

1

GULLAH-GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR:
SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC HEARINGS

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

REPORTED BY: MARY ANN RIDENOUR, RPR, CLR
Registered Professional Reporter,
Certified LiveNote Reporter
and Notary Public

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

POST OFFICE BOX 21784
CHARLESTON, SC 29413-1784

25

00002

1

I N D E X

2

June 16, 2009 - St. Helena Early Learning Center -
St. Helena.....65

00065

1

(The proceeding commenced at 6:22 P.M.)

2

QUEEN QUET: Welcome, everybody, to
St. Helena Learning Center. I'm Marquetta Goodwine. I
am one of your expert commissioners for the State of
South Carolina.

5

6

Also, as you see on your program, if you turn it
over, you have a complete list as well of all of the
members of the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage
Corridor Commission. You were greeted this evening at
our sign-in table by also one of our South Carolina
commissioners, Ron Daise. And you also were greeted by
who I like to call Ranger Mike, who actually is Michael
Allen, who is our National Park Service commission
coordinator and liaison for this project. At this
time, I would like to also bring forward our
Commissioner, another from this county, Louise Miller
Cohen, who will now introduce our chairman of the
Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission.

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

MS. COHEN: Howdy, everybody. Oh, I was just
saying hello to you. That's all. I notice that I'm
supposed to introduce our chair, which (inaudible). Of
course, he is no stranger to this community. He's
served as director of Penn Center for 22 years. So I
introduce to some and present to others none other than

21

22

23

24

25 our chair, of course, Chairman of the Gullah-Geechee
00066
1 Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, Emory Campbell.
2 (Applause.)
3 MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you very much, Louise.
4 I don't know that that was necessary, but I accept the
5 honor.
6 And I want to say good evening to all of you. As
7 chair of the Gullah-Geechee Corridor Commission, I want
8 to welcome you to our hearing. I invite you to please
9 give us your input tonight to what it is that you think
10 we should be preserving with regard to the Gullah
11 culture. Speak your peace. It wouldn't offend us at
12 all. We have a court reporter and videographer that
13 will take exactly what you say.
14 And so, later on, you will hear more about the
15 corridor, I'm sure, from Queen Quet, Marquette
16 Goodwine, as well as Michael Allen, how this has come
17 about and what it is we're trying to do to preserve the
18 Gullah culture.
19 Thank you all for coming. This evening is very
20 important. We'll have an opportunity to tell others so
21 that they can also send their comments in. Thank you.
22 (Applause.)
23 QUEEN QUET: Now, some of you -- someone left
24 a cell phone at the check-in. Oh, please turn off your
25 cell phones before we get started. Want to make sure

00067
1 nobody leaves it there when signing in.
2 So also we want the folks who got here early, they
3 have taken some time and looked at some of these
4 panels. And the reason that they are here is so that
5 it helps us to explain to you why this Gullah-Geechee
6 Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission exists. There
7 are 15 members that are commissioners and there are ten
8 alternates. And this Commission was created by the
9 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Act, which was signed
10 into law in the year 2006 by President George Bush at
11 that time. The Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage
12 Corridor Act led to then initiating this process that
13 you are going to take part in tonight. We were then
14 authorized and vetted with the White House to do what
15 is called create a General Management Plan.
16 We will hear -- you will hear all kind of
17 abbreviations, GMP. If you hear us just go, GMP,
18 that's General Management Plan. If you hear us say
19 NPS, National Park Service. If you hear us say, DSC,
20 Denver Service Center. The only reason I'm pointing
21 that out now is because a lot of times, when you're so
22 used to speaking lingo with others that you work with,
23 sometimes you just start doing this and not realizing
24 the rest of the people don't know what you're talking
25 about, you see? But those are the things -- those are

00068
1 the groups of folks that are working together to create
2 the General Management Plan.
3 This Gullah-Geechee cultural Heritage Corridor
4 begins in Cape Fear, North Carolina, north of us, and
5 extends all the way southward to Jacksonville, Florida.
6 It goes inland about 35 miles. The larger board right
7 here gives you a much bigger example and shows you
8 actually the counties that it extends into. And, of
9 course, this is one of them.
10 Now, this small board that has the miniature

11 version of it gives you more of the background and
12 gives you also who your commissioners are.
13 You'll notice that there is a slanted image there.
14 Some of you, I recognize the faces, of course, were
15 here many years ago, nine years ago, when we had the
16 Lowcountry Gullah Special Resource Study going on.
17 Well, that's an image of the plan that came out of it.
18 It was a report that came out of it, that led to the
19 legislation called the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage
20 Act. It meant that that report said that
21 Gullah-Geechee culture is significant, especially to
22 American history. Because if that report said anything
23 else, this Commission wouldn't exist, you see? So
24 Congress saw that, yes, by virtue of that report, our
25 culture is so significant that we need to create a plan

00069

1 so that other legislative bodies and so forth,
2 community groups, will have an understanding of that
3 culture, but also work together to preserve and protect
4 and continue it, as well.

5 So here you would say, well, what exactly is this
6 corridor? It is called a National Heritage Area. Now,
7 the National Park Service is in collaboration in this
8 project. We are not a park. We are not going to
9 become a park site. The National Park Service has
10 national park sites within its division. But National
11 Heritage Areas are separate entities. We are unique
12 because we are a federal commission. Not all NHAs are
13 federal commissions. Some have nonprofit organizations
14 that are -- the local board may be the commission. So
15 we have a very unique position. And this particular
16 corridor was the first that America has ever had to
17 recognize a culture of people of African descent. So
18 it set a precedent. There are now some 40 NHAs, as
19 they're called, National Heritage Areas, in the federal
20 system. Now, NHAs go grassroots up in terms of how
21 they operate, wherein park sites generally go top, down
22 because they're part of the government itself, instead
23 of being an entity that is coordinated on a global
24 level.

25 Now, in terms of this Commission, we are part of

00070

1 what is called the Department of the Interior for the
2 United States. So we are here. The National Park
3 Service is also in the Department of the Interior. But
4 we're two different federal groups and we're working
5 together on this plan, along with the community, along
6 with the citizens that are now saying to us what you
7 want to happen in this National Heritage Area, the
8 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

9 Now, here, this gives you information on the
10 Commission and how can I participate? Well, that's why
11 you're here tonight.

12 The General Management Plan, we had three years to
13 produce it. Notice I said had, because we are in the
14 second year right now of the process. By January of
15 2010, we intend to have this plan completed.

16 This is part of our first phase of public input.
17 We have already had meetings in Jacksonville, Florida,
18 the northern part of South Carolina. North Carolina,
19 they just had their meetings last week, as well as they
20 started the meetings in Georgia over the last week.
21 And we will have another set of meetings in southern
22 Beaufort County and downward in Jasper or Hampton after

23 all of this. We will be having another meeting in
24 Yemassee that sits on four counties, actually, right in
25 the heart of it. And that will be on the 24th, from

00071

1 six to eight. So please let people know that that
2 meeting is coming up as well for this area, so that
3 more people can put input. And you can even come and
4 bring more people with you because it will be at
5 Fennell Elementary School, from six to eight on the
6 24th.

7 So now this General Management Plan is a federal
8 document. When it's created, it's created from your
9 voices. It's created from you saying these are the
10 things that we believe are important in regards to
11 Gullah-Geechee cultural heritage. These are the things
12 that are tangible and intangible, that we believe
13 represent the culture that we want to have continue.

14 When you provide us feedback, you see that we have
15 the device here the stenographer is using. Those
16 transcripts get decoded, so to speak, and pull out the
17 various things that people have said.

18 You will also notice on your seats, along with the
19 agenda, a folded card. That is our comment card. If
20 you decide that you want to take that comment card with
21 you tonight, you can do that. And unlike anything else
22 in America, it's free to mail it back to us. You paid
23 for it already, okay? So you can mail it back. The
24 address is already on it. Just drop it in the mail.
25 And then that will go to the Denver Service Center, on

00072

1 our behalf. And they will then decode what you write
2 there.

3 If you look at the top of it, you'll see, right at
4 the end of that paragraph, a Web site as well as the
5 same Web site as on your agenda. You can also go and
6 electronically provide input. Because, let's say
7 tonight you may say a couple of things that come to
8 mind, and as soon as you get in your car to leave, go,
9 You know, I had meant to say -- no problem. Go online,
10 send it that way. Write it on the card, if you still
11 have it with you. Mail it in.

