical, mentally, but  
8 also spiritually. So we're going to ask Ms. Joyce  
9 Cokely to come and provide us the invocation.

10 (Invocation.)

11 MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Joyce.

12 We're going to ask Commissioner Saunders if he  
13 wanted to share a word with you. I think that will set  
14 the platform for our gathering here tonight.

15 COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Good evening. My  
16 name is Bill Saunders. I'm from Johns Island, South  
17 Carolina. Across three bridges, I think, four bridges  
18 to get here.

19 And the reason I wanted to say a couple of words  
20 to you, I graduated from Laing High School, from Johns  
21 Island, in 1956. Laing High School was the only one at  
22 the time would accept veterans. And I've already spent  
23 three years in the army. I went in the army when I was  
24 16. When I came back to Laing school, I was just 19.  
25 So I still fit in with the rest of the kids that were

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1 here.

2 But the reason I also want to say some things,  
3 that there is so much history over here that has not  
4 really been looked at. And I'm hoping that the people  
5 from this area would really take a look at some of  
6 those things.

7 You know, the Post and Courier did something this  
8 past week, talked about Memorial Day. And when we were  
9 growing up, there was no such thing as Memorial Day.  
10 We knew Decoration Day. You know, and up until about  
11 20 years ago, that's all we knew. All of my elders  
12 used to get on a bus, pay three dollars to go down to  
13 Beaufort, to lay wreaths on the tombs every year. And  
14 it just slowly changed from African or  
15 African-Americans having ownership to going in the  
16 other direction.

17 One of the ladies out there just asked me a while  
18 ago -- they're making Gullah dolls, and she asked me,  
19 Did you used to make Gullah dolls? We hated Gullah.  
20 Gullah is not a term that we had anything to do with.  
21 Any time you said anything about Gullah, it made some  
22 of us angry. But, again, other people, they were to  
23 make it acceptable. So now it works well for  
24 everybody.

25 But I'm interested in making sure that, as we look

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1 at all of our history -- I was thinking this morning,  
2 we used to bank potatoes. And some of you that's old  
3 enough in here, talk to some of the other elders about  
4 the way, because it was scientific, the way you bank  
5 potatoes. If you didn't do it right and the air got in  
6 it, the potato rots.

7 You know, when I was growing up, the government  
8 brought lime, tractor-trailer full of lime and just put  
9 it on certain parts of the island. And everybody can

10 go get, you know, a cart full, to put in their fields,  
11 to help the sod, the soil.

12 And I still speak Gullah. So I go in and out  
13 sometimes. But if I get excited, it get real bad.  
14 But -- so I try to be cool all the time.

15 But there's so many things that we -- when we got  
16 our first -- our first outhouse was brought by the  
17 government. And it came in, the cement foundation, the  
18 top. And then it had what went in the ground. All we  
19 had to do was dig the hole. I was about ten years old  
20 at the time.

21 But, you know, and you sit there. But the  
22 government got involved in the kind of crops that you  
23 would plant, to help people. And none of those things  
24 are happening today. We help some individuals, but  
25 there was help for everybody. So there was just so

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1 many things that has gone on, that we have sort of  
2 walked away from. And I'm hoping it can be very  
3 exciting to get back into our history.

4 When I was young, growing up on Johns Island, we  
5 didn't need money for anything. We ate everything  
6 within the river, was in the woods. We built our own  
7 houses, built our own boats, built our own nets. We  
8 did everything for ourselves. We needed very little  
9 money. Now, they close the supermarket, I'll starve to  
10 death. And we call it progress.

11 You know, so I'm hoping -- I see a brother nodding  
12 in the back there. I'm hoping that as you talk  
13 tonight, as you try to learn -- because this thing  
14 involves everybody. I've got organized concerned  
15 citizens for the sea islands. And it has nothing to do  
16 with race. It has something to do with the original  
17 people that was over on Johns Island.

18 The slave owners -- I used to work for -- the  
19 guy that chairs the thing with me, I used to work for  
20 his grandfather, for a dollar a day, you know. But  
21 that was pretty good money. My grandmother took six  
22 dollars of that, you know. If I made extra money, she  
23 took it all and give me 50 cents later on.

24 But, again, we had so much respect for authority.  
25 And somehow, as you go through this, our kids are not

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1 having that kind of respect. They're not as bad as I  
2 was, because I argued with a lot of our elders. But I  
3 was a bad boy. You know, and most of the people I grew  
4 up with were bad.

5 You know, when I came to Laing school, I had a '47  
6 DeSoto that most of y'all in here never heard of,  
7 DeSoto, '47, four-wheel-drive DeSoto. And coming  
8 across the old Cooper River bridge, the only way I  
9 could get that thing to 100 is have it wide open when I  
10 go up on the bridge and coming down, coming down, it  
11 run 100.

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: 100?

13 COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: 100.

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: On the old bridge?

15 COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: On the old bridge,  
16 yeah.

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: With two-way traffic? You  
18 were bad.

19 COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: But I didn't know.  
20 We did all that. But kids now is not near as bad, I  
21 don't think. They just don't have no respect, and some

22 of the other things, but they're not as bad.

23 So what I would like for to us do is look at  
24 history as it was and not how we would hope or try to  
25 make it. Because there's some good, some exciting

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1 stuff that will happen.

2 And, you know, some of us could still say by the  
3 grace of God that we're still here, you know, because  
4 we're not -- I was wounded in Korea, when I was 16.  
5 I'm still here.

6 So, again, I appreciate Michael Allen, the one  
7 that said this, because he really works hard. He's  
8 caught a lot of hell from folks, trying to stand up for  
9 this thing. So we want to give him as much support as  
10 we can.

11 And I'm going to be around for a while. But I  
12 wanted to make sure that we understand and that Lange  
13 is -- again, Lange is a history within itself.  
14 Ms. Stokes, it has to be a part of anything that's  
15 going to happen that relates to this area. Mr. Russo  
16 (ph) was the principal when I was still here. I had a  
17 talk with him a couple of weeks ago. He's still here.  
18 He knows so much. We need to make sure we can get and  
19 sit and talk to those kind of people.

20 Thank you. I'm going to shut up.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. ALLEN: Thanks, Bill.

23 You know, I think what Bill said really sets the  
24 foundation to the importance of tonight. As I look  
25 around the audience, some of you all I perhaps have

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1 never encountered before, and so you may be asking, Why  
2 are we here tonight? How did we get here tonight? And  
3 what did we do to deserve what we will talk about  
4 tonight?

5 The journey of us actually standing and sitting  
6 here tonight really goes back almost a decade ago, when  
7 the National Park Service and members of the community  
8 came together with Congressman James E. Clyburn to try  
9 to find a creative way to protect, to preserve and  
10 interpret Gullah-Geechee history and culture. The  
11 culture, the legacy of people of African descent that  
12 arrived over three centuries ago, that we see when we  
13 walk around, when we smell outside, when we taste  
14 outside, and when you purchase one of those baskets  
15 outside. So that's part of our foundation of why we're  
16 here.

17 So we were tasked in 2000, by Congress and James  
18 E. Clyburn, to embark on what we call in the Park  
19 Service a Special Resource Study. And what that really  
20 is, is an opportunity to have a conversation and a  
21 dialogue with you, the public, asking basic questions:  
22 What is Gullah? What is Geechee? What are the  
23 threats? What are the opportunities? What do you see  
24 the future looking like, in a way that it can preserve  
25 it, protect it, but also bring sustainability to it?

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1 So in the spring of 2000, we began what we called  
2 exploring the soul of Gullah and Geechee history. And  
3 that journey began here in Charleston, here in the  
4 Lowcountry, asking you basic questions. But we were  
5 not selfish. We asked those questions in Penn Center.  
6 We asked those questions in Savannah. We asked those  
7 questions in Darian (ph). We asked those questions in

8 Georgetown. We asked those questions in Atlantic  
9 Beach. We went down to Jacksonville, Florida and asked  
10 those questions, up to Wilmington, North Carolina, and  
11 asked those questions. We began this journey 2000. We  
12 did as we're doing here tonight.

13 If you will notice to my right a young lady here  
14 that's taking notes, as a court reporter. Because  
15 what -- we see this opportunity here tonight as  
16 history. In fact, this is the same young lady that did  
17 it for me in 2000. In the back is a young gentleman  
18 that's videotaping what's transpiring in here today.  
19 Future generations will ask, What happened at Laing  
20 Middle School in July of 2009? And so for future  
21 generations to know, historians to know, we have gone  
22 about the task to document what we're doing here  
23 tonight. And so we ask that you take advantage of the  
24 situation by speaking clearly, distinctly, with the  
25 court reporter, and also making sure the young man in  
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1 the back is able to capture what's being said here, for  
2 future generations to experience. So that's the  
3 foundation as to why we are here, beginning in 2000.

