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GULLAH-GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR:
SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC HEARINGS

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I N D E X

June 24, 2009 - Fennell Elementary School -
Yemassee.....177

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1 (The proceeding commenced at 6:32 P.M.)
2 QUEEN QUET: Good evening, everybody.
3 (Remarks in Gullah.)
4 It's the first meeting we have for the
5 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. I'm Queen
6 Quet, Marquette Goodwine. I am your expert
7 commissioner for South Carolina and also the chair of
8 the General Management Plan, working for this process.
9 And before we begin tonight, I would ask everyone
10 to please stand as we have Missionary Carrie Major come
11 forth and provide our invocation for this evening.
12 (Invocation.)
13 QUEEN QUET: Thank you, Missionary Major.
14 I was going to ask you, don't we want to come a
15 little closer? Since we are a very small group of us
16 tonight, still, do not feel shy. This makes the
17 process even better. We know how we used to be real
18 close up in our houses together.
19 And on behalf of our chairman, Emory Campbell, I
20 want to welcome all of you. I know that originally he
21 intended to be here this evening, so I'm not exactly
22 sure if he is on the way or something else has held him
23 up. Because he does live on Hilton Head Island. So if
24 he steps in later on, we'll have him bring words to you

25 on behalf of the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage
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1 Corridor.

2 I am one commissioner out of 15 federal
3 commissioners.

4 And the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor
5 is a National Heritage Area.

6 So as I said to them yesterday in Walterboro,
7 there is somewhat of an alphabet soup. You may hear us
8 use words like GMP, DSC, GGC. And you say, Well, okay,
9 wait a minute. Too many letters. What are we actually
10 talking about? So we're talking about how this whole
11 process began, and where we are now, and why it's
12 important for you to be with us on the remaining parts
13 of this journey.

14 In 2006, there was a federal law that was signed,
15 called the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Act. It
16 was signed into law after Congress passed this bill and
17 President George Bush put, as we say, his John Hancock
18 on it. That then created the Gullah-Geechee Cultural
19 Heritage Corridor Commission. There are 15
20 commissioners and ten alternates. So, for the State of
21 South Carolina, I am also the chairman from this state
22 and, in fact, from Beaufort.

23 What is unique about where we are tonight, is that
24 Yemassee, as small a town as it is, sits on the border
25 of four counties. That was why we thought it was

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1 crucial to have a meeting here, so that people who are
2 in Jasper, Hampton, Colleton and Beaufort, the northern
3 part of Beaufort, if they wanted to attend, to hear
4 more about the process, they could do it right here.

5 The corridor itself, as you noticed coming in the
6 door, starts roughly in Cape Fear, North Carolina, and
7 goes all the way southward to Jacksonville, Florida.
8 So it encompasses not only the sea islands, but 30
9 miles inland, onto the mainland of four states.

10 So this National Heritage Area, which is an NHA,
11 that you might hear us refer to sometimes, is unique
12 for a number of reasons.

13 We don't have too many National Heritage Areas
14 that go beyond the boundary of one state. That's the
15 first thing. Most of them only run in one state. So
16 when we wanted to do a four-state project, people had
17 already told us, Are you kidding? On the federal
18 level? Wow. We don't know if that will ever happen.
19 But as you see, you're sitting in it now.

20 Also, when we came into the Department of the
21 Interior's system, because as a federal group we are a
22 federal entity, that's what they call us, the local
23 coordinating entity for this. We are part of the
24 Department of the Interior. The National Park Service
25 is a different department under the Department of the

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1 Interior. We are collaborating with them on this
2 project. And that's where, when you hear the initials
3 DSC, and if you look on your comment card, you'll see
4 that there's an address on this card. And you might
5 wonder, there are some cards that have the Denver,
6 Colorado address on it. And you'll say, Well, if this
7 project is along this coast, why do these go to Denver?
8 Because the Denver Service Center is who we contracted
9 with to help us do what we were told is our charge as
10 federal commissioners, and that's to create the GMP,

11 the General Management Plan, for the corridor. So
12 these comment cards to go their office and then the
13 information is extracted from them.

14 You'll notice tonight we have a court reporter
15 here. We also have a videographer in the back. And
16 they are also documenting the process. And whatever
17 you come forward to state will be part of the federal
18 record. That also will be transcribed and be part of
19 what we utilize to create the plan that then designates
20 where the funding that is currently legislated would
21 go, when it's appropriated.