12 The process at this point, we intend to have it
13 end at the mid of July, roughly. June was our target
14 date. We extended it by a week. So you have until,
15 let's say July 4th, so that you can still get your
16 comments in to us. And you can share that Web site
17 with anyone you like, so that they also can put their
18 comments in as well, if they couldn't make it this
19 evening or won't make it to the next few meetings.

20 So now, when you give us your information, we will
21 take that information, go back, examine it. And from
22 it, we create what are called interpretive themes.
23 Once we create those, we are going to come back in the
24 fall, with another round of meetings in different areas
25 in the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, so

00073

1 that you will have a chance to look at those things and
2 say, I agree with this, I don't, so on and so forth.

3 Now, if you look at these boards on this side,
4 this is a blowup of your particular part of the
5 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. This is the
6 South Carolina section. Each state that we go to and
7 have a meeting, we bring their section, so you can
8 really see where you are on there. You'll see that

9 there is a list of things on it. That was basically
10 from a map we exercised from. Some of us as
11 commissioners say these are some things we know are in
12 certain places. That does not mean we're restricted to
13 anything. That's why you're here. Because there are
14 places you know about. There are things you know
15 about, that we may not be aware of. And so we want you
16 to provide us with those things that you find to be
17 significant.

18 Now, one of our teammates, who he and I have been
19 active about 20 years now, not just on this project but
20 on various other special resource studies, public input
21 and comments and so forth, and is Mr. Michael Allen.
22 And Michael Allen is here on behalf of the National
23 Park Service, as a liaison to also assist with
24 providing more information from the federal side of how
25 does this process work? So Michael is going to share

00074

1 some things with you as well.

2 MR. ALLEN: Thank you, Commissioner.

3 Again, on behalf of the National Park Service, we
4 do say thank you for coming out tonight and sharing
5 with us in this great occasion.

6 As Queen Quet shared with you, as we sit here this
7 afternoon, there are approximately 50 National Heritage
8 Areas. We've got 10 (inaudible) 50 national heritage
9 areas across the entire United States. But the one
10 that you sit here, as she said, is the only one that
11 deals with the African-American experience exclusively
12 in the context of our American journey.

13 In preparing to come here tonight, there were a
14 few things I think I need to share with you all that
15 would shed some light to the seriousness of this
16 process.

17 Number one, when the legislation was passed in
18 2006 to create the National Heritage Area, the
19 legislation said very clearly that Congress has the
20 authority to authorize up to one million dollars a year
21 for the use by this Commission. Well, I'm here to tell
22 you tonight, that has not occurred. No matter what you
23 have read in the newspaper, no matter what you have
24 heard on television, no matter what you have heard on
25 the radio, that has not occurred. I don't want you all

00075

1 to be upset with Queen and with Ron and Louise and
2 Mr. Campbell, thinking they're hiding a million dollars
3 from you all. That is not the case.

4 The funding that has been provided at this point
5 in the journey is being the services utilized to manage
6 what you see here tonight, to engage the facilities and
7 to move the process. By the end -- well, by the middle
8 of next month, we would have had over 25 public
9 meetings along the coast. I can assure you, in my 29
10 years with the National Park Service, we have never
11 embarked on 25, 30 meetings with the community. So
12 that shows you the seriousness of this endeavor here.

13 I want to also speak about integrity, because the
14 National Park Service will take what you send to them
15 very seriously. That's why we went to the length and
16 breadth to develop -- some of you all may have received
17 newsletters back through the winter months.
18 Approximately 6,000 newsletters were sent out across
19 the four states. In my 29 years at the National Park
20 Service, we have never sent out 29 -- we've never sent

21 out 6,000 newsletters to anybody. So, again, that
22 shows our commitment to this endeavor.
23 I may also add that a part of our process, of our
24 success, has been through our creator, if you will.
25 That's Congressman James Clyburn, who also has given
00076
1 his full devotion and measure and staff time to this
2 endeavor.
3 And so I just want to come from the federal side
4 and from the Park Service side and a personal side,
5 that the dedication that we have to this endeavor, and
6 by you being here tonight, and by us sitting and
7 listening to what you have to share tonight, will allow
8 us the opportunity to create something that's great and
9 wonderful for future generations to enjoy.
10 And I want to end on one note. One of the other
11 serious matters that will be addressed through this
12 process, besides funding, is sites. I want to
13 re-emphasize that. Because the day of the exercise
14 that was done by the commissioners, that was just on
15 the front part of their brain. We don't want you to
16 believe, as she said, that that's the end all and the
17 be all. We want to hear from you tonight of historic
18 sites, buildings, locations, community, whatever, that
19 need to be incorporated in this journey.
20 We see tonight in the same manner as historians
21 saw the WPA project in the 1930s, when folks went out
22 and interviewed folks of African descent about life in
23 America at that time in our nation's journey.
24 Again, I just want to commend you all for coming
25 out. We want you to share. We would like the
00077
1 opportunity. And we are here to listen.
2 Thank you.
3 QUEEN QUET: Many of the folks that are here
4 tonight are people that have worked with these types of
5 processes before. And before we go into our comments
6 from everyone here, I want to acknowledge all the folks
7 that are here from the Beaufort County Planning
8 Commission. Could you please stand?
9 (Applause.)
10 I don't see anybody -- are there members from the
11 Beaufort County Council? Oh, in the back. There you
12 are. All right.
13 (Applause.)
14 I was expecting them to come on up front, but you
15 came from a meeting to this meeting. Yes, I
16 understand.
17 We also have our St. Helena's Cultural
18 Preservation Committee. That's our name for the
19 current time. Would you all please stand as well, that
20 are here? And I'll raise my hand. I'm already
21 standing.
22 (Applause.)
23 Excellent. And I also want to thank Principal
24 Priscilla Drake, who opened the doors to us very
25 willingly, please. Principal, here.
00078
1 (Applause.)
2 At the St. Helena Elementary School and St. Helena
3 Early Learning Center.
4 I want to thank Pastor Williams for providing the
5 invocation for us this evening. We do know that you
6 have to soon go to church. I want to make sure we

7 acknowledge you before you depart.

8 And any of our state representatives here this
9 evening? Any congressional representative from Capital
10 Hill that I've not noticed? All right. Sometimes they
11 fly in, so we wanted to make sure.

12 Now, one of the things that's very significant
13 about what Mr. Allen just said to you is how the
14 legislation works and how this process connects to it.
15 The legislation calls for one million dollars per year
16 over the course of ten years, not just ten million
17 dollars, but one million dollars per year, over the
18 course of ten years. That would be distributed along
19 that entire corridor, okay? That is legislation, not
20 appropriation.

21 When this General Management Plan is done, it is
22 then sent to the Secretary of the Department of the
23 Interior. The Secretary of the Department of the
24 Interior then approves or disapproves the GMP. Once we
25 have approval, there's a signature that goes there. It

00079

1 comes to the Southeastern Regional office for a
2 signature. There is a third signature on this
3 document. That then says that that plan is now what we
4 follow. Then the process can go forth to receive
5 appropriation. So as I said to our folks at our very
6 first meeting like this, that meeting, (remarks in
7 Gullah)

8 So we want to make sure you understand why he's
9 saying we don't have the money. Because we still have
10 to complete the process that gets us to the point of
11 appropriation. So, right now, in carrying out the
12 legislative role that we have as Gullah-Geechee
13 corridor commissioners, that is why we want to hear
14 from you.

15 I used two words already: Tangible and
16 intangible. We keep mentioning sites. There are
17 things called cultural landscapes, meaning an area of
18 land where there may not be a building, but there is
19 something significant to you about that landscape in
20 terms of your culture. That can be mentioned. That is
21 still tangible. We can touch it. We can go to it.
22 Intangible, what did I do when I walked up here? I
23 sang a song. What kind of song? A traditional
24 Gullah-Geechee spiritual. So that's an intangible.
25 You couldn't touch it in the air, but you could hear

00080

1 it. You could feel it. You knew it was part of the
2 culture here. So there are many other things like
3 that. Those are intangibles. Those are also part of
4 this process. So don't feel like, well, you have an
5 idea about something, it doesn't yet exist. Don't feel
6 like, I can't say that because they just said sites.
7 No. If there is something you feel is significant to
8 this corridor, to this culture, yes, it is your turn to
9 be able to speak and tell us.