4 We went back, after that, and began to listen and  
5 record and began to take in what she wrote. And then  
6 we came back, a year later, and said, This is what you  
7 said to us, but we want to make sure we heard it  
8 correctly. So again we went back and retooled what you  
9 had said. And we came back a second time and said,  
10 This is what you said to us in 2000. We want to make  
11 sure that you got it right, we got it right, so we can  
12 move forward. So we went through that second process  
13 again. And we came back a second time, with the  
14 radiant light of your conversation. And in that, you  
15 affirmed what you said to us a year or so earlier. And  
16 we took that document that was pooling together all of  
17 the conversation of communities and partners along the  
18 coast, and we put that into a document that became the  
19 Special Resource Study of Gullah-Geechee History and  
20 Culture. Since Congressman Clyburn asked to us to do  
21 that, we gave him an advanced copy. Well, he was so  
22 excited about the advanced copy that he took the tenets  
23 out of that advanced copy and in 2005 he introduced the  
24 Gullah-Geechee National Heritage Act into the United  
25 States Congress.

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1 Now, I transitioned in 2005 from doing public  
2 events to helping to shepherd the bill through  
3 Congress, which took about a year or so. And in the  
4 Fall of 2006, the Gullah-Geechee National Heritage Act  
5 was passed by the United States Congress, establishing  
6 the Gullah-Geechee National Heritage Corridor, where we  
7 are gathered here today. As the map clearly shares in  
8 the back with you, it stretches from Wilmington, North  
9 Carolina, all the way to Georgetown -- all the way,  
10 excuse me, to Jacksonville, Florida, 30 miles inland.  
11 You may ask, Well, why is that the boundary? Because  
12 we know that's the historic breadth and scope of the  
13 arrival, of the advancement, and of the development of  
14 coastal North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and  
15 Florida. And so that's why the boundaries are set the  
16 way that they are.

17 But the legislation did three things. One, it  
18 gave a name to the corridor. Two, it said that we  
19 should have a commission of individuals that would work

20 with the National Park Service, work with the  
21 communities, to ensure that your voices are being  
22 heard. So, again, that's why Chairman Campbell is  
23 here, that's why Mr. Saunders is here, that's why  
24 Nicole is here, to do as they have been tasked by the  
25 Secretary of the Interior. And the third and most

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1 important thing that came out of that Act was the  
2 development of a management plan. What that means is  
3 that as you talk, as we listen, and as we gather, we  
4 are able to take information that you have shared with  
5 us in developing a management plan. So later on,  
6 sometime in the next year or so, we will be able to  
7 present this plan to the Secretary of the Interior.  
8 And in that, we will be able to have said that we  
9 captured your voices.

10 So, again, that's why it's so important that we  
11 have assembled ourselves here today. And we have gone  
12 so far to the length of being -- making sure we capture  
13 this, that we have done meetings in North Carolina and  
14 Georgia and the upper coast of South Carolina, and now  
15 we're working our way down the rest of the state. And  
16 we will soon be finishing up meetings in Georgia. So  
17 by the middle of next month, we probably would have  
18 done close to a dozen meetings that you see here, to  
19 make sure that your voices was captured.

20 Now, the Commission has done a few things on your  
21 behalf. But a part of us being here today is making  
22 sure that you are satisfied with what they have done  
23 and also to give some advice to what they have done.  
24 The panels that you may have been paying attention to  
25 when you walked in laid out a few things. One, it lays

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1 out a draft vision and mission and purpose, which kind  
2 of gives a blueprint of where they're traveling. It  
3 also -- the latter two maps, on the end there, they  
4 have taken the time, at least in their opinion, to  
5 highlight and to document and to list important sites  
6 that they knew of in the corridor in this state. But  
7 I'm here to speak on their behalf. They realize that  
8 may only scratch the surface. So we're being, as our  
9 president said, very transparent. So, again, our  
10 collecting of data and information here tonight is for  
11 you to tell us potentially other places, other sites,  
12 other locations, other facilities, other churches,  
13 praise houses, things that are not on that list, that  
14 should be added in that list. So at the end of the  
15 day, when we do present to the Secretary of the  
16 Interior this final document, we will able to tell him  
17 that we traveled the length and the breadth of the  
18 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, to provide  
19 the best data about the preservation and the  
20 interpretation and the sustainability of a valuable  
21 part of our American fabric. So that's why we're here  
22 tonight.

23 Now, I need to add a few other caveats that has  
24 been floating around regarding this Commission. I need  
25 to say very clearly, at this present time, Chairman

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1 Campbell, Mr. Saunders and Miss Nicole are not sitting  
2 on a million dollars. They need to be very clear about  
3 that. Unfortunately, in some publications, in some  
4 things written and said publicly, you will see that the  
5 Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor, at least the paper

6 says, has a million dollars. That is not the case.  
7 The legislation says that Congress has the authority to  
8 appropriate up to. I'm managing the money with them.  
9 I can assure you, that has not happened yet. However,  
10 what we want to be able to tell the Secretary is that  
11 whatever Congress appropriates in future years to come,  
12 we will be diligent and also we will be able to do it  
13 with integrity. So, again, our integrity is on the  
14 line in how the financials of this work out.

15 So what we seek from you here tonight is your  
16 comments, your thoughts, your suggestions, and any  
17 other aspect that we need to know about, that perhaps I  
18 did not mention or you may have thought that we didn't  
19 know, which we may not know, or that needs to go on the  
20 public record.

21 I said when I was in Wilmington, two weeks ago,  
22 for those of you all who may have studied the WPA  
23 movement in the 1930s, a similar time to where we are  
24 now, when there was economic issues in our country,  
25 when people were sent out in coastal areas to interview

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1 former slaves and African-Americans and other community  
2 individuals about life in America. Well, we're back  
3 again, not in that same level of intensity, but we're  
4 back again.

5 And so, again, we ask that you take advantage of  
6 the situation by coming here, standing before the  
7 microphones -- I think I'll bring it up here to the  
8 front, so that the cameraman will be able to capture to  
9 say what you say here, so the young lady here will be  
10 able to capture what you say here. Then we'll be able  
11 to share with our partner, which is Denver Service  
12 Center in Denver, how we arrived at what we arrived for  
13 the meeting here at Mount Pleasant.

14 Again, before I move forward, I want to thank  
15 Ms. Thomasena Stokes-Marhsall and the committee of the  
16 Sweetgrass Cultural Corridor gathering for allowing  
17 us -- (applause) -- for allowing us to be a part of  
18 this journey. For some reason, when I called her and I  
19 asked her indulgence, she said, Sure, come on in.  
20 Because we see this as one collaboration. This is what  
21 we call a partnership. And so, therefore, in  
22 partnering with her and others, is how we're going to  
23 advance the ball down the field.

24 So, again, just want to make sure that's why we're  
25 here. That's our purpose. That's our mission. That's  
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1 our intent. Now we need to hear your voices.

2 DR. GREEN: Thank you, Michael.

3 (Applause.)

4 DR. GREEN: So this is the fun part. We get  
5 to hear from you. And I ask, again, if you came in a  
6 little bit late, please visit the table and sign in.  
7 If you give us your name and address, then we can get  
8 your newsletters and you'll be on our mailing list.

9 Also, when you come up to the mic, if you'd please  
10 state your name and community you're from, we would  
11 appreciate it.

12 MR. ALLEN: Not all at one time, please.

13 DR. GREEN: Yes, sir, come on.

14 MR. PARKS: Good evening, ladies and  
15 gentlemen. My name is Ernest Parks. I am from the  
16 community of Sol Legare. That's on James Island, South  
17 Carolina.

18           And I believe I have here this evening a special  
19 opportunity. I think she is a gem to behold. Back  
20 about ten years ago, we had this project called  
21 Seashore Farmer's Lodge, located on Sol Legare Island,  
22 on James Island, South Carolina. Sol Legare Island is  
23 an island on an island. And when we started this  
24 project, we wanted to renovate and renew that old lodge  
25 hall located on Sol Legare Island. Well, lo and

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1 behold, our biggest problem is a problem that everyone  
2 always has: Money. So through the efforts of  
3 Constable Marvin and the Town of James Island, we were  
4 afforded money to start this project up roughly six  
5 months ago. And February 17th of 2009, we started the  
6 project. Three months later, the project, where we are  
7 right now, she's approximately 90 percent finished,  
8 okay?