22 Now, notice I use "legislated," meaning, in 2006,
23 when the law was passed, it stated that there would be
24 one million dollars per year given to this federal
25 corridor over the course of ten years, okay? And that

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1 means that essentially is the funds that will come to
2 operate the General Management Plan.

3 But the first process is the Commission has to
4 create the document. And we had a three-year window to
5 do that. We have been commissioners since 2007, so
6 that tells you, by 2010, we have to have our homework
7 done. And if we have it done correctly, the Secretary
8 of the Department of the Interior signs it. We get a
9 southeast regional director's signature and one other
10 signature, and they now say, This is the federal
11 mandate. This is how this corridor should operate.
12 These are the things the people there want done. And,
13 therefore, we now feel there should be funds
14 appropriated to it, to carry out what the General
15 Management Plan states within it.

16 What is so unique within this corridor, again, is
17 that out of -- when we came in the system, there were
18 37. Last year, there were now 40 NHAs. And, as of
19 today, there are 50 National Heritage Areas. And
20 there's still only one that deals with a culture of
21 people of African descent, and that is the
22 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. So this is
23 an unprecedented corridor, unprecedented National
24 Heritage Area, and an unprecedented journey that we are
25 on.

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1 The public input portion that we are in now began
2 in February of this year. If you'll notice on this
3 board here, this is our planning schedule. We are in
4 the phase now to get from the public your input. And
5 by the end of this month, very first week of July, we
6 are intending to close the public input portion. So if
7 tonight you take your comment card home and decide that
8 you want to fill it out, please keep in mind, June ends
9 next week. So please make sure that you drop this in
10 the mail for us by June 30th, so that it will arrive in
11 Denver in time to still be included in this first phase
12 of public input.

13 If you decide you want to go online and look at
14 these images again, you'll notice under the words,
15 Comment Card, the second line from the bottom in this
16 paragraph starts with HTTP. That is the Web site that
17 you can go on electronically and pull up these same
18 images, which are from our initial newsletter, that
19 tells you about the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage
20 Corridor and this input process.

21 And if you decide, if you're someone like me, that
22 likes to write detailed comments and letters, and this

23 is not enough right here, these lines, use this address
24 and use this, and then write in a letter. There's
25 nothing that says you have to only use the comment

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1 card, okay? So you can definitely write a letter. You
2 can say what you think is important about
3 Gullah-Geechee cultural heritage and what you feel
4 should be protected and celebrated and educate the
5 world about from this corridor.

6 We want two things: The tangible and the
7 intangible. The tangible, we're sitting in something
8 tangible, right, because we're in a building. Anything
9 we can touch, that's tangible. But there are things
10 you can feel, that you can't actually touch, you see?
11 So when you talk about Gullah-Geechee culture, for
12 instance, anybody ever heard of this before? (Clapping
13 hands.) Right? I see heads. So that is something we
14 know you hear in this area. But you can't touch it,
15 other than it's a clap. But once you hear it, you
16 can't grab what you hear out the air. That is
17 intangible. But because it's called intangible doesn't
18 mean that it's not something that is important.
19 Doesn't mean it's not something historic. Doesn't mean
20 that's not something sacred. And if it is to you, in
21 terms of Gullah-Geechee culture, you need to list that.
22 You need to say, That's one of the things that I think
23 is important here and that we need to have.

24 In addition to those things, if there are things
25 you think are threats to Gullah-Geechee culture, we

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1 need to know about that, too. Because we need to have
2 it on the federal record, to know what are the things
3 that are happening that maybe this corridor commission
4 can't get the right resources to help prevent this
5 threat in the future or mitigate it, as a lot of
6 federal folks would say.

7 So we need to hear from you. What's important to
8 you about this unique Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage
9 Corridor and this process? So the floor is now open to
10 you for questions and comments. And due to the fact
11 that our videographer is back there, and we prefer to
12 see your faces on the tape and not the backs of your
13 heads -- I know a lot of you don't like to be upfront
14 folks. But if you would, we'd appreciate if you come
15 up to the microphone. That way, they can record
16 everything and we can see your lovely faces on the
17 tape, too. Anybody? I know nobody ever likes to be
18 first. Anyone? Questions? Comments? I see folks
19 nudging folks.

20 AUDIENCE MEMBER: A question real quick.

21 Does this encompass business, encompass the arts?

22 QUEEN QUET: Yes, sir. Keep going.

23 AUDIENCE MEMBER: It encompasses personal
24 life, education?

25 QUEEN QUET: Everything you just said, it

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1 encompasses all of those things. Because all of those
2 are parts of someone's culture: Education, business,
3 personal life, land, all those things. So if you want
4 to come up --

5 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, I mean --

6 QUEEN QUET: Come, so we can get it on the
7 mic. And, please, when you come up, state your name
8 and then also state whether it is a question, comment,

9 the input, so forth.