10 Now, this microphone, I'm going to step away from
11 so that you can come and then make a statement or I can
12 bring it to you because we do have someone else that
13 wants to acknowledge, that's here tonight. And I know
14 she needed a little help coming in, and that's our
15 school board superintendent, Valerie Truesdale. Thank
16 you for coming tonight.

17 And are the other school board members that are
18 here with her -- not yet? Okay.

19 So just in case someone needs the microphone, I
20 can bring it to you.

21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Whenever they speak, call
22 out your name, first. If you signed in, you'll be duly
23 identified. State your name and then --

24 QUEEN QUET: Then make your statement or
25 state your question. This way, when the stenographer
00081
1 has the transcript, we know exactly who made what
2 statement at what time. All right. I'll come to you.
3 He would rather you come up, but I will come to you,
4 Ms. Truesdale.

5 MS. TRUESDALE: That's all right.

6 QUEEN QUET: You okay? All right.

7 MS. TRUESDALE: I want to thank you for
8 inviting me.

9 QUEEN QUET: Thank you for being here.

10 MS. TRUESDALE: It is a delightful evening.
11 Welcome to everyone.

12 It was a fascinating opportunity to move here two
13 years ago, as a native South Carolinian, and learn more
14 about the Gullah-Geechee Corridor and the differences.
15 And I was glad to ask Mr. Allen tonight to explain to
16 me exactly the differences.

17 Because there's a -- there was a horse-drawn
18 carriage downtown the other day, when I was attending a
19 funeral. They were asking me if I were a native here
20 and if I could tell them some things about the Robert
21 Smalls statue? I was glad that our students had done a
22 documentary and I had seen it, so I could actually
23 answer the question, which was great. And they asked
24 me the difference between Gullah and Geechee. And I
25 didn't know, until this evening. So that was very
00082
1 helpful.

2 So what I would like to say is that our students
3 at Robert Smalls Middle School recently did a
4 documentary on Robert Smalls. We showed it at our
5 school board meeting. Then we replay it on television.
6 What I would like to urge is more of an historical
7 documentaries, that share with our school children in
8 our community.

9 I had the blessing to attend Leadership Beaufort,
10 a tour of St. Helena and a Gullah tour, and be with a
11 man -- we spent an entire half day learning about this
12 island and learning about the cultural background. And
13 I'm a native of South Carolina. So I heard it most of
14 my life. Imagine, if you're not from here, you don't
15 know. And I knew very little. The folks who are not
16 from here know nothing.

17 And I think that it would be fantastic, if
18 appropriated. There would be an opportunity to share,
19 in visual form, for students to be able to understand
20 the background, and the history, and to hear the beauty
21 of the language, to be able to -- they may not acquire
22 it for their own use, but to be able to hear the
23 rhythms and to hear the sounds, and connect those, and
24 to always preserve our history. That living history
25 needs to be preserved for all time. Because many folks
00083
1 are maturing and we will lose that opportunity if we
2 don't preserve it.

3 So thank you for what you're doing.
4 (Applause.)

5 QUEEN QUET: Did you say your name? I said
6 it.
7 MS. TRUESDALE: Thank you.
8 QUEEN QUET: Valerie Truesdale. That was her
9 statement.
10 MS. BROWN: Good afternoon. My name is
11 Charlotte Pazant Brown. And I'm one of the co-founders
12 and one of the vice-presidents of the Gullah Festival.
13 And I know that it is not a monument or a tangible
14 site, but it might be one of the most intangible sites
15 that I feel might be a good thing to include in this
16 Gullah-Geechee Corridor. And so we have been -- we
17 have been involved with trying to preserve the heritage
18 and the culture of the Lowcountry since 1985. That's
19 when we first started out. And we have been working
20 hard at it for 23 years. And we're fast approaching
21 our silver anniversary. And we feel that it would
22 really be great if it could be included as a part of
23 what you're doing. We feel that we have quite a bit to
24 offer. And, I guess, that's about it.
25 (Applause.)

00084

1 MS. LEGARE: Good evening, everyone. My name
2 is Mary Rivers Legare, and I'm from St. Helena Island.
3 And one of the things that I would like to see
4 included for preservation and oral history is
5 preserving of the few praise houses that is left on
6 St. Helena Island. That was a very, very important
7 part of the religious culture, for the people in the
8 Gullah-Geechee corridor, especially on St. Helena. So
9 I would love for you to make -- identify the ones
10 that's remaining. I'm actually involved in the one on
11 Court Point (ph), where I live. And I understand they
12 are also trying to preserve two more in the Nance Point
13 area. But when our people could not attend churches,
14 it was an important place where they went to worship
15 and to share news and to get instructions in religion,
16 in order to get baptized.
17 Also, in my own community, I can identify at least
18 five families that still do canning, especially during
19 this time of year. So sometimes, if you want to
20 identify, do a story, take a oral history, watching
21 them, how they preserve tomatoes, how they do the cans
22 and stuff. I know some people who still actively do
23 that. That would be something to capture before it's
24 lost.
25 Thank you.

00085

1 (Applause.)
2 QUEEN QUET: Just a bit of housekeeping,
3 before Mr. Armstrong comes forth. For all of you who
4 have never been here in the multipurpose room, the rest
5 rooms are out this door and to your right, all right?
6 And if you need to have something to drink, we also
7 have lemonade and sweet tea in the back. The one that
8 is to the front of the table is the sweet tea, the one
9 to the back, turned to side, the lemonade. All right.
10 Mr. Armstrong?
11 MR. ARMSTRONG: Good evening. I'm Reed
12 Armstrong, resident of St. Helena.
13 And I suggest to you of what the park service is
14 trying to accomplish here, St. Helena is a model
15 example of exactly that. And what makes us so special
16 is that the community has come together, particularly

17 under the leadership of Penn Center, to make this a
18 very special place in preserving and highlighting the
19 value of the Gullah-Geechee community, and which can be
20 appreciated by all of us.
21 And I think that over ten years ago the community
22 came together, in the county here, and worked to make
23 this a very special identified location under our
24 Cultural Protection Overlay District, which identifies
25 St. Helena as a very treasured place, and its cultural
00086

1 heritage and history is something to be preserved and
2 identified. And Penn Center was able to provide the
3 leadership on that program.
4 And I suggest to you, as a Commission, identify --
5 well, additionally, the county has just announced that
6 they'll be building a large new library and cultural
7 center on the grounds of Penn Center. And it gives us
8 more opportunity here.
9 But I'd suggest that the Commission identify Penn
10 Center as a very special place in the corridor, and to
11 provide support directly toward Penn Center to continue
12 these programs.

13 Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 QUEEN QUET: As Ms. Green comes forward, I
16 want to also acknowledge our state representative,
17 Kenny Hodges that just arrived this evening. Good
18 evening.

19 MS. GREEN: Hello. I'm Kim Green. I am a
20 native of St. Helena Island.

21 One -- there are two things I think that needs to
22 be preserved (inaudible.) One is our burial sites on
23 each plantation. During the time of slavery, the
24 Africans were buried in their own burial grounds, most
25 of them. And in those burial grounds is the history of
00087

1 the family because you were buried in the burial
2 grounds of your mother.

3 The other thing that's very important and is
4 significant is the way we buried our loved ones, with a
5 bush of the everlasting tree. And all those things are
6 still happening in this county.

7 The other thing that is extremely important, a few
8 years ago the University of Minnesota came over to the
9 island and did some mapping of the island. And I'd
10 like to see that continued, if the Park Service or
11 whoever, will be responsible for that. Because in the
12 mapping, you then can identify most of the historical
13 areas within each plantation. And on this island,
14 there were 55 plantations. And within that, you have
15 all these conglomerates of history connecting families
16 to families.

17 And I think those two things are extremely
18 important, particularly the burial sites. Because once
19 you find out who's in those burial sites, you can then
20 begin to trace the ancestry of the Africans and who
21 they belonged to and who we are all connected to. Most
22 of us on the island are connected to many, many
23 families. I can trace with my husband's family about
24 15 different independent families. And we are all
25 connected. So it's important to be able to trace that
00088

1 and also preserve it. Because if any kind of
2 development comes in, what are the first things to go?

3 Our burial grounds. And most of those burial sites,
4 according to culture, are around the marshlands, the
5 wetlands. Because that was land that was not important
6 for agriculture. But, today, that's the land that most
7 people want. They want to see a water view, et cetera.
8 And I'd like to see those burial grounds not fenced in,
9 like so many of them have begun to -- began to happen,
10 gets fenced in, boxed in. The family can no longer
11 take their loved ones, the deceased loved ones, into
12 those areas; it's blocked out. I'd like to see that
13 tradition continue because it's so important to be able
14 to lead your stuff back to the
15 great-great-great-great-great grandmother.