9           Now, what's significant about this is that Sol  
10 Legare Island has a special place in American history.  
11 July 16, 1863, the famed Massachusetts 54th Regiment  
12 fought their first battle two years before they went  
13 onto Fort Wagner, Battery Wagner, excuse me. Okay, so  
14 that's history in and of itself. You have to crawl  
15 before she'll walk. She crawled at Sol Legare Island  
16 so she could walk at Wagner, okay?

17           This isn't just about that. We are wanting to  
18 submit this gem to the Gullah-Geechee Commission, as  
19 part of the package on the tour, that she will come to,  
20 and you guys will be able to see.

21           As you can see here, this is what she looked like,  
22 circa -- built circa 1900, 1915, Sol Legare Island,  
23 South Carolina. And we have now gone from this picture  
24 right here, ladies and gentlemen -- I'll pass it  
25 around, so everyone can see -- to this picture.

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1           (Applause.)

2           The people of Sol Legare and the people of James  
3 Island, South Carolina, you know, we're a new fledgling  
4 town and we've had our hard times, trying to compete  
5 against the City of Charleston. But we hold our own  
6 pretty good, through the efforts of our mayor, the  
7 constable, our honorable constable, we have attained  
8 this so far, okay? So it's a pleasure.

9           Now, another thing that's astounding -- God works  
10 in mysterious ways. Another thing that astounded me is  
11 because of the length that we have the Massachusetts  
12 54th -- the Massachusetts 54th Regimen in American  
13 history, the diorama was offered to the State this  
14 particular year. Lo and behold, I applied for it.  
15 Now, I said a prayer, ain't no way in the world I'm  
16 going to get this, okay? But, lo and behold, in March,  
17 I was afforded the diorama of the assault at Fort  
18 Wagner that the Massachusetts 54th Regimen did on  
19 Morris Island. So this will be definitely the  
20 centerpiece of our museum. So I offer this to the  
21 Gullah-Geechee Commission.

22           And I want to thank Ms. Corey Hope and Trademark  
23 Services, because they played a big part in this. We  
24 had a James Island boy, Richard Davis, came in, James  
25 Island guy. He put his whole company back behind us.

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1 He sent us the story writing and everything.

2           So we would like to definitely partner with the  
3 Gullah-Geechee Commission. We want to know that the



4 way in order to make this Commission very successful  
5 would be that we go and we get all the small gems in  
6 the neighborhood itself. Some of the history that's in  
7 the neighborhood, nobody is telling. That's where the  
8 history is. And I think that's where Michael and the  
9 rest of Commission is really trying to get to the crux  
10 of everything.

11 Everything that Mr. Saunders said -- his son and I  
12 went to school together. Reginald and I went to school  
13 together.

14 I'm very familiar, very familiar with Michael.  
15 Michael has come along the way on a lot of things.

16 Nicole we had came last year to our function.  
17 Thank you very much.

18 We want to thank y'all. We want to let's  
19 everybody get together to do the best we can and make  
20 this Commission a success. Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. WILDER: Good evening, everyone. My name  
23 is Bill Goody Wilder (ph). I was raised up on Sol  
24 Legare. Went in the air force, give them about 24  
25 years and six months of my life. Then I came back.

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1 When I got back to James Island, I didn't like  
2 what I see. Old buildings was being pushed down. The  
3 neighborhood was changing. And the city of Charleston  
4 was encroaching on James Island, and I didn't like  
5 that. It was eating us up. After that, they give us  
6 this and they give us that. But we decided to go and  
7 form our own government.

8 Well, anyway, I want to say to you, to you folks,  
9 that I remember the little boy named Bill Saunders. We  
10 used to go downtown the city, the city of Charleston.  
11 And from -- from -- from Smith Street, all the way back  
12 to Line Street, it was more or less a very historic,  
13 historical place in Charleston for the black area.

14 What the City of Charleston did, they ran the  
15 Connector right through the heart of the black  
16 community, tore down houses, pushed back houses. I  
17 want y'all to know that homes are very historical.  
18 Those were historical homes. City of Charleston has a  
19 lot of historical homes down there. And the thing is,  
20 those homes on the Battery, only those big mansions,  
21 the folks down there don't pay their tax. You know,  
22 they're tax-free because they got a big historical  
23 home. But when it comes to the other part of, of the  
24 uptown area, where the minorities is at, these houses  
25 are being torn down and being replaced with new homes.

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1 We have got to learn that we have got to protect  
2 our heritage, you know. And I don't want to just pick  
3 on black or white. It's the fact that if there's white  
4 folks got nice historical homes, they need to save it  
5 and preserve it, if they can.

6 Ernest Parks, the efforts that he made at Sol  
7 Legare Island. And there is another old house right  
8 across from old Sol Legare Island. And this house was  
9 built back in the forties. It's a little, small house,  
10 little, old, small frame houses. What we're going to  
11 try to do is move that over on the -- on the historical  
12 property and restore it and make it like a visiting  
13 center. Because we're thinking about making the old  
14 Sol Legare Lodge a museum of African-American history,  
15 with the diorama to be inside that building.

16 So I say to y'all, y'all came tonight. Preserve  
17 the history. When you lose it, you got nothing. And I  
18 just want to say this: We came a long way and we got a  
19 long way to go.

20 Thank you, Michael.

21 MR. ALLEN: Yes, sir.

22 (Applause.)

23 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'll be very quick.

24 There's another project, which runs directly  
25 through this corridor, the East Coast Greenway. And  
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1 this is a national project to create a bicycle and  
2 pedestrian path from Maine to Key West. It gets some  
3 use now. And as the bike trails are improved, such as  
4 the wonderful walkway which passes to the Cooper River  
5 Bridge, it gets more and more use. But it would be  
6 worthwhile, as y'all develop your resources, to check  
7 them and make sure that they're listed in the guides  
8 and maps for the East Coast Greenway. As more and more  
9 bicycles go up and down the coast -- you can walk it,  
10 too, though it's sort of enormous to do that. It's  
11 sort of like the Appalachian Trail, but it's urban and  
12 it's coastal and it's bicycle-friendly. These are not  
13 people that are in a hurry. They want to meet people,  
14 they want to interact with the culture. If you're on a  
15 bicycle, you inevitably do that. And so do connect  
16 with the East Coast Greenway Project. They have a Web  
17 site, a state coordinator. And it's a project that  
18 goes directly through most of this corridor.

19 (Applause.)

20 MR. FREEMAN: Good evening. My name is  
21 George Freeman. I was born here in Mount Pleasant. I  
22 won't say I'm from any one particular community because  
23 I was raised in -- I lived in Two Mile, Four Mile, and  
24 Six Mile Community, so I came from all three of them.  
25 When I say I'm from Mount Pleasant, I mean I'm from

00025  
1 Mount Pleasant.

2 I also graduated from Laing High School, not when  
3 Mr. Saunders went there, though, a few years later.

4 MR. SAUNDERS: Be nice.

5 MR. FREEMAN: But, like he stated, Laing High  
6 School, like many of the other schools in Mount  
7 Pleasant, is very dear to me. I attended Laing  
8 Elementary, but Laing Elementary is no longer there.  
9 It was torn down some years ago and there's a water  
10 tank there now. There was a Laing School before that,  
11 and that was torn down.

12 What is happening in Mount Pleasant is that all of  
13 these schools that were built specifically for  
14 African-Americans are being torn down. It's my  
15 understanding right now that the school district has a  
16 plan to sell Laing High School and to demolish Jennie  
17 Moore Elementary. That's a group of us who are  
18 opposing that. We would like to save both of them, but  
19 we feel that it would be too difficult for us to save  
20 both of them, so we're concentrating our efforts on  
21 Jennie Moore Elementary School because it sits in the  
22 heart of the community. And when I say the heart of  
23 the community, I'm talking about a community that was  
24 created by African-Americans who were enslaved, many of  
25 them right at Boone Hall Plantation. Boone Hall

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1 Plantation, though, is well protected. But the people

2 who were enslaved there and live right next to it, and  
3 some of them even purchased land that was part of Boone  
4 Hall, is not protected. In fact, it's very much  
5 endangered right now by the Town of Mount Pleasant.  
6 There are things that the Town of Mount Pleasant is  
7 doing that is causing a lot of effect, that is causing  
8 these communities to be eaten away like a cancer,  
9 slowly and slowly. So we're definitely looking at  
10 trying to protect these schools.