10 MR. JONES: Well, I'm really -- okay. My
11 name is Samuel Lewis Jones. I've been down here all my
12 life, but I was born in New York. Both my parents are
13 from Beaufort County. My mother was born in Lobeco, my
14 father -- my father in Sheldon. They knew each other
15 as children, okay.

16 The question I have is, like, on land -- and I
17 know that getting the information out to people who
18 live here, I don't know how well that is spread, but I
19 understand a lot of the people who are part of the
20 Gullah-Geechee Nation, they, I think, are in the
21 northern states; they're not here. In other words,
22 those are the heirs that have all -- they've been
23 paying the taxes on all this property and everything
24 that we actually have in this corridor, up and down.
25 But they're actually not here and I don't think that

00186 they're aware that this is going on.

2 QUEEN QUET: Okay.

3 MR. JONES: You know what I mean? I was just
4 saying, there is a whole bunch of another level of
5 input that needs to be about the land and things that
6 could be done with it. Because I know people, like on
7 the island where you live, on St. Helena Island, people
8 do farming and other things like that.

9 And -- but I'm also -- I was working with the kids
10 with drumming and that sort of stuff. So I'm
11 interested in --

12 QUEEN QUET: The arts.

13 MR. JONES: -- things of the arts, things for
14 the artists, and the things down here. Like, I'm
15 growing gourds and making gourd instruments and drum
16 instruments and stuff like that. You know, so those
17 types of things. I know there's a lot of regular
18 artists. So I'm just curious as to those things and
19 how would they come into play.

20 Because -- actually, even showcasing some of the
21 places that we have. You know what I mean? Because
22 the house that my father grew up in, and they built the
23 house in 1934, is still standing on the property. And
24 I would love to turn something like that into a museum.
25 You know what I mean? Because I have some pictures of

00187 old time. You know what I mean? Something like -- you
2 know, I don't know how it could be used. But that sort
3 of thing.

4 Because I tell a lot of my friends they need to
5 visit down here. You know what I mean? It's just
6 almost as good as a visit going to Africa or Brazil.

7 QUEEN QUET: Right. Where is the house that
8 you mentioned, the house that you would like to turn
9 into a museum? Where is that?

10 MR. JONES: It's on Page Point Road in
11 Sheldon, in Sheldon. I don't own the property.

12 QUEEN QUET: All right. Excellent.

13 This is Queen Quet, for the record. I just want
14 to state that when you read the legislation for the
15 Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Act, you'll notice
16 that part of our duties as commissioners are to deal
17 with the arts and objects of the culture. So when you
18 mention instruments, you mention the arts, those are
19 part of this whole corridor plan as well. So you were
20 right on target.

21 And in terms of the folks that you mention up
22 North, this Web site that's on here, this address
23 that's on here, is not for people that just live in the
24 four states.

25 MR. JONES: Oh, yes, I know. I know.

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1 QUEEN QUET: Okay? So, definitely, you can
2 share it with anybody, anywhere, and have them also
3 send in input. So they can live in Harlem, where you
4 were born, and they could still put their input in this
5 process.

6 MR. JONES: Well, the database to find a lot
7 of those names would be the heirs' records in the
8 courthouse.

9 QUEEN QUET: And so I understand. Uh-huh.
10 Uh-huh.

11 Anyone else? No? Yes? Okay.

12 MS. LEGARE: Good evening. My name is Mary
13 Rivers Legare.

14 I did attend the meeting on St. Helena Island.
15 And I had made some suggestions at that time, at that
16 particular meeting. And I also have filled out my form
17 and I turned it in that evening to Mr. Allen, to
18 Mr. Allen. But I thought about some, some other things
19 that I wanted to include, but I was hoping that there
20 would be more people here and I would wait until the
21 end and then come up with some of my suggestions.

22 I think it's very, very important to incorporate
23 the Gullah culture into the schools, into the school
24 system, among -- especially among the Gullah natives or
25 the African-Americans. It's amazing how little we know

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1 about our history in this area, and how important land
2 purchases were for the families that live here.