16 (Applause.)

17 MS. COAXUM: Good evening. My name is Pam
18 Coaxum.

19 And I would like to say that in 1921, seven black
20 family members got together and purchased over 128
21 acres of property on Lands End. And on that property
22 includes a beach area. And I believe this is one of
23 the last black beaches in South Carolina. And on the
24 property, there are a couple of tabbies where the slave
25 master and a slave lived. And also we have a cemetery

00089 1 on that property. And we are looking to preserve the
2 history of that.

3 Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 QUEEN QUET: Ms. Coaxum, I take it you're
6 referring to what is called the Woodlands Club
7 Incorporated, correct?

8 MS. COAXUM: Yes. Yes.

9 QUEEN QUET: Wanted to make sure that's on
10 the record.

11 MR. BARNWELL: Good evening, everyone, to
12 whatever is chairing. I'm honored to be able to come
13 and request some of the immediate services that might
14 have been mentioned already. My name is -- for the
15 record, my name is Thomas C. Barnwell, Junior. I live
16 on Hilton Head Island. My mailing address, for the
17 record, is PO Box 21057, Hilton Head Island, South
18 Carolina, 29925.

19 The first thing I'd like to mention is that we are
20 working on the plans for a Gullah museum on Hilton Head
21 Island, 193 Gum Tree Road. I would certainly hope that
22 we would be able to solicit all of the technical
23 expertise in terms of the architecture and other green
24 space planning that this Commission might have, the
25 contacts for planning, as well as preserving the

00090 1 artifacts that families will be able to donate to that
2 museum, please.

3 The second thing that I'd like to mention very
4 quickly is something that is of great importance to
5 many families of many of the islands, specifically who
6 have been in this area for more than 100 years, and
7 that problem is heirs' property. Heirs' property is
8 something that many families have great needs,
9 especially today, to get cleared up. And I would like
10 to suggest that if this Commission would be able to
11 request in its planning process special laws to be set
12 aside on a revolving loan basis, and that revolving
13 loan means that the families will be able to go to this
14 fund, request up to \$28,000 to get the appropriate

15 attorneys, attorneys needed to be able to clear the
16 title on the property, to the extent that the property
17 will have title insurance. Now, there are families in
18 various parts of this state today that are having major
19 problems with finding lawyers that will be able to
20 clear the title and get title insurance. That is
21 critical to the process. And it's not an overnight
22 process. It takes time. There's a lot more I could
23 say about that, but I'll go on to the next one.

24 The next thing I'd like to mention quickly is the
25 need, please, to try to do something to help the

00091

1 committees on Hilton Head Island that's working on
2 trying to preserve a portion of the community called
3 Mitchell Field. It was established in 1862. It's
4 continuous to Port Royal Sound. And the Town of Hilton
5 Head has purchased some of the land in that general
6 area. There is one house being discussed now. We
7 would like to get all of the expertise that this
8 Commission might have available, to make that the most
9 outstanding point to visit on Hilton Head because of
10 its very rich history. And I will not belabor you to
11 go into details about Mitchell Field.

12 The last one I will mention very quickly is the
13 preserving of tabbies. There are several of them
14 throughout the county. And I happen to have access to
15 one on properties that I personally own, on Squire Pope
16 Road. The state history and archives has little data.
17 They've recommended, as a state (inaudible) category
18 and also they have recommended eligible for the federal
19 registry. Now, the problem is that these tabbies, as
20 you know, are so old and they begin to deteriorate
21 after so many years. If the Commission could provide a
22 list of resources, resource persons with technical
23 expertise, again, that citizens such as myself could go
24 to and get the technical expertise to restore those
25 tabbies.

00092

1 Thank you for your time.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. SMALLEY: Dwayne Smalley, the city of
4 Beaufort. My concern is regarding the Northwest
5 Quadrant. The Northwest Quadrant is in the Beaufort
6 Historic District, roughly bounded by the streets
7 Charles Street, Boundary Street, Prince Street and
8 Hamar Street. It's subject to Historic Review Board
9 constraints for remodeling exteriors of properties.
10 And, if I may, I'd just like to read a brief part of
11 the historic overview of the Northwest Quadrant: The
12 modest buildings in the Northwest Quadrant illustrate
13 an important chapter in the history of Beaufort. The
14 area developed in the years following the Civil War and
15 was populated predominantly by African-American
16 tradespeople, domestics, laborers and small business
17 owners. When Beaufort was occupied by federal troops
18 in December, 1861, most of its residents had already
19 fled their homes, never to return. During the War,
20 Beaufort's African-American population began to grow as
21 refugees from nearby plantations made their way to town
22 to look for shelter and work. It is in this period
23 that many people acquired land, built houses.

24 And many of those structures still exist to this
25 day. But the problem is, many of them are in

00093

1 disrepair. The Historic Beaufort Foundation has
2 identified at least 20 houses dating from the 1890s and
3 1880s that are vacant, boarded up, maybe close to
4 falling down. Next time you've driving down Price
5 Street or Duke Street, Converse or Washington, you may
6 notice them in particular.

7 There is a problem a portion along 1407 Duke
8 Street, Lodge Hall started by African-Americans. The
9 early history of the building may not be that well
10 known, but in a lot of cases the histories need to be
11 produced.

12 Also, there is a home, 1203 Prince Street, which
13 was owned by two daughters of Robert Smalls. Another
14 structure in very bad repair.

15 What I would like to see happen is that maybe the
16 corridor commission can work with families that own
17 these houses and find some means to preserve them, to
18 allow them, in some way, whatever ways might be
19 created. Also, Mike, to see maybe that these families
20 get assistance in identifying history of some of these
21 structures as well.

22 The document that I read from is available through
23 the City of Beaufort's Web site. If you go to their
24 commissions link and then down to Historic District
25 Review Board, it's the Northwest Quadrant Design

00094

1 Principles. Again, it covers the history of many of
2 the -- well, not history of the buildings themselves,
3 but history of the area, talks about how early
4 African-Americans acquired land in downtown Beaufort.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. RICHARDS: Good evening, everyone. I'm
8 Maureen Richards with the Heyward House Historic Center
9 and the Bluffton Historical Preservation Society. And
10 my comment goes in line with the man who just spoke
11 about the architecturally significant structures that
12 are in our county, and specifically one very dear to my
13 heart is the Garden House located on the banks of the
14 May River, next to the Oyster Factory Park in Old Town
15 Bluffton.

16 I was a student at the Savannah College of Art and
17 Design, studying historic preservation. And I came to
18 Bluffton. And I was looking for a master's thesis.
19 And I ended up writing and learning so much about the
20 African-American culture and history in this little
21 town of Bluffton and through the Garden House, a
22 freedman's cottage which was built circa 1870, the
23 records say, right on the banks of the May River.

24 And, since then, at this time, the Town of
25 Bluffton has received some state funding to create a

00095

1 preservation plan for the Garden House, which I am
2 fortunately involved in. It was very exciting for me
3 this week meeting with the preservation society to
4 review their plan. And then we will, of course, need
5 to secure some more funding for proper restoration of
6 the Garden House. And through that building we can
7 connect to a real, truly significant part of our
8 history and to the whole region, all along the
9 corridor.

10 And those are my comments.

11 (Applause.)

12 QUEEN QUET: I'm Queen Quet, for the record.

13 Just to add to your comment, because you mentioned
14 Bluffton, you mentioned Heyward House. I thought you
15 were going to mention the slave cabin that is on the
16 property also. That is a Gullah-Geechee house there as
17 well. So definitely want to mention that.
18 (Inaudible.)

19 MS. BROWN: Good evening. I'm Rosalie Brown, a
20 resident of St. Helena Island and also the director of
21 history and culture at the Penn Center. I'm also a
22 member of the Lands End Woodland because I'm also a
23 descendent of one of the purchasers of the 128 original
24 acres.

25 So Pam forgot to mention that annually at the
00096

1 Labor Day weekend we hold a Lands End River Festival,
2 to not only celebrate the contributions of our
3 African-American ancestors, but also to bring people to
4 an area that they probably never visited before, to
5 share in the culture, to be educated about the history,
6 and to see also the remnants of tabby ruins that are
7 quite rare. So we would like to just share that with
8 everyone. It is open to the public.