11 But we also would like for there to be a system  
12 where some of these communities could be protected.  
13 Because these communities are very historic. I didn't  
14 realize how historic they are until I left South  
15 Carolina. It's very unique to find a community where  
16 almost everybody in the community is related and that  
17 the people don't look at homes as an investment, they  
18 look at it as their home. This is where they live and  
19 this is where they plan to die. They don't look at it  
20 to say, I'm going to hope my house appreciates and one  
21 day I'm going to sell it. They look at it, This is  
22 going to be my home. And, right now, the most of the  
23 people that are in my community, their grandparents  
24 were in that community at one time. And I expect maybe  
25 my grandchildren might be there one day. But I don't

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1 know, they're kind of iffy. I can't get them to  
2 understand the real history or how much this land  
3 really means to us, like how when I was a youngster  
4 they sort of relayed that to me, the value of the land.

5 My grandfather on my mother's side bought land  
6 here in Mount Pleasant in 1900. So my mother's family  
7 has been in Mount Pleasant since exactly the year 1900.  
8 So my family on my mother's side has been here for over  
9 a century. And before that, I believe on my father's  
10 side, they were here ever since they got -- their  
11 family were given their freedom from slavery.

12 So as far as I'm concerned -- and there is a few  
13 of us that I work with, we would like to see a system  
14 set up where a lot of these communities that are  
15 predominantly African-Americans, that were created by  
16 those descendants of enslaved Africans, that they get  
17 the same protection, just like we have in the Old  
18 Village of Mount Pleasant. Parts of the Old Village of  
19 Mount Pleasant is considered an historic district and  
20 you cannot do certain things to that part of the  
21 community. We would like to see something in that same  
22 fashion here in Mount Pleasant.

23 In the County Comprehensive Plan, we were able to  
24 get them to do something where you call a special  
25 management for areas like Six Mile and Seven Mile.

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1 However, we found out, since then, that even though we  
2 have a comprehensive plan and we put all this in the  
3 comprehensive plan, another jurisdiction that has a  
4 different comprehensive plan, they can ignore your  
5 comprehensive plan and come in and do things in your  
6 area that you didn't plan for. So that has not worked  
7 out to protect us.

8 So what we're looking for and hoping for from  
9 something in the Gullah-Geechee Corridor is that --  
10 some mechanism to set in place where these communities  
11 can be protected, so that they can move into the  
12 future, so that people can come to South Carolina, just  
13 like they go to Charleston, and as tourists, and see

14 these -- see Charleston, that they can come and visit  
15 these communities and see and meet those actual  
16 descendants of Africans who were enslaved here in South  
17 Carolina.

18 And, with that, I'll end my little spiel for  
19 tonight. Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. STOKES-MARSHALL: I'm going to usurp you.  
22 I have to leave tonight.

23 AUDIENCE MEMBER: That's fine. That's fine.  
24 I certainly appeal to you.

25 MS. STOKES-MARSHALL: Thank you. Good

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1 evening, everyone.

2 And, first of all, let me thank everyone for  
3 taking the time to come out and find out what the  
4 Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor is all about and being  
5 willing to share your thoughts and ideas.

6 I'm going to have to leave, so I just want to say  
7 a few words to leave with you, to think about, before I  
8 leave.

9 I am a person who was born here, left here at  
10 three years of age. When I came back home in 1993, I  
11 was 50. I did not feed into the history or anything  
12 else here. I didn't want to know anything about the  
13 South, okay? I had a New York mentality.

14 One of the things I did when I came back home, I  
15 found that I was plunged into the middle of a -- of a  
16 number of communities where there was a tremendous, a  
17 vast amount of history that tells me where I came from,  
18 where my people came from, what we went through, what  
19 kind of contributions we made to this country, to the  
20 development of the country across the board, social  
21 economic, political, domestic. You name it, there was  
22 a contribution. So as a result of that, I have become  
23 a lot more involved in the activities in a number of  
24 different communities, in our efforts to preserve the  
25 history and culture.

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1 I was fortunate enough to meet Michael Allen early  
2 on. And he serves as a resource for me in terms of  
3 helping me to put things in their proper perspective.

4 But to make this short, one of the things I wanted  
5 to say is that, years ago, when our foreparents were  
6 slaves, they were not allowed to read and write, so,  
7 therefore, their stories were not told.

8 I learned very little through my elementary,  
9 junior high, high school education about  
10 African-American history. If I went along with what  
11 was taught in the traditional schooling, it was as  
12 though the African-Americans and slaves really did not  
13 exist, they didn't make any contribution or anything.  
14 So later in my life, I found out that it's just the  
15 opposite, that there's been a tremendous amount of  
16 contribution across the board.

17 The Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor Act provides  
18 an opportunity for all of us to have direct  
19 contribution and input into telling the story of our  
20 foreparents, of our lives, of our family, of our  
21 community, of our heritage and traditions. If we -- no  
22 one else can tell our stories. Just like with any  
23 other race of people or culture, they live it, they  
24 experience, they know it, and they tell, they write,  
25 they record. If the African-Americans, the

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1 Gullah-Geechee people, or any other race, don't do the  
2 same thing, it's not going to be captured and people  
3 will tell the story, and it's distorted in a number of  
4 different ways or a number of different reasons. So I  
5 implore upon all of you, you have an opportunity to  
6 tell the story, to tell your story, to tell your  
7 family's story. Seize that opportunity so that it can  
8 be recorded in history.

9 And I thank you very much, once again.

10 (Applause.)

11 DR. POWERS: Good evening. My name is  
12 Bernard Powers, and I live on James Island. So I think  
13 there are about three of us that have already spoken  
14 from James Island. And I'm a professor of history at  
15 the College of Charleston. And I've been at the  
16 college for about 16 or 17 years now.

17 And, first of all, I just want to say how pleased  
18 I am to be here tonight and to be a part of this  
19 effort, which is so terribly important and --

20 (Fire alarm sounding.)

21 (Due to the fire alarm, a recess was taken.)

22 DR. GREEN: Dr. Powers, as you were saying.

23 DR. POWERS: Well, let's see, good evening.

24 I've been directed to start over again, so that they  
25 get all my information.

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1 So my name is Bernard Powers, and I live on James  
2 Island. I'm from the College of Charleston, member of  
3 the History Department, and I've been at the college  
4 for about 16 or 17 years now.

5 I just looked in the audience. I see I've got two  
6 colleagues sitting right here now. I just want to  
7 announce their presence, too.

8 And for those of y'all who know me, and several of  
9 y'all do, you know I have a personal interest in the  
10 Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor Commission and the  
11 work that you are charged to do. And a lot of my work  
12 is quite in concert with the kind of projects that you  
13 all are going to take on in the coming years and  
14 decades and so on.

15 But I'm here to really speak to a larger purpose.  
16 And I wanted to be absolutely clear at the outset, and  
17 I want you all to be able to take the information back  
18 to your funders and other people that are going to be  
19 looking at this project, and I want to say that there  
20 are people at the College of Charleston that are very  
21 interested in what the Commission is doing. But not  
22 only people, there are departments and there are  
23 programs. And there'll be administrative support. I'm  
24 not talking about money now, but I mean in terms --  
25 because we don't have money, either. But when you have

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1 institutions and agencies and people that don't have  
2 money, we can pool our personnel. Our personnel, we  
3 can bring people together. And there are a number of  
4 us who wanted to be absolutely clear that we want to  
5 work in concert with you all. And, in fact, we have  
6 some things that have already gone on, that really  
7 relate and comport quite well with your mission.

8 Bill Saunders is not here right now. He had to  
9 step out. But, for example, I can -- I can tell you  
10 that one of our students in history two or three years  
11 ago did a master's thesis on Bill Saunders and his

12 civil rights activism here in Charleston. We had  
13 somebody in, I believe it was environmental studies,  
14 environmental science, who did a master's thesis on  
15 some aspect of the work of the basket sewers here, East  
16 Cooper. So we're talking about people and departments  
17 that cover a wide range of interests, from the  
18 humanities to the sciences. And we want to work with  
19 you. We want to make the resource base of the college  
20 available to you all. And we've got a lot of  
21 resources. We've got faculty members and we've got  
22 students. So there will be opportunities for  
23 internships. You know, there will be lots of oral  
24 histories that will have to be collected.

25 Right now, I'm working on a project, a very  
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1 long-term project. Some of you all know about it,  
2 deals with the growth and development of  
3 African-Methodism in South Carolina, Lowcountry  
4 included, obviously. And -- and so that is directly  
5 related to the mission of cultural preservation and so  
6 on.

7 I'm not going to -- I'm not going to talk about  
8 the Carolina Lowcountry Atlantic Growth program because  
9 Simon Lewis is here and he may very well say something  
10 about that.

11 But let me just wrap it by saying the College of  
12 Charleston is present. And we want to work with you  
13 all in whatever way possible. Let's -- let's  
14 collaborate. And we want to follow your lead.