3 As to this evening, as a matter of fact, I have a
4 copy of my family's deed from 1866. And it was
5 purchased; it was not given to us. It was 13 acres of
6 land for five dollars an acre, back in 1866. You know,
7 to me, that's a very proud legacy. My
8 great-great-grandfather, Abraham Rivers, purchased it.
9 And my name is Mary Rivers Legare. So I think it's
10 great when you talk about tangibles.

11 That would be great, during Black History Month,
12 for these schools to plan programs, where we can get
13 some of our families or African-Americans to come in
14 and talk about the things that we could share with
15 them. For instance, seeing a deed from 1866, I think
16 that's amazing.

17 And we have a few -- has anyone on this part of
18 the county, have any praise houses that you know of,
19 that's still standing in the Yemassee area? There's
20 very little of them that remain. But, do you know,
21 that was so important in our history, when we were
22 enslaved people? That was the only place we could go
23 to, to actually worship and, you know, share news among
24 each other, and say verses and sing songs in our Gullah
25 language.

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1 And, at one time, it was considered like a little
2 teaching center for the rights of passage. When
3 someone had to go through a catechism sort of thing,
4 before you could get baptized, you went to the praise
5 house. Your leader was there. You reviewed the
6 Scriptures and you were questioned and things like

7 that. There's only three that I know of on St. Helena
8 Island. But we are trying desperately to restore and
9 preserve those three because it's so unique to our
10 culture. Because there aren't many houses. Even when
11 you mentioned that your dad's house from 1934, that's
12 when it was built, that is a great thing that we should
13 try to preserve in this area.

14 And there was a gentleman that just passed from my
15 community this past week, and he never tore down the
16 house that he was raised in. So that's another house
17 that we could really go in there, look at the
18 artifacts.

19 Because the Smithsonian Institution was in this
20 area about a month ago. And they were encouraging
21 people to bring all these old artifacts out of their
22 home. It might look like an old chair, but it could
23 have been a chair that someone made. You know, it
24 could have been an old lamp that they used to burn. So
25 don't be so quick to just tear down the structure and

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1 throw everything out.

2 I would like to see if we could get somebody to
3 come and take a look at the house. Because it's been
4 standing there, I think, since the 1930s as well, and
5 it's still pretty strong. So that -- that is another
6 part of it.

7 Of course, preservation, holding onto your land.
8 There should be some programs established for those
9 people who might have a problem with not being able to
10 hold onto the land, to pay their taxes. We should have
11 incorporated that, you know, there should be something
12 set up for our current landowners, to make sure it's
13 there for posterity, and to also share with the younger
14 generation the importance of keeping our land and
15 making sure that you pay your taxes. And passing, you
16 know, the stories, you know, the whole legacy down
17 about how we did get our lands from here.

18 Also, maybe not so much in this area, but in the
19 St. Helena area, we are very close to the waterways.
20 So the fishing, the whole fishing industry, the whole
21 culture that comes with it, crabbing, oystering,
22 shrimping, those things have to be preserved for us.

23 And we should have access to the waterways. It's
24 getting more and more difficult now to get to the
25 waterways. We can't traverse through people's

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1 property. We have to pay a pretty stiff license fee to
2 go to be able to fish in places where at one time we
3 could just walk there. And I think it's okay to help a
4 county by paying a fee. But, maybe, if you can show
5 that you have Gullah ancestry, the fee could be a
6 little less because our income is so much less.

7 And the same goes for a fee that you pay when you
8 have to move onto a property, impact, impact fees. I
9 think there's something that if you can show you own
10 the property for more than 50 years, the entire fee
11 won't be waived, but it would be reduced, you know,
12 from people who had history in this area, and now, you
13 know, want to move and you want to build. There should
14 be some fees like that.

15 And we should also encourage the arts. Like, you
16 were talking about all kinds of arts, quilting,
17 basketweaving, even canning. We have someone here
18 there's an expert at canning. There's people up North

19 that really want this kind of stuff. And we need to
20 find a way, an avenue to promote all of that and even
21 encourage more roadside stands, where you bring your
22 watermelons from our land, and your greens, your
23 collard greens, and your peaches and show it on the
24 roadside, so as -- as visitors pass through, they love
25 to stop by these cute little stands. Or even little --

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1 I think something is really picking up over in our
2 area, little, little dolls, called Gullah dolls.
3 They're actually little black dolls with the
4 old-fashioned skirts and things that we dressed in.
5 They are really becoming very, very popular.
6 I've developed some postcards, showing true Gullah
7 people on the postcards. I'll just show it to you,
8 when I get finished. I've got a Gullah booklet. I've
9 developed some things, songs and presentations. We
10 want our people to really reach out and, and bring back
11 those things, bring back the songs, even some of the
12 shouting that we used to do.