9 But I stand tonight to speak on behalf of the Penn
10 Center, an institution that has 147 years of history.
11 So, you know, I would need hours and hours to talk
12 about that. But, instead, I would just like to share
13 briefly with you that the Penn Center has been a major
14 catalyst for the development of not only this
15 community, but also for the preservation of its history
16 and the cultural artifacts linked to Africans and
17 African-Americans who still thrive in this community.

18 The mission of the Penn Center has always been to
19 preserve and promote the history and the culture of the
20 sea islands, in particular, Gullah culture. So our
21 work preceded the work of this federal entity. But we
22 indeed strongly believe that we all have to collaborate
23 to make it a successful national project.

24 We were a part of the resource study. And, as
25 such, it helped us to also examine a lot of aspects of
00097

1 what the Penn Center once was, and what it is today,
2 and what we'd like it to be in the future.

3 And there are many, many exciting things on the
4 horizon, such as the Beaufort County Library. And
5 potentially one of us will be developing a
6 Gullah-Geechee research center.

7 But I'd just like to say that I think it's
8 critical for us to look at this community, just as a
9 microcosm of what you will see along the corridor.
10 Because it's one of the few communities that remains
11 intact as a Gullah community, from the lifestyle of the
12 people, to the physical spaces within the community,
13 the historical landmarks that are still preserved here.
14 And we feel that we've also been -- Penn Center has
15 been an important part of the overall community spirit
16 and character. It's not a fabricated community. It
17 indeed is something you could put your hands on and
18 touch.

19 And I can speak to this and attest to it because
20 people who come here every day tell us, I've never
21 experienced anything like that. I've never seen
22 anything like this. I feel a spiritual connection to
23 the people, to the place. And we tell them that that
24 is because this is sacred ground. Our ancestors who

25 came to this country from various nations in Africa
00098
1 came here, lived here, worked here, bled here, died
2 here. So we respect the land. We respect what they
3 did here.
4 And we have a great love for our community, who we
5 are. And many of us do not want to see that
6 compromised or changed into something other than what
7 it is. So our work has been devoted to preserving
8 those cultural traditions, those cultural artifacts
9 that we display every day in our small museum.
10 The oral histories that I could still recall my
11 grandfather telling those stories, about how he taught
12 basketmaking at Penn Center; to my father who could
13 tell you about every family that lived on the island
14 and their relationships to him or to his family.
15 And the historical landmarks, we often take those
16 for granted sometimes: The cemeteries, the house of the
17 first African-American doctor who lived on the island,
18 the brick Baptist church that was built in 1855 by
19 slave labor. So the community is rich in that respect.
20 And, historically speaking, it is a very special place.
21 Two things that I'd just like to comment on
22 before I take my seat. And one is the language. I
23 always appreciate hearing Queen because she is indeed a
24 representative of the culture and the truest aspects of
25 the language. And Penn Center was very proud to have
00099
1 been a part of a major language preservation initiative
2 the translates the Gullah translation of the New
3 Testament. And we are still in the midst of continuing
4 to do that, a little differently now perhaps, to do the
5 audio recording of that. So there's a race against
6 time to preserve these things because of the human
7 element that is holding stories and those human
8 elements that are holding the authenticity of who we
9 are. And language is critical to our identification.
10 One such project that we're working on now is our
11 Gullah Studies Institute. I'm so sorry the
12 superintendent has vacated because I'll share with her
13 at a later time. But we do have several teachers from
14 her school district and many teachers from the
15 Orangeburg school district and across the country
16 coming this summer to participate in our Gullah Studies
17 Institute. And in that institute, we make it a point
18 to include the study of language. And this year we're
19 bringing a linguist, Dr. Margaret Wade-Lewis, from SUNY
20 University in New York. Anyway, she had -- she wrote a
21 book on Lorenzo Dow Turner two years ago. And she sits
22 in front of an audience of teachers, helping them to
23 understand that many of our children speak a version of
24 Gullah Creole. And it indeed, in itself, is a language
25 and has a structure to it. And how do children feel
00100
1 when they come in a classroom, perhaps they may not
2 have the same diction or dialect as other children who
3 have mastered standard English? It's an experience
4 that none of us would like to be demeaned or belittled
5 for. So she is teaching teachers how to use strategies
6 to help those children bridge from the Creole English
7 that they speak to mainstream English. And we've
8 learned that simply because of our age and our
9 experiences. We look at children who sit in
10 classrooms, who have not had those experiences, but

11 have the brilliance and intelligence to be successful
12 at anything they put their minds to. So we are
13 challenging the teachers who work with us. And we
14 would love to have more of our local teachers to attend
15 our programs so that we can see a change in our
16 classrooms that welcomes all children and all of their
17 cultural linguistic uniqueness. So I would urge that
18 we look at language as one of our foremost needs in the
19 corridor.

20 I'm going to give a second, and I'll be brief
21 about it. We all come from different communities and
22 have so many critical and interesting and much-needed
23 preservation topics. But we all lack the same thing:
24 Resources to do them. And the corridor will not have
25 all of the resources that we need. So I will share

00101

1 with you that I think it is critical that all of us,
2 through the corridor, build partnerships with
3 universities and colleges, in particular our
4 historically black colleges and universities. They're
5 a network. They have vast resources for public
6 service.

7 I contacted a gentleman, he was way up in Indiana.
8 But he had what I needed. I needed someone to do a
9 cultural landscape study. He wrote a grant, he got the
10 money, came down and spent a week at Penn Center. And
11 I'm going to get a free cultural studies report that's
12 going to show me all of the landscape of the Penn
13 Center, what was there prior to the school, and where
14 we may or may not build a new construction or new other
15 things that we are planning to do in the future.

16 So the colleges and universities, just like our
17 partners, South Carolina State University, they have
18 vast resources and are willing to work with various
19 partnerships.

20 We're inviting the corridor commissioners to join
21 us this November, November 12th through the 14th, for
22 the Penn Center Heritage Day celebration. During that
23 celebration, we will host a symposium with university
24 and college presidents and commissioners to discuss
25 some of the same topics that we're talking about

00102

1 tonight. So we think that will be worthwhile for many
2 of the individuals sitting here, as well as many of the
3 sites along the corridor.

4 So I appreciate your time that you've extended.
5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 QUEEN QUET: Ms. Brown -- I just wanted to
8 add to what Ms. Brown said. This is Queen Quet. You
9 referred to the doctor. And you're referring to the
10 building that was there, correct?

11 MS. BROWN: Yes.

12 QUEEN QUET: And, also, the Leroy Brown
13 Service Center is named for your father, correct? That
14 is here on St. Helena Island. I wanted to make sure
15 that was on the record as well.

16 MR. DAISE: My name is Ron Daise. I am
17 speaking as a commissioner, as a native of St. Helena
18 Island, and as a parent.

19 This comment hopefully will be a springboard for
20 thought for others who are listening.

21 Having attended public engagement meetings along
22 the corridor, I have not heard this point made. But

23 because of the value of the heritage of this community,
24 which many of you have spoken about earlier, I have not
25 heard of other communities where youths from one

00103

1 particular section are so hateful of others in a nearby
2 community, where they just go out and they form gangs,
3 shoot them up based on our heritage, where we come
4 from, all of us in this community, particularly in this
5 area. And I'm hopeful that the Commission will be able
6 to present the education of heritage in a way so that
7 our youth realize their significance. It's being done
8 in the churches. It's being done by numerous
9 festivals, some that have been mentioned here. But we
10 need to somehow engage our youth or help them to better
11 understand where they've come from and, more
12 importantly, how we're all interrelated. Same families
13 from St. Helena and Burton and Hilton Head and
14 otherwise. So I don't see, based on this heritage that
15 we have, how we devalue ourselves. And something needs
16 to be done about that.

17 (Applause.)

18 QUEEN QUET: He was standing first. Okay,
19 come on, Reverend Brown.

20 REVEREND BROWN: Ladies first.

21 QUEEN QUET: He said, Ladies first,
22 Ms. (inaudible.) The REVEREND said, Ladies first.

23 Chivalry is not dead, praise the Lord.

24 (AUDIENCE MEMBER): Good afternoon. My name
25 is Liz (inaudible.) My great-great-grandmother

00104

1 was born on St. Helena Island. She was a midwife in
2 the community activity. So my
3 great-great-great-grandfather was also born on St.
4 Helena's Island. And on the other side, my
5 great-grandparent (inaudible) was a native of the
6 Wassaw community. And he bought property on Wassaw
7 Island in 1879.