15 Thank you very much.  
16 (Applause.)

17 MS. MCCONNELL: My name is Elizabeth Hamlin  
18 McConnell. Many of from around here know Hamlin Road,  
19 Hamlin Sound. The name's all over. We don't count  
20 Hamlin Plantation because they took our name.

21 But Thomas Hamlin came here in 1694. The family  
22 lives on the same farm, the same property that Thomas  
23 Hamlin bought back then. So we have a lot of history.

24 I have a lot of pictures. I have a lot of maps,  
25 documents. And one of the maps I found from 1881 is  
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1 where ten-acre lots were divided off the farm and sold  
2 to the local population. And this is now the county  
3 beach area. And there are names on those maps like  
4 Jefferson, Cokely, Campbell. These people still live  
5 there. Our family still lives there. The local black  
6 population still lives there. And Joyce Cokely and I  
7 are working on collecting all this history and putting  
8 it together so that it will be available to everybody  
9 that's interested. Is that it?

10 MS. COKELY: That's it.

11 I'm Joyce Cokely, and I'd just like to put in a  
12 pitch for the young people. I've had the opportunity  
13 to have collected oral histories in my community. I've  
14 been running around for 35 years with a tape recorder  
15 and collecting the oral histories of the old people.  
16 And it's not until, you know, sometimes I go back and  
17 I'm listening to the tapes and I say, Oh, my goodness,  
18 I have found evidence of the underground railroad, the  
19 building of Highway 17 -- because this was just a shell  
20 road -- the building of the Cooper River Bridge, when  
21 Pershing's rifle people were on the green, just history  
22 that's untold in this, in this area. And sometimes  
23 when the young people say to me they're not interested,

24 then I take them back to the plantation, not just for  
25 enslavement, but for the lifestyle of the people.

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1 Because recorded in the oral histories were the games  
2 that the people played on the plantation, and the  
3 foods, and the religious practices. And for those  
4 people who like music, the songs from the Lowcountry.

5 I, too, attended Laing High School, but not with  
6 Mr. Saunders, but I did attend Laing High School. But,  
7 more importantly, I was able to record the people, some  
8 of the very old people, who attended Laing, when it was  
9 in the Town of Mount Pleasant.

10 And for their parents, who were able to tell me  
11 when -- second generation -- to tell me about 1866,  
12 when the Quakers came and started a school and the old  
13 orphanage in Mount Pleasant, and so much of Mount  
14 Pleasant's history that's lost. You know, I always  
15 tell people that Mount Pleasant is not the Mount  
16 Pleasant that you see today, but it is the Mount  
17 Pleasant of yesterday.

18 And I can definitely go on and on and on for the  
19 next two hours about banking potatoes and everything  
20 else. But my push is for the young people, because  
21 they really think that they have no interest in this  
22 community. But I always seize the opportunity to get  
23 the microphone, to prove to them that I can definitely  
24 make them interested in history.

25 Why, I think it was George or somebody who said  
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1 it: We're all cousins in Mount Pleasant. You see  
2 Elizabeth and I are working together. Guess what we  
3 discovered? In the family graveyard, so it goes on.

4 And Washington and the rest of the country is  
5 going to be amazed at what we are able to share with  
6 them through songs, through art, through our baskets,  
7 through our oral histories, through just what my  
8 grandparents have said to us and what many of us have  
9 lived, including Richard, because we were raised by  
10 grandparents, and grandparents in this area who never  
11 got electricity. So we're in a modern age. But  
12 for most of us, we lived in a house without electricity  
13 and without running water. But we heard the stories of  
14 200 years ago. And now we're ready to share the story  
15 with the younger generation, so that's my push.

16 (Applause.)

17 MS. CARTER: Good evening. My name is  
18 Barbara Oldham Carter, and I'm 62. And I moved to  
19 Mount Pleasant a day before my sixth birthday. And all  
20 of my friends in the city talk about how I had moved to  
21 the country. And for all my years through school, we  
22 took a beating because we lived in the country. If  
23 you -- we lived in Remley's Point. That's where I'm  
24 from. I'm from Remley's Point.

25 And if you walk out of the school and take a  
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1 right, you'll go a few feet down the road. Before you  
2 get to the traffic light, there's a red brick building,  
3 sits off of the road, looks like a little store. My  
4 grandmother and my grandfather built the store. You  
5 can walk there from here.

6 At the age of 55, my grandmother was an officer in  
7 the PTA at this school. No joking. No children, no  
8 grandchildren, but she thought it was her  
9 responsibility. She was in the PTA wherever she lived.

10 Until she died, she was in the PTA. We couldn't  
11 understand it. Billie Walker, member of the PTA, Laing  
12 School. I'm saying, how can you -- how do they let  
13 her -- how would they let her be on the PTA? We don't  
14 go to school there. We don't live there. We're not  
15 her children; we're her grandchildren. But they taught  
16 that responsibility.

17 What we need from the Gullah-Geechee Corridor  
18 Commission are two things: We need resources and we  
19 need a repository. We have the stories, but we don't  
20 have a place to put them.

21 And Remley's Point, those of you that live here  
22 know that we just completed the battle about the  
23 cemetery. Anybody heard about that? The Scanlonville,  
24 Remley's Point cemetery. A man bought ten acres and  
25 decided to build his dream home on the cemetery. Now,

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1 we fought because someone in our community had in their  
2 possession the 1870 map outlining the structured  
3 community and bordering marking the cemetery. So we  
4 went to court. We weren't expected to go. And we won.  
5 We weren't expected to win. The abandoned cemetery  
6 happened to be abandoned when Hugo hit. And trees were  
7 felled, and we couldn't move them. We needed  
8 resources. We won that battle in 2006. Our last  
9 barrier -- prior to the legal battle, our last barrier  
10 was Hugo, 1999, '98, '99 was the last barrier.

11 MR. ALLEN: '89.

12 MS. CARTER: I'm sorry, '89. So that was the  
13 last, before the legal battle.

14 Our first burial after the legal battle, because  
15 we won in 2006, our first burial was May of 2008, and  
16 it was my dad. And my dad, at the age of 87, was  
17 buried in the cemetery where his grandfather was  
18 buried.

19 We need a repository. The cemetery is just the  
20 tip of the iceberg of what happened in Remley's Point.  
21 And it's weird because everybody knows. The minority  
22 community knows what happened over there and the  
23 majority community knows what happened over there.

24 We know that on this map earmarking the cemetery  
25 was also earmarked a playground. The playground, by

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1 virtue of the legislature, was awarded to the College  
2 of Charleston. So it was taken from the community,  
3 given to the college. The college kept it for 20 years  
4 and then they decided, We don't need this. Did they  
5 give it back to the community? No. They sold it to a  
6 developer. And at this point, it's a gated community,  
7 2 million, 4 million, \$5 million homes. And we, in the  
8 community, have a cinder block building behind the fire  
9 house, you know. It wasn't returned to us.

10 So we need resources. We need something to help  
11 us investigate situations like that, even if it's just  
12 an intern or somebody to help us do the research that  
13 can be done.

14 One thing that happened with the legal battle is  
15 that every family had a story. But the stories weren't  
16 ever gathered at the same time. So during the recesses  
17 and during the breaks, while we waited for court to  
18 start, you told what happened in your family. You told  
19 what happened in your family. And you said, You think  
20 that's something? Here's what happened to my family.  
21 And you had all these stories in one room. We need a



22 repository, because it's amazing.

23 We were told by one family that they walked to the  
24 county courthouse in our city to pay their taxes. They  
25 were told, when they arrived at the courthouse, You'll

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1 have to come back next week because the tax books have  
2 gone home with a private citizen. Come back. And when  
3 the tax books were returned, 16 pages of records  
4 pertaining to our community were gone. So these are  
5 the kinds of things that are heavy on our minds.

6 When you drive through Charleston, you see the  
7 grave markers, the historic markers. There's one for  
8 Green -- for Green Hill. And there's one over on  
9 Sullivan's Island. And there's one for White's  
10 Paradise, and there's one for Riverside Beach. It's  
11 almost sad to be here. Because all of the grave  
12 markers are indications of places where we used to be.  
13 It's almost sad. We live in a community that prides  
14 itself on preservation. But we live in a community  
15 that seems like it wants to preserve everything but us.  
16 That's just the way we feel. And so we need resources  
17 to help us tie some links between us and the grave  
18 markers.

19 And that's -- that's what I'm asking for, a  
20 repository and resources to help us. Interns, lawyers,  
21 researchers, publicists, we need resources.