13 So I'm just -- you know, just wracking my brain,
14 trying to come up with all these good things. Because
15 that's what culture is.

16 And the culture actually starts with the land,
17 with the land ownership. So -- and then, from that, we
18 are able to maintain our culture. Because we own land,
19 we could grow. We could produce. You know, we had a
20 place where we could build a little home. When
21 children were born, they were born right in the, you
22 know, in your home, in the plantation. There were
23 midwives.

24 When you became sick, we knew of certain herbs
25 that we would go right out there and pick up, like a

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1 mockingbird or a mint leaf. You might have never heard
2 of that, but some people still sort of grow it to the
3 side, right now. And they still use it, especially old
4 people. They'll treat that mockingbird. It's very
5 bitter, but it's supposed to be very good.

6 So all these things we need to share. If we're
7 not practicing it, have it recorded somewhere.

8 So I -- I just thought tonight was a night to come
9 back and really mention some of the things that I
10 didn't get a chance to mention.

11 Thank you.

12 QUEEN QUET: Thank you.

13 This is Queen Quet again. I'll put on my
14 professor's hat. I give her an A for doing her
15 homework. I love students like that. They go home
16 with the paper and come back with the answers on it.
17 Don't say, My dog ate it.

18 But I wanted to add, the project that Ms. Legare
19 mentioned, that came to the area recently, was part of
20 the National Museum of African-American History and
21 Culture that's going to be built on the Mall in
22 Washington D.C. And it is going to be the last
23 building, they say, to be built on the Mall in
24 Washington D.C. So they are currently traveling the
25 country and coming to different communities to help

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1 educate people on how to protect and preserve their own
2 items, not where they want to come get them from you,
3 but just help you to know how to better care for them,
4 so you can have them for the future and so that you can

5 have them in your own communities.
6 And the other thing that came to mind was -- and
7 it's interesting because we just Facebooked it --
8 America's Heartland is a television show. And one of
9 their early episodes they did on Gullah culture, and
10 did it on St. Helena Island. And I showed the deeds
11 from my family's property on that episode. And we were
12 in the field, picking tomatoes. I think I might have
13 been hoeing out tomatoes. So, yeah, if you look on the
14 Internet for America's Heartland, you can actually see
15 the video on the Internet. And so that's also
16 something, just to add to what you said, that's readily
17 available, that you can show students, show children.
18 Because they love the Internet. So you can go and tell
19 them, Go look up America's Heartland on the Internet
20 and see what you find. And then they'll see the deeds
21 they have on there and everything. I thought it was
22 outstanding. Because that program is dedicated to
23 rural communities and agriculture all over America, so
24 that's why it's called America's Heartland.
25 So definitely, we have a lot, as you mentioned,
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1 that is really, really interesting to other folks. And
2 we have to sometimes remember how interesting it is and
3 important here to keep it. Trust me, even New Yorkers
4 sometimes don't visit the Statue of Liberty. So
5 whatever is right in someone's yard is what they don't
6 pay that much attention to. You see? But other folks
7 will come and say, What a treasure, you see.
8 Anybody else?
9 MS. LEGARE: Any input, we get input from
10 other people as well.
11 MR. JONES: I've come up with some more
12 ideas.
13 MS. TOWNSEND: I'm Robin Townsend and I'm
14 from Daufuskie Island. And I sit here and listen and
15 appreciate the opportunity for input, but sometimes
16 there's so much that needs to be said. And I sit there
17 and I listen and I thought, Where do you start? And I
18 don't know where to start. So that's as simple as I
19 put it.
20 But I think the educational process that is taking
21 place is invaluable. There are those of us that move
22 here and we don't have clue in the world what we're
23 seeing. We don't understand. So the educational
24 process that you are sharing with us, it overcomes the
25 prejudices. It helps us to understand, when we're
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1 seeing things, what it is we're seeing, the value it
2 has to you within your culture. It helps cross
3 bridges. So there are so many things.
4 And, as I said, I'm from Daufuskie and one of the
5 things that has, I don't know, a passion -- because you
6 told me I preach to the choir sometimes. So, excuse
7 me, but sometimes it happens.
8 But the particular culture on Daufuskie has just
9 about disappeared. We're down to just a little over a
10 dozen people that are left on it. So I watch the
11 culture, and I imagine for some of you that it is your
12 life, it's -- it's -- it just is your life, that it has
13 to be painful to see you become on the brink of
14 extinction.
15 So I guess what I want to say is, thank you for
16 the opportunity to educate us, to learn, and then to

17 take it and share with others.
18 Thank you.
19 MS. QUEEN: Thank you. Thank you,
20 Ms. Townsend.
21 And to coin a phrase that Michael Allen likes to
22 say, you're now a disciple. So once you learn, then
23 it's your job to go and spread the word as well, you
24 see?
25 So, now, any others? Any other input? Yes?