8 And I think that for us to preserve the culture,
9 we have to hold on to the land. If we lose the land,
10 the culture is gone.

11 I am fearful of our culture being placed in one
12 place. And I'm fearful because of the fact that we are
13 alive, the culture is still going on, we practice our
14 culture every day.

15 And in talking about the tangible and intangible
16 things about the culture, there's a spirituality about
17 our culture that you cannot place in a museum. And the
18 only way people can get a feel for that is to actually
19 meet people who are Gullah-Geechee people. That's the
20 only way. I would hate to see us lose that.

21 One of the best ways I see, in addition to holding
22 onto the land, to preserve our culture, is to teach our
23 children about our culture. Because I don't care how
24 much money the federal government puts up, the only way
25 we're going to hold to that culture is if we do it

00105

1 ourselves. Because you can't work on something you
2 don't understand and you don't know. So, you know,
3 people can help. And there's a great need for help.
4 But we've got to be willing to buckle down, as
5 individuals and as communities, and come together and
6 work on saving the culture. And you do that by working
7 with the kids, holding on to the land, and
8 understanding that this community, as many other

9 African-American Gullah-Geechee communities, have
10 always been a communal, a communal type of community.
11 We've always worked together. And unless we
12 continue do that, unless we continue to come together,
13 do what's best for our community, we're not going to
14 survive. And the culture will be gone. It will be in
15 a museum. And the people won't be here because there
16 won't be any land for them because they can't afford
17 the land. So people will come here, go to the museum
18 and say, Oh, you know, they had that culture here. And
19 look at -- oh, that's the picture of that house that
20 was taken down ten years ago.
21 If you look in Beaufort and the city of Beaufort
22 now, it does not look as if there were any
23 African-Americans in the city of Beaufort. Every --
24 just about everything that belonged to
25 African-Americans are gone. The last thing was Tom's

00106

1 Shoe Shop. It was a great building. And now all we
2 have are the intangibles, being the memory of what
3 Tom's Shoe Shop did and what it meant to us as a
4 community.
5 So I would urge us to be extremely careful in all
6 we do, what we do, and be careful of what you preserve.
7 Because sometimes what you think you're preserving
8 won't get you where you need to go.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. BRYANT: Good evening, everybody. My
12 name is Joseph P. Bryant, with a T on the end. People
13 call me Rev. I'm the one who owns what is called Rev's
14 Gullah Island Cove.

15 And I came up here because -- I came to this
16 meeting because I was informed about it by our queen.
17 And I thought it would be most important for me to
18 come, take some time out of what I think is important
19 to come and meet these people that are here today
20 because this is the most important thing at this time.

21 I am very proud to be a member of the
22 Gullah-Geechee Nation. I don't just call it the
23 corridor; I call it the Gullah-Geechee Nation. And one
24 of the things I'm most proud of is the fact that we
25 have a queen by the name of Marquette L. Goodwine.

00107

1 Let's give her a round of applause.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. BRYANT: I think, if it had not been for
4 her, a lot of things that we are enjoying as a
5 community of people, we would have ceased to exist a
6 long, long time ago, some years ago. But I want to
7 thank God for letting us have such a wonderful person
8 as her in our presence.

9 I thank God for people like Representative Kenny
10 Hodges and others that are here.

11 I want to say that I run a small business. I'm a
12 tour guide from St. Helena's community, parts of Wassaw
13 and parts of Lady's Island. I am the one they call the
14 Gullah One. I give you what is called the
15 "unforgivable experience." In other words, I do
16 things that other people don't do. I go places where
17 other people don't know to go. And if they do know to
18 go, they're not going to go, okay? Because they don't
19 want to take a chance. You've got to be a tribesman to
20 be able to ride through the reservation. And I'm a

21 tribesman. I was born Gullah, bred Gullah. I know
22 Gullah. And I know how to speak people's language,
23 okay?
24 I took two white ladies one day to the Scott
25 community down in an area called Peaches Hill, no man's

00108

1 land. Introduced them to an old Gullah woman.
2 Introduced them to a woman down in the Gullah
3 community. They asked her, they said, Mama, can you
4 teach us how to speak Gullah? We would like to learn
5 how to talk like Gullah people so we can know how to
6 communicate with the Gullah folks. And her response
7 was (remarks in Gullah.) That's what she said.
8 Then I had a lady walk up to me in the Beaufort
9 County Public Library not too long ago, library, comes
10 up to me and said, Maybe you can tell me about those --
11 I said, What kind of people is you looking for?
12 (Inaudible.) So she said -- I said, What kind of
13 people are you looking for?
14 She said, I'm trying to find the Gullah people.
15 She said, Do you know anything about the Gullah people
16 and where they are located at?
17 I said, You're talking about my people, the
18 Gullah.
19 So she said, Oh, that's how you say it?
20 I said, Yes, ma'am.
21 She said, You know anything about them?
22 I said, Well, ma'am, Gullah is the ones who raised
23 me. I guess I'm an authority on the subject.
24 So she said, Well, how would you no one if you saw
25 one?

00109

1 I said, Just keep your eyes open. They be here,
2 there, and everywhere. I said, The Wal-Mart, look at
3 every cash register. Everybody that's working on the
4 floor in Wal-Mart, just look and you'll see.
5 She said -- so she said, Do you know anything
6 about the language?
7 I said, I better know something. These are my
8 people, ain't they? (Inaudible.)
9 So she laughed. And she didn't know what to do
10 then. She said, There's another group they call the
11 Geechee.
12 First thing she said was Gullah, now she wants to
13 know about the Geechee.
14 I said, You're talking about the Geechee now,
15 right?
16 She said, Oh, that's how you say that?
17 I said, Yes.
18 So she said, Are they related to each other? Are
19 they kin? Are the Gullahs and the Geechee kin?
20 I said, Ma'am, they're the same people. I said,
21 If you've ever been to a funeral, you watch the
22 marching through the church and see if they're not
23 mixed up together.
24 So I just want to say I'm proud to be a part of
25 this great culture. And I don't want to see it die. A

00110

1 lot of people are concerned, as I heard said earlier,
2 that our culture was being lost in the community,
3 within the a matter of years that the Gullah will cease
4 to exist. We'll be like the Native American tribes
5 that have ceased to exist. We only know them now, by
6 name.

7 But I believe that a Gullah is going to be a
8 Gullah, regardless if they live in New York, Chicago,
9 Dallas. I bet I could go anyplace, anyplace, and tell
10 you which one is our people. Because I can tell you,
11 if they walk barefoot a lot, if they -- if I go to
12 their house and they got rice and lima beans with neck
13 bones in it, I know where I'm at, okay? These sure are
14 my people.

15 Thank you. God bless you.

16 (Applause.)

17 QUEEN QUET: As we stay in church, there's
18 still room for more. Yes, please.

19 MS. WHITE: Hello. My name is Teresa White.
20 I'm a resident of St. Helena Island. And I'm
21 originally from Savannah. So I'd like to ask that some
22 of the historic sites from the Savannah area and other
23 parts of Georgia be included as part of this corridor.
24 For example, the First African Baptist Church in
25 Savannah, which was founded in the 1770s. And it

00111

1 predates the United States of America itself. And it
2 still has in the floor holes where they used to hide
3 slaves, that they were hiding, who were trying to
4 escape to other parts of the country, who were going
5 down to Florida to join the Native Americans.

6 There's also Factors Walk in Savannah, where they
7 used to stand out and sell slaves, when they brought up
8 slave ships up Savannah River.

9 There are places on the island where you still
10 have a lot of Gullah speakers and praise dancers.
11 There are place to go around Savannah that have
12 historic markers, such as the one for Bishop Henry
13 McNeal Turner, who was one of six bishops of the AME
14 church who was known to be an African-American
15 (inaudible.) His master gave him certain respect for
16 that.

17 There's also a monument in Savannah (inaudible)
18 against the British and a marker on River Street that
19 was put there to honor the freed slave family. We
20 could see them come out of their chambers, right on
21 River Street.