22 Everybody that talks about being here in  
23 Charleston -- I think Ms. Stokes-Marshall talked about  
24 having left. If you -- if you stay, you want young  
25 people to stay, there are no jobs for them. There's no

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1 money. So everybody leaves. And then, once we've got  
2 enough money to take care of our family and do the  
3 things we want, and try to safeguard some of this  
4 property we're trying to preserve, then we come back.  
5 So we need resources.

6 I appreciate your indulgence. I thank you for  
7 what you're trying to do. We're depending on you.  
8 Because we'll be lost. We want to preserve everything  
9 in this community. Please, please, please help us  
10 preserve us.

11 (Applause.)

12 DR. LEWIS: Bernie mentioned the Carolina  
13 Lowcountry and Atlantic World Program. I'm Simon  
14 Lewis. I've been the director of that program for the  
15 last five or so years.

16 Whenever I hear historians like the last one, I  
17 feel very embarrassed about the role of the College of  
18 Charleston, which has talked a pretty good talk, but  
19 hasn't always walked the walk. And there are  
20 certainly, as Bernie has indicated, people at the  
21 college who are very, very keen to make amends for  
22 that. And I've actually talked about the phrase of  
23 academic reparations.

24 It seems to me that the College of Charleston is  
25 very proud of its history. It was founded in 1770.

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1 And we boast about the people who were its first  
2 trustees, and they were people who signed the  
3 Declaration of Independence. And they were people who  
4 were absolutely fundamental in framing the Constitution  
5 of the United States.

6 But the most recent big push that the Carolina  
7 Lowcountry and Atlantic World Program did was to

8 commemorate the bicentenary of the banning of the  
9 international slave trade. And the reason why the  
10 international slave trade was not touched for 20 years  
11 after the signing of the American Constitution was  
12 precisely because of some of those same people who had  
13 signed and drafted the American Constitution, and who  
14 were trustees of the College of Charleston in 1770,  
15 namely John Rutledge and the Pinckneys. So we have a  
16 history at the College of Charleston which is extremely  
17 important in terms of education in America, in terms of  
18 the foundation of the very Constitution of the United  
19 States of America.

20 But one of the things that we have not done well  
21 has been to embrace the role of African-Americans in  
22 the United States. And when we were trying to  
23 commemorate the bicentenary of the banning of the  
24 international slave trade, which was not an easy topic  
25 to raise still in Charleston -- this was the most

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1 important port in North America -- it's still a pretty  
2 sensitive topic, as those of you who have been reading  
3 the newspapers will realize. When you try to bring it  
4 up, there's some weird kind of slant that gets put on  
5 it. The very Sunday after Tony Morrison had been in  
6 town here for the Tony Morrison Study Conference, at  
7 which the first bench by the road was placed out there  
8 at Sullivan's Island, a very, very important historical  
9 marker, the Post and Courier ran a newspaper article,  
10 front page, which had the headline: Selling Slavery,  
11 as if somehow what had been done had been exploiting  
12 the past of slavery and bringing up something in a  
13 slightly unsavory fashion, that it ought not to have  
14 done. So it's not an easy thing to do.

15 So what I've been trying to do with the CLAW  
16 program is try to talk about the American story,  
17 American story of liberty. And the American story of  
18 liberty does not begin and end on July the 4th, 1776.  
19 It doesn't begin and end in 1787, with the drafting of  
20 the Constitution. It doesn't even end in 1863, with  
21 the Emancipation Proclamation.

22 But I sincerely hope that will be one of the  
23 things the Gullah-Geechee Corridor enables us to do, to  
24 really commemorate the freedom, the Emancipation  
25 Proclamation, the 150th anniversary of that. I hope

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1 that will be a target that we're aiming for, January  
2 the 1st, 2013. That would be wonderful, if we in South  
3 Carolina could put on the very best, most meaningful  
4 commemoration of that particular anniversary. But  
5 freedom doesn't come in 1865. Maybe it doesn't even  
6 come in 1965. Maybe it still isn't here. Maybe  
7 November the 4th of 2008 was part of the whole thing.  
8 But it's a long, long story, this story of  
9 emancipation.

10 And there are a lot of people here at the College  
11 of Charleston, whether or not our administration is  
12 always behind us, there are people there who are going  
13 to try and make things work. And we are trying to make  
14 amends and, as I say, offer academic reparations.

15 One of the things that we've been doing, we've  
16 worked with Wevonneda Rider. Some of you may know  
17 Wevonneda. She's a features writer with the Post and  
18 Courier, and a very, very well-known local genealogist.  
19 She ran a series of workshops called Roots and

20 Branches. And she has a Web site now called  
21 gullahroots.com. And anybody who is interested in  
22 doing their family genealogy should try to and check  
23 out gullahroots.com and try and get in touch with  
24 Wevonneda Rider.

25 We do not yet have funds for this, but one of the  
00046

1 things I would really love us to do at the CLAW program  
2 and College of Charleston is actually to push that  
3 genealogical research back, as far back as we possibly  
4 can, looking at all of the documents in which  
5 African-Americans are mentioned, which are obviously  
6 not necessarily wills or marriages, where you would  
7 normally look. But they're in other books, for  
8 instance, in mortgages, because slaves were used as  
9 collateral for owners to raise money. There's a whole  
10 stack of material, research material, which has not  
11 been looked at, which actually has in it information  
12 that you can mine. It's not very easy to use that  
13 stuff. It's going to be very hit or miss. Names are  
14 going to be misspelled. Names are going to be  
15 difficult to trace. But there is an awful lot of  
16 information there, if people are really determined to  
17 find these tracks. So I would really like to try, if  
18 we can, to push that back further, that genealogical  
19 research, to try to build up the family trees and then  
20 to push, as Michael has always talked about, the 40  
21 percent, the 40 percent of African-Americans who landed  
22 here as enslaved people, came to Charleston and then  
23 they moved on. And because they moved on and married,  
24 that probably means that somewhere in the order of 60  
25 percent of African-Americans can trace their origins

00047  
1 back to South Carolina, and probably to Charleston.  
2 That's a huge deal.

3 If we can get everybody to recognize that this is  
4 not just a local community, but this is the birth place  
5 of African-America, we can start putting Charleston on  
6 the map as a place of pilgrimage for all  
7 African-Americans. It could be absolutely huge. And  
8 the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor is  
9 central to that. And then, if you think about how  
10 important that is to the world, because  
11 African-American culture is absolutely central to world  
12 culture. All right, without African-American culture,  
13 there is no soundtrack to the 20th century. There is  
14 no jazz, there are no blues, there's no rhythm and  
15 blues, there's no ragtime, there's no rock-and-roll,  
16 there's no reggae, (inaudible) no rumba, no samba,  
17 nothing. It just falls silent. All right. And that's  
18 only at one level, not to talk about the actual work  
19 that African-Americans put in, in the building of  
20 Charleston, in the bricks that were made at brickyards  
21 and then shipped across the river and built the houses  
22 that all the tourists come to now.

23 There are people at the College of Charleston who  
24 really want to draw attention to all of this history,  
25 to make those kind of academic reparations. So,

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1 please, if you want to use us, there are folks who want  
2 to be used.

3 Thanks.

4 (Applause.)

5 MS. HANSON: Well, this is a good follow-up.

6 My name is Liz Hanson. I work for the South Carolina  
7 Room at the Charleston County Public Library. And we  
8 are interested, of course, in all culture, all history  
9 of South Carolina.

10 Recently, there's been a huge, huge increase in  
11 the interest in genealogy for African-Americans. And  
12 we've made huge strides. We've made huge purchases  
13 recently. We're the only institution, other than the  
14 National Archives in Atlanta, that actually has all of  
15 the records of the Freeman's Bureau, not just the bank  
16 records, but -- and not just the field officers'  
17 records, but the stand-by officers' records,  
18 everything. It is so full of information of a  
19 genealogical sort that you cannot find anywhere else.  
20 And, of course, I'm very familiar with Dr. Powers'  
21 books and all of his work. But I just want you to be  
22 aware that we have not only the resources for you to  
23 use, to do this research, but we have trained  
24 genealogists always there, always willing to help,  
25 always willing to get you started.

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1 I've only had one success getting a family all the  
2 way back from now to slavery. I know who owned them.  
3 But it can be done. And it can be done with  
4 questioning 96-year-old great-aunts and things like  
5 that. But it can be done.

6 The other thing is, the library is a great  
7 resource for you to promote your cause. We have  
8 conference rooms. We have auditoriums for programs.  
9 We are always looking for programs that we can sponsor  
10 and bring in and bring in the public. We also have  
11 huge amounts of display space, not just for artwork.  
12 We've done sweetgrasses. We've done artwork. But we  
13 have just general displays where we can display any  
14 kind of projects that are going on in the Lowcountry.