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1 MS. MCMILLAN: Okay, Ms. Legare. You made me
2 do it. My name is Cecily McMillan and I live in the
3 section called Coffman's Point on St. Helena Island.
4 Ms. Legare is my neighbor. She -- I'm kind of shy
5 about this sort of thing.
6 Two things: Of course, I agree with everything --
7 thank you also, Queen Quet. I agree with everything
8 that has been said here about education and land. But
9 as a professional writer, I would love to see this
10 group use the Internet for a way to encourage people to
11 put not only America's Heartland, but your own stories,
12 your grandparents' stories. Use the Internet to get
13 people, if they have a grandchild, help them with a
14 school project. Get that out there, whether it's, you
15 know, linked via Facebook, or whether there is
16 technological input going forward. It's inexpensive
17 and so empowering. I think what you said was so
18 interesting about Harlem. There may be people there,
19 and all over the United States, that have stories that
20 we might know of, but don't know those stories. And
21 the oral history is so powerful. So I'd love to see
22 that be a component of this. And the technology, and
23 it could be, you know, YouTube, an interview that a
24 young person has with an elder, in any setting. I
25 think, in the aggregate, those stories are just

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1 tremendously important and useful.
2 And I guess the other thing I'd like to say is, I
3 own Coffman Point Plantation, which was built in 1800
4 on St. Helena. And, of course, I'm just the curator of
5 it, in a sense. You know, after I die, someone else
6 will own it and so on. But a big part of my husband
7 and my owning it has not been -- I don't know how to
8 say this. It's been very important for us to have both
9 its black history and its white history recognized and
10 understood. That is, professors come out and
11 scholars -- it was one of the sites during
12 Reconstruction where abolitionists were lost and came
13 and taught. And I think that history is not well known
14 enough. And I think the conflict, and what happened
15 there, there's so many lessons to be learned right now,
16 toward reconciliation and understanding between the
17 races. And something that I've tried to do is do a lot
18 of research and find old journals and documentation and
19 get them more widely known.
20 Because it just -- for example, where I live, that
21 house, literally, these young people from Boston came.
22 You might say they were the first Peace Corps kids.
23 They were young idealists who came from Boston. Some
24 of their ideas were great. Sometimes they failed
25 because they were too idealistic, they didn't

00200
1 understand what they were doing. Other times, they
2 were ahead of the curve. But for the most part, and

3 particularly given the setting in which they -- the
4 context in which they came, they were very respectful.
5 And their points of view are so interesting. So it was
6 a place where the races were trying to work out sort of
7 a new dialogue.
8 And that house, fortunately, physically still
9 exists. So --
10 MS. LEGARE: And several others on the
11 island.
12 MS. TOWNSEND: Oh, yeah, other -- right, I'm
13 not the only one, by any means. Yeah.
14 But, anyway, I don't know why -- I mean,
15 Ms. Legare told me I should say it.
16 MS. LEGARE: Because it is black/white
17 history.
18 MS. TOWNSEND: But, anyway, thank you again
19 for all you're doing. It's a pleasure to be here.
20 QUEEN QUET: Thank you. Thank you.
21 And just to add to your list of literature, in my
22 book, Gawd Dun Smile Pun We: Beaufort, as well as
23 St. Helena, I do write about Coffman.
24 And that's Queen Quet again for the record, as if
25 you don't know by now.

00201
1 But, definitely, just to add to that. Because
2 what you did say is significant. And that's one of the
3 reasons this public input process is so important.
4 Because sometimes, like each one of you keep saying, I
5 don't normally get up here, I don't normally get up
6 here. There's so many people that don't want to be the
7 first one to get up and say something. But your voice
8 does count. And that's the reason we came, because we
9 want to hear your voices. Because it's important to
10 us, so that we document what the folks have said, so we
11 can come back and then initiate what the folks want
12 done exactly.
13 MS. MAJOR: Hello again. I'm Carrie Major.
14 I just thought I would say something.
15 As she was speaking