22 And I'd also like to make sure that incorporated
23 into this corridor is the part of all of the sites
24 relating to power, fight for liberation in the United
25 States, including ones to Robert Smalls and Harriet

00112

1 Tubman.

2 And I'd also like to say that when I was working
3 at Beaufort Gazette as a reporter, one of first stories
4 I did was about the African delegation that came to
5 South Carolina, that went on a tour of St. Helena
6 Island, places that was conducted by Sandy Green. And
7 they were marveling at the African culture in South
8 Carolina, the way the houses are still in family
9 compounds related to the mothers, that we have heavy
10 West African culture there. They marveled at some of
11 the hairstyles are the same, the food is the same, the
12 boats, the way they make nets are the same.

13 And both Gullah and Geechee grew up in Savannah.
14 Neither one of my parents actually came from Savannah.
15 My mother comes from St. Helena Island. She had the
16 same rich history that many of the people here, which I
17 didn't know about until I became older and I came over
18 to my mother's side of the family, when I was 16 years

19 old.

20 I was raised by my father's side of the family.
21 And they came from rural Georgia, where they had come
22 out of slavery and ended up becoming sharecroppers
23 because they got cheated out of their land, my
24 grandfather did. Because he couldn't read.

25 So it is very important that we continue to

00113

1 recognize the importance of our early educational
2 institutions, like Penn Center and the Beach Institute
3 in Savannah, and various other sites.

4 And also like to see you not just concentrate on
5 the slavery aspect, but there were many communities
6 where there were freed blacks, who had land, property.
7 One woman in Savannah had so much influence, when they
8 were laying out the street in the historic district in
9 Savannah, they went, like, a little extra feet around
10 her house. So the street curves like this, so she
11 wouldn't have to move her house. And this was before
12 slavery ended, so you can see that black people did
13 have a lot of influence and power, even then, and it
14 continues to this day.

15 Thank you.

16 (Applause.)

17 QUEEN QUET: This is Queen Quet.

18 I'd like to add to the list of schools Dorchester
19 Academy, which is down in Liberty County, Georgia, and
20 also the site of what some call the uprising, Stono
21 Rebellion site, which is on the border of Hollywood,
22 South Carolina, and Ravenel, South Carolina, where the
23 Sea Island Regional Market is currently.

24 And, of course, agriculture and keeping
25 agriculture alive in these Gullah-Geechee communities,

00114

1 I think, is very significant as well.

2 Finally, a County Council person.

3 MS. VON HARTEN: Laura Von Harten, Beaufort
4 County Council, represent Beaufort and Port Royal.

5 I grew up here in Beaufort. My
6 great-great-great-great-grandfather -- no, my
7 great-great grandfather was born here, on St. Helena.
8 The family had an oyster shucking house, and a house
9 there. But we've lived in town pretty much for the
10 past couple of generations. But I still feel a
11 connection to these islands. I grew up on these
12 islands.

13 And I want to make sure that the maritime heritage
14 of the Gullah-Geechee people is included in the work
15 here. Because, just like agriculture was so important
16 to this area and to building the wealth of this area,
17 in slavery time as well as in the truck farming time,
18 with all the lettuce and what have you, but also
19 shrimping and oystering. Those were major industries
20 here in Beaufort, in the earlier part of this century.
21 The oyster factories were a major source of income.
22 They were the largest employer of families, and they
23 were mostly African-Americans working in there. There
24 were some other people, too, some Polish immigrants
25 that they brought down from Baltimore. But the people

00115

1 doing a lot of the really hard work were Gullah-Geechee
2 people. And the same with the shrimping. And the
3 shrimping started in the 1920s.

4 And there's one man, his name is Charlie Wilson,

5 who passed away this past year, almost 100 years old.
6 He was an African-American man, Gullah, and he grew up
7 just a poor, barefoot kid near the docks there, at the
8 time when they did not allow black people to work on
9 the boat. They would only let white people on the
10 boat. And back then, there was a lot of boats from
11 Spain, Italy and Spain, that owned these big fleets of
12 little shrimp boats. But, anyway, he got an
13 opportunity one day. He would sleep on the dock. And
14 one day, some white guy didn't show up for work. And
15 so the boat captain says, Hey, Cubby -- his nickname
16 was Cubby -- come, we need you. We know you're a hard
17 worker. Come work with us. And that's how he made his
18 way onto the boat. He had eventually become the
19 captain of his own shrimp boat. And I think he's -- I
20 know he was the -- I'm almost certain he was the first
21 African-American shrimp boat captain owner here in
22 South Carolina, and maybe even the Southeast. You
23 know, there are other people that had captained boats.
24 He himself had captained boats for some other people.
25 But he was able to buy his own boat. He bought -- he

00116

1 put his kids through college.
2 And there's still a shrimp dock at Port Royal
3 that's operated by a man named Mark Smith. And Mark
4 Smith is someone I went to high school with. And he's
5 also African-American. And he learned a lot from
6 Mr. Wilson.
7 And that's an example of some traditional culture
8 that's gotten passed down from one generation to
9 another. Even though they're not related biologically,
10 everybody in Port Royal called Mr. Wilson Papa. And he
11 taught Mark Smith a lot of what he knows.
12 Right now, the shrimp dock, its future is kind of
13 up in the air because it's on the State Port Authority
14 property. And it's part of the redevelopment plan.
15 Once the property is sold to a private developer,
16 they're supposed to keep the docks there, to keep the
17 shrimp boats operating. But I want to make sure Mark
18 keeps his job of managing that dock, because that's
19 part of a long and proud tradition.

20 (Applause.)

21 QUEEN QUET: Again, this is Queen Quet, for
22 the record.

23 Pre-county Council days, Ms. Von Harten did an
24 oral history project on the oyster industry and this
25 county's maritime industry. And that is with the

00117

1 McKissick Museum in Columbia, archived there, right,
2 archived there.
3 And also, when you mentioned Mr. Wilson, when you
4 said Charlie Wilson, I don't think Charlie Wilson ain't
5 that old. He's still alive.
6 But then I also want to just mention that the
7 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Group out of northeast
8 Florida honored the families of the fishing families in
9 Amelia Island and Fernandina Beach right after we did
10 our very first public input session for this
11 Commission. So everything is linked together.
12 MR. DAISE: Ron Daise again. I do want to
13 mention that we welcome any comments about anything
14 that would be -- you would consider a threat to the
15 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Corridor, anything, or any
16 activity. And if you are aware of any partnerships

17 that will be important to the corridor, please give
18 comment to those.

19 If any of you came prepared to write checks, to
20 make donations, please know that they will be welcome
21 as well.

22 The comment card was mentioned. And you have --
23 when you sat down, and Questions 3 through 7, if before
24 you leave you could complete this, please turn it in.
25 It was mentioned that it could be mailed in. Did we

00118
1 set a deadline? Hopefully, turn it in, in two weeks?
2 QUEEN QUET: Yes.
3 MR. DAISE: Two weeks from leaving. Please,
4 complete it and forward it, mail it in. Thank you.
5 MS. BROWN: I would like to just ask a
6 question, though. Is the corridor also extending to
7 protect the waterways, which are also a source of
8 sustenance and an important link for people who are of
9 Gullah descent? I'm not clear about that, the
10 boundary.

11 QUEEN QUET: I understand. Ms. Brown asked,
12 Does the corridor also extend to protect the waterways
13 that are a significant part of our culture and
14 aquiculture? Actually, when we were vetted with the
15 White House and then signed our John Hancocks to serve,
16 that is part of our job, to protect the waterways and
17 lands associated with Gullah-Geechee cultural heritage.
18 So it does extend with the lakes and rivers and marsh
19 between islands and also into the Atlantic. So when we
20 discuss even mariculture, yes, that will be part.

21 MR. BROWN: There will be a connection with
22 the Department of Natural Resources?

23 QUEEN QUET: Yes. Those would also be
24 partners that we're looking to work with and negotiate
25 with, yes. DNR, yes.

00119
1 MS. OLUDOVE: Good evening. I just want to
2 say how struck I am by being in the room with people
3 who over 20, 30 years, you wind up being in the same
4 room or being in the same function. And that's a great
5 thing, for the record. (Inaudible.) Officially, I
6 guess, I was coming to represent the Kingdom of
7 Oyotunji, the African Village, and for the history and
8 Gullah nation.