15 So I just want you to be aware that there's this  
16 great, free resource that you can all take advantage  
17 of. And we're open long, long hours, compared to any  
18 other research facility in Charleston. We're open  
19 Monday through Thursday, from 9 to 9; Friday and  
20 Saturday from 9 to 6; and Sunday from 2 to 5.

21 Okay, thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 MS. GOETCHEUS: My name is Cari Goetcheus.  
24 I'm with Clemson University. And similar to the  
25 College of Charleston, we want to be used. We've been

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1 collaborating, actually, with the College of Charleston  
2 for about two years now.

3 We had received a grant from the State Historic  
4 Preservation Office to literally document ten of the  
5 African-American communities, from the village up to 15  
6 Mile. And when I say document, there has been so much  
7 research on the art forms and the culture in connection  
8 to Africa, but we were much more interested in the  
9 place and what physical resources are still available.  
10 So we have literally surveyed 3,000 properties between  
11 the village and 15 Mile. And if you get an  
12 opportunity, there is a display in the cafeteria of  
13 mapping those properties that are currently eligible  
14 for the National Register of Historic Places. Not the  
15 big victorian houses, I'm talking about the concrete  
16 block houses that were built when there were no  
17 mortgages, when it was save and build, the very

18 critical properties that tell a history that has not  
19 been told yet. So I wanted to make sure that you knew  
20 about that.

21 And then I actually has some suggestions about  
22 what the Corridor Management Plan might have. And it  
23 deals with things that we have run into as we've been  
24 doing our research and I know y'all have been running  
25 into for the past 25 years. I want to suggest that

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1 when the Management Plan comes out, there is some kind  
2 of framework to address working with municipalities,  
3 with policy, with development. Because those are the  
4 things that are taking out the communities, that unless  
5 the exclusionary planning practices are stopped, or at  
6 least influenced to be minimized, the communities will  
7 not continue. So there's got to be some kind of  
8 framework of collaborating and working with the various  
9 municipalities. I can't even imagine more than one  
10 county or one town working together, let alone three  
11 states.

12 MR. ALLEN: Four.

13 MS. GOETCHEUS: All those counties, all those  
14 municipalities.

15 MR. ALLEN: Four.

16 MS. GOETCHEUS: So there has got to be  
17 framework that addresses how do you deal with zoning,  
18 planning?

19 One of the things that we have come up with in our  
20 research is literally mapping the boundaries of the  
21 African-American communities. And it's not us. We  
22 have literally asked the community members, What  
23 historically was your boundary? What currently is your  
24 boundary? We have chosen to give that to both  
25 Charleston County and the Town of Mount Pleasant. So

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1 at least it's on the radar screen, when planning does  
2 occur. There's got to be that same exact kind of thing  
3 and level of detail that occurs in each of these  
4 communities. Unless these communities are defined for  
5 planning purposes, they won't be acknowledged at all.  
6 So there's got to be that.

7 So when I see (inaudible) identified and  
8 preserving sites, historical data, it's not only the  
9 planning process, but I'm hoping that it will be part  
10 of the Management Plan, to make sure that cooperation  
11 with state historic preservation offices and collecting  
12 data.

13 Because I can tell you, I was astounded when we  
14 first proposed this grant in 2007. I said, Well, this  
15 culture is so appreciated and the art form is so  
16 appreciated, surely all of these properties have been  
17 identified and documented in some way. Got to be. And  
18 so I was just flabbergasted when I looked at the  
19 existing documentation, and there was nothing. How can  
20 that be? That's ridiculous.

21 So it just has to be part of the Management Plan,  
22 that it gets down to that local level and it works at  
23 the state level, to make sure it's a priority at the  
24 state historic preservation level, to understand  
25 African-American resources and identify them, so it can

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1 be planned for and around and respected for what they  
2 are.

3 Oh, the Jennie Moore school. There has been

4 actually a really excellent paper written about the  
5 equalization schools program, which I don't know if you  
6 know about this. But in the 1950s, there was a lot of  
7 politics going on. Finally, there was funding created  
8 for schools, both white and black, a certain amount of  
9 funding to go toward each group. Jennie Moore was one  
10 of those schools that was built specifically during the  
11 equalization program. So there is documentation that  
12 it does have historic significance. And I think that  
13 would be one of the things that you would be able to  
14 use to help save that property. And, like I said,  
15 someone at the state historic preservation office has  
16 written that paper. So that is documentation that  
17 exists, that can help assist that process.

18 I think those are the key things. Thank you.  
19 (Applause.)

20 MR. ALLEN: Anyone else?

21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, if we -- I'm Bill  
22 (inaudible), at the College of Charleston. I'm a  
23 historian, along with Bernie here. And Simon's here  
24 from the English department and also from the CLAW  
25 program.

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1 I just want to just briefly just say that I think  
2 that the college does stand ready, really, as we've  
3 already said, to really be engaged in this whole  
4 long-term process. And in particular, I just want to  
5 say briefly that we might be able to be a repository,  
6 for the person who was talking about the repository for  
7 all these kinds of things that are occurring. Because  
8 we are doing that at the college. We're got special  
9 collections in our library. We've got librarians.  
10 And, of course, Avery is at the College of Charleston,  
11 as well. So let me offer that as a possibility. Maybe  
12 we can get, you know, addresses, exchange phone numbers  
13 and so on, see if we can't help along on that, on that  
14 project. And we've got plenty of students in the  
15 history department that can really help along on this  
16 project as well. And I'm sure that's true for other  
17 departments as well at the college. So I just want to  
18 just make that little note there and just to reaffirm  
19 what my colleagues have already said.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. ALLEN: Go ahead.

23 MS. DANIELS: My name is Nell Daniels. And I  
24 had not planned to speak tonight, but this has really  
25 been wonderful.

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1 I'm from Awendaw. And, as most of you know,  
2 that's north of here.

3 And so many things that have been said tonight, by  
4 so many people, have just -- they just are all  
5 dovetailing together. And they're all so important.

6 I guess I'll just make it brief and pick up where  
7 the lady from Clemson was talking about the, the  
8 importance of having these communities, the planning  
9 and the zoning, and all that, be -- that these areas be  
10 recognized, that the culture, the communities, what we  
11 have left that we can preserve. I mean, talking about  
12 Remley's Point and having to carve out your little  
13 place, and the Snowden community, and the Phillips  
14 community that are just crammed up. You know, that's  
15 all that's left of a huge area. Well, we do still

16 have -- and, I mean, this whole corridor, we have  
17 Myrtle Beach. And -- you know, which is Myrtle Beach,  
18 and developed for various reasons and used what they  
19 had. And then there's Charleston, wonderful, historic,  
20 urban setting. And Mount Pleasant has its own way and  
21 wonderful things. And there are some great communities  
22 in this area, out -- as you move this way more. I love  
23 the Two Mile, the Four Mile, the Six Mile, the Seven  
24 Mile.  
25 And I spent years of my growing up in Georgetown.

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1 And -- but I didn't ever realize those designations of  
2 communities.  
3 And, of course, living in Awendaw, we have the 15  
4 Mile and 24 Mile and all those. And I just love that.  
5 But what I wanted to say is that we do have, from  
6 Highway 41 to the Santee River, we have, like, 24 miles  
7 that still have a chance to be preserved, to be not  
8 just crammed, you know, the one little area that's  
9 crammed up against a bunch of development, but that is  
10 natural to the way that it was 100 years ago, 150 years  
11 ago, as much as possible.  
12 We still have settlement areas in Awendaw and  
13 McClellanville, and all of the areas in between, Buck  
14 Hall and Tibwin. And we have a special resource in the  
15 Francis Marion National Forest and the Cape Romain  
16 National Wildlife Refuge that are already huge areas  
17 that are preserved.  
18 But it doesn't take too many, as you all know from  
19 around here, doesn't take too many Hamlin Plantations  
20 and Park Wests -- and I don't mean to say there's  
21 anything wrong with those communities, because those  
22 are necessary. There's nothing wrong with them at all.  
23 But they're -- there's a place for that kind of  
24 community and there's a place for the -- to preserve  
25 the old communities. And I would really like to see

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1 the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor work diligently to  
2 preserve this area between Highway 41 or, you know,  
3 however far up you have to go, say, Chandler Road or  
4 whatever, Seewee Road, all the way to the Santee River,  
5 that we work.  
6 And one way to preserve that -- and in addition  
7 to, or in conjunction with, working with the planning  
8 and zoning is to look at infrastructure and to consider  
9 what we know now, that we may not have known 25 years  
10 ago, that sewer, the big pipe sewer, is a sure road to  
11 development. And, I mean, to high-density development.  
12 And we -- and, also, it's enormously expensive. And  
13 especially when you have an area like Awendaw, where  
14 you have -- would have to have miles and miles of pipe  
15 for very few homes, until those big, huge developments  
16 came in. And it's just -- it is -- in this day and  
17 age, none of us need to be paying that kind of money,  
18 either the taxpayers paying it for people, or the  
19 people then having to take on that burden of that  
20 monthly sewer bill. So one thing we could do -- and  
21 there have been enormous technological advances. And  
22 just there's so much you can do with septic systems  
23 these days. Septic system is not a bad word. It --  
24 they can work beautifully, wonderfully well. They, you  
25 know, they work the way nature intended, if you have

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1 enough space. So we -- the Charleston County is

2 working at this time on with a lot of different  
3 entities to come up with a septic management district  
4 for the Seewee to Santee area. And I would really like  
5 to see the Gullah-Geechee Corridor join us in those  
6 efforts to prevent the imposition of sewer on the area,  
7 so that we do have a chance to preserve these  
8 settlement areas, these communities.

9 And I'm really excited to think of getting the  
10 genealogies going and the historic places identified.  
11 And this is just a wonderful opportunity. And I thank  
12 you so much for what you've done.

13 And, Mr. Clyburn, I'm so glad that he took that on  
14 and got it passed in the legislature. And let's keep  
15 it going. It's a great thing, and I'm so excited.

16 Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was sitting there when  
19 some of the -- so much stuff came to me, as I hear all  
20 the people speaking and talking. I want -- I have to  
21 share this with y'all. I'm going to talk -- this is  
22 especially for Mr. Freeman, who said that he wants to  
23 try to save Jennie Moore Elementary School. And as you  
24 know, there was 46 schools that was built after they  
25 passed the Brown versus Board of Education. They gave

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1 46 schools in each of these counties. And each school  
2 is gone. Rosemont school, and I think Jenny Moore was  
3 a Rosemont School? It wasn't?

4 MR. ALLEN: No.

5 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay. There's another  
6 Rosemont School. Then I want you to know that  
7 (inaudible) which is now Septima Clark on James  
8 Island -- well, on June 13, is that it? June 13th  
9 they're going to have the celebration that this school  
10 is going to become a historic -- they're going to put a  
11 historical mark on that school, to make sure that  
12 school don't get tear down. This was the first black  
13 school, high school, on James Island. And we used to  
14 play the line in football. But I want you to know that  
15 there are ways.

16 And, Michael, I need to ask you a question. How  
17 many teeth is the Gullah-Geechee Corridor going to  
18 have? When I say that, I mean, like, I may be a town  
19 councilman. We try to pass -- we're trying to pass --  
20 we have tried to pass a historical district on James  
21 Island, to try to preserve these old communities. And  
22 we run into slack because the minority people are  
23 saying that we want to just do things for us. And it's  
24 not just us. We try and preserve our culture and our  
25 culture and our heritage. Because the development --

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1 the developers -- if any of y'all ever been on Sol  
2 Legare, or as you go in about two miles from Folly  
3 Beach, and they run like water. We do have sewage.  
4 And these are -- these 2 million houses, 2 million  
5 houses that they're building over there, so many taxes  
6 going up. And pretty soon I won't be able to live  
7 there.

8 So what we want to do is the Gullah-Geechee  
9 culture, we need to use that as a big battering ram to  
10 get these little towns or these cities to realize that  
11 we got to -- we need somebody behind us when we push  
12 for these resources, you know, to kind -- to rezone  
13 these historical areas, so we can try to preserve these



14 homes. Because if -- okay, that's good. All right.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. ALLEN: When you all walked in, you saw  
17 Ms. Zelda Grant at the table, asking each one of you  
18 all to please sign in. She probably placed in your  
19 hand a copy of this comment card. On the back of the  
20 comment card it says, National Park Service Denver  
21 Service Center, Planning Division. Then it says, West  
22 Alameda Parkway, Denver, Colorado.

23 This past winter, we mailed out approximately  
24 6,000 cards and newsletters to folks along the four  
25 states and across the country. When I sent the list

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1 that I had, some since 2000 and some I secured from  
2 some of you all sitting in here today, the first thing  
3 that was said to me by the folks in Denver, There's too  
4 many addresses.

5 And I said, You can never have enough addresses.  
6 Because people have been waiting for this mailing 400  
7 years.

8 So to teeth, my teeth are in this. I have shared  
9 very clearly with the authorities within the National  
10 Park Service system that as long as I'm involved in  
11 this endeavor and in this journey, I will do whatever  
12 it takes to ensure that it's viable and it's  
13 successful. And I can speak on behalf, I think, of the  
14 chairman and all of those who are sitting here as  
15 commissioners. Because Mr. Culler, we've had these  
16 same consults about teeth also. That's why the  
17 chairman said 32 so quickly.

18 We realize, as we sit here today, as I shared  
19 initially, that there are 50 National Heritage Areas in  
20 the country, 50. We realize that the one that you're  
21 sitting here today is a little bit different than the  
22 other 49. No offense to you, Ray, okay, because you're  
23 the existing heritage area. Ray is in the City of  
24 North Charleston.

25 Teeth. Because who we are and what this is, we're

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1 going to use it as an opportunity to do what is right,  
2 meaning, as my good friend said, we will shake some  
3 apple carts. That's already on the table. We may have  
4 some push back from the counties, cities, towns,  
5 municipalities. But that's why I'm glad you all got up  
6 and talked about teeth. Because what that means, she  
7 recorded it, he recorded it, that means we're  
8 responsible for it. Therefore, we can act on it. So  
9 if any of these conversations that you all brought,  
10 openly and honestly to us, ends up into a final  
11 document, we didn't force anybody to say anything  
12 tonight. What you said came out of your heart. So we  
13 realize that the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage  
14 Corridor is ground-breaking. It's setting a tone.  
15 It's setting a trend for other communities to follow.

16 The work that Cari has done, to be honest, ladies  
17 and gentlemen, needs to be replicated in every  
18 community, from Wilmington to Jacksonville, from the  
19 Atlantic to the Pacific. But Cari doesn't have that  
20 much time to do all that. But by her -- but by her  
21 saying this publicly tonight, and with her sharing her  
22 resources with this endeavor, it now becomes a part of  
23 the conversation.

24 Now, I did share with my good friend, George  
25 Freeman, that Emory Campbell is not a policeman.

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1 Nicole Green is not a policeman. But she's a  
2 spokesperson for those who have spoken to her here and  
3 it has been recorded by the two devices here today.  
4 That means that we're willing to go and to say and to  
5 move forward in what we know is right. Because folks  
6 are waiting 400 years for this comment card. Cari's  
7 story she shared with you, came when I had a simple  
8 conversation with the keeper of the National Register  
9 for the United States, when she took her tour of Mount  
10 Pleasant and visited many places that Carrie shared  
11 with you all tonight. And then, when she got to the  
12 end of the tour, she said, Mike, are these places on  
13 the National Register and so forth?

14 And I said, No.

15 Because in the normal scheme of things, that's not  
16 how things are done. But I'm glad that you brought  
17 that up. Because the day will come that the things  
18 that you saw outside of your window as you drove around  
19 Mount Pleasant need to be included in the National  
20 Register of Historic Places. So all you're doing here  
21 tonight is validating what I told the keeper, and the  
22 one before them, and the one that will come after her.  
23 It's validating what I'm telling the acting, what I've  
24 told the acting director of the Park Service, the one  
25 before him, and the one before her. So that's why it's

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1 important that what you said goes on the public record,  
2 so I have something to stand on.

3 I have a standing with this agency this week, 29  
4 years. Still standing. I've gone in places where  
5 they've never been before, done things they have never  
6 done before, answered questions they didn't want to  
7 deal with. But that's fine. I'm happy about that.  
8 And so seeing your faces here tonight, hearing your  
9 story tonight, makes me push a little bit further along  
10 so at subsequent meetings along the coast we're going  
11 to hear some heavy-duty things, like we heard here  
12 tonight. But that's all right. The bottom line, you  
13 all had an opportunity to share. That's all we can  
14 ever ask for. And that's the teeth that we will use.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. ALLEN: Anything you want to add, Mr.  
17 Chairman? I want to respect you.

18 I'll stand and be dismissed. Again, thank you all  
19 for coming out tonight. We'll be back again because we  
20 need to make sure we heard what you heard, and heard  
21 what you said, and she got it right and he got it  
22 right, okay?

23 (Benediction.)

24 (The proceeding concluded at 8:26 P.M.)

25