9 And I want to say a couple of things that I'm
10 struck by. One is that I think very few people know
11 that the -- while our founder was originally born in
12 Michigan, our current oba is, in fact, a native of the
13 Gullah-Geechee Nation. And we see a lot of things that
14 are moving toward in the African village that speak on
15 this particular project, whether it be sustainable
16 living and recycling. So we're really excited that
17 over on the southeast we have the first two earth ships
18 (sic) that are happening now with recycled tire and
19 bottles and cans. So that's something exciting, as
20 well.

21 We'd like to say that in cooperation with
22 partnerships we, a few weeks ago -- you probably got
23 the e-mail, did invite people to begin to think about
24 what everybody in the room has said. So we have to
25 have our own partnerships. We have to know how we

00120
1 connect with one another in all of these forms,
2 education, health, sustainable living, how the planet

3 continues. So to that degree, we do have the
4 African-American Cultural Restoration and Rural
5 Development Coalition, which hopes to help in a certain
6 way or at least participate in all of the coalitions
7 and the projects going forward, not just in this area,
8 but pretty much in the Lowcountry or the Southeast.
9 And then, on a personal note, I absolutely say I'm
10 very impressed by those who got up with notes. So I'm
11 inspired to leave here and really section it off and
12 all the areas, good ideas and projects.

13 But, personally, I was born in New York. So I
14 know you don't hear an accent on my part. (Inaudible.)
15 And I asked my high school friend, Theresa White, was
16 Jasper included? And she said, Yes, Jasper County is.
17 And so it's almost like an answer to a prayer. Because
18 I really, really, really, really didn't know how I
19 would do it. And I think my mother spent most of her
20 life really trying to figure out.

21 We are in the preservation business, as everyone
22 in the room is. And that's a part of our family, and
23 the family of that particular big house, as we call it,
24 in Coosehatchie, goes back to the 1800s, to an indigo
25 farm. And the fact that it is home, and that somebody
00121 could take it down and all that history would be lost
2 is unimaginable to me, unimaginable, simply from the
3 respect of the stories in my ear. So I'm inspired on
4 many levels.

5 As you said, the tangibles and intangibles. It
6 doesn't just have to be stories. Maybe they're just
7 captured in pictures. If we're not able to save it
8 completely, to have the whole stories of all the
9 midwives, all the ministers, (inaudible) from the first
10 Negro school, and on and on. So it's almost
11 unimaginable that that kind of history would be lost.
12 And, yet, it would be our -- one of the final
13 (inaudible) again that almost all of my cousins and my
14 relatives at my age level are in heaven already. So it
15 is to see if we could make that happen.

16 But I've so enjoyed hearing everyone's part and
17 corner of it. And success to us all.

18 (Applause.)

19 QUEEN QUET: Anyone else? No? All right.

20 Oh, yes.

21 CHIEF OLAITAN: Good evening, everyone. We
22 just wanted to touch on a couple of points.

23 One is that what Ron Daise said earlier about the
24 youths and kind of divisions that are happening and so
25 forth and so on, going from one community to another
00122 and fighting within family. That is not a good thing.
2 So that educational part, to let them know, and for us
3 to know that we are all part of that larger family and
4 that in-fighting is not a good thing.

5 What Liz (inaudible) was talking about culture
6 being lost if we lose the land. That's not necessarily
7 true in the sense of we were taken away from our land
8 and brought here to America and other parts of the
9 world, and we still try to maintain through
10 Gullah-Geechee, through communities like ours,
11 intentional community, that we can bring those things
12 from the past and maintain them.

13 I think one of the sisters over here talked about
14 preserving, canning, that type of thing. It shouldn't

15 just be on film. We should maintain those crafts and
16 arts, the quilting, the making of cloth, the
17 canning, preserving, all of those things and pass them
18 on to the children. Because those are things, when
19 Wal-Mart or Piggly Wiggly or Winn Dixie or those
20 markets close, we have to know how to farm. The
21 agriculture, we have to know how to go to the waters,
22 that aquaculture. And if we can't put them in the
23 freezer, how are we going to preserve them? So those
24 crafts, those arts, must be maintained.
25 So the land, as we said, is very important. But
00123
1 we all must remember, I think also, that we go past
2 America. We go -- our history goes beyond America. So
3 we look at part of the area of the corridor that talks
4 about making everything back to where our roots are,
5 and that is our culture will be maintained if you go
6 back to our roots. If you forget your source, a tree
7 without roots cannot last.
8 For the record, Chief Olaitan, head of the Mens
9 Society of the village.
10 So the youth part was particularly important to us
11 because some of the things that we talked about here
12 today, maintaining the culture, helping the youth,
13 educating them about their history, about their past,
14 their past that, of course, if we give them those
15 things, they will teach the other children coming
16 behind them.
17 And I could go on and on, but we've been here for
18 a while. And we'd like to hear what somebody might
19 state.
20 Chief Olaitan from Oyotunji African Village, for
21 the record. Thank you.
22 (Applause.)
23 QUEEN QUET: I just wanted to say also --
24 this is Queen Quet, once again.
25 My mother, Caroline Holmes Goodwine, Brown still
00124
1 cans, still farms, still quilts. And because she has
2 done all of that, because her great-grandmama and those
3 passed it to her, she passed these things to me. So I
4 know how much they (inaudible.) So I think it's vital.
5 And the brother just said for us not to just document
6 it, but to teach, so that we have it for the future
7 generations. Because we can't always say that
8 everybody else is going to have a store open, but we
9 can have a store house always open.
10 MR. ALLEN: I just want to share again for
11 the record again, thanks for coming out tonight.
12 One thing with y'all regarding partnerships, I was
13 glad to hear the young lady from Beaufort County
14 Council to share with us and other groups from elected
15 officials, my good friend in the back. During this
16 conversation that we've had tonight, we've had all
17 displays. We've stressed don't put your eggs in the
18 baskets of the money. I think we're very clear to you
19 about that. Being that I'm the glue for this
20 Commission, I'm bombarded with a lot of questions
21 involving money. I want to be very clear about that.
22 A part of this journey here, of our success, is
23 partnerships. The legislation tells us very clearly
24 that we have to have matched either in dollars or
25 in-kind services to my friends in the General Assembly
00125

1 and in Beaufort County Council. Because however this
2 grows and matures, you all will benefit from it as
3 well. And so I just want to put that on the table.
4 This afternoon, the Senate subcommittee for the
5 National Park Service met to look at the appropriations
6 for FY 2010. The president, President Obama, asked
7 that for the National Heritage Area movement 15 million
8 dollars was appropriated for upcoming fiscal year.
9 This is for 50 National Heritage Areas. The House
10 appropriations passed last week. They looked for 17
11 million. There was great pressure put on from the U.S.
12 Senate to go a number higher than that. So maybe in my
13 e-mail tomorrow I'll see what the number is.

14 So I want you to be mindful here that it's going
15 to take all of us to make this successful, in our
16 prayers, in our support, and in our efforts. And if
17 the day ever comes in the future fiscal years, if
18 Congress don't appropriate a million dollars -- they're
19 not guaranteed to do that -- that what you said, what
20 you told us, we will move forward with it. So I need
21 to be very clear about that. Because what we have
22 heard as we've journeyed along this process is that
23 people are scratching and clawing at us, looking at the
24 dollars. I need to be very clear.

25 I'll just be respectful and be honest. This is
00126

1 our life. This is our history. This is our culture.
2 This is our past. This is our present. This is our
3 future. And you all know from which we have come, long
4 before there was appropriation, long before this was a
5 National Heritage Area. We were able to sustain and to
6 do what God blessed us to do. So I want to be very
7 clear with you all about that.

8 But I also want to say I've along the way pledged
9 my support to this endeavor. As Queen said, we've been
10 traveling this highway for history and culture and
11 preservation for over two decades. I am of the
12 culture, grew up in the culture, (inaudible.) So you
13 not only get me as a person in green and gray, but you
14 get the spirit and culture that are inside of me. So I
15 take pride and joy in being a part of such a historical
16 occasion.

17 And, again, we want to say thank you for taking
18 the time to come and share with us. Now you all are
19 disciples. You leave this place. You should share
20 what you heard. Leave this place, encourage the people
21 to come to future meetings. Go to the Web site,
22 whatever, reach me. (Inaudible.) She may get five
23 calls, I might get 50. But that's all right.

24 QUEEN QUET: But I'll get 500 e-mails.

25 MR. ALLEN: So, again, thank you for that.

00127

1 QUEEN QUET: (Remarks in Gullah.)
2 (Benediction.)
3 (The proceeding concluded at 8:06 P.M.)
4
5
6
7
8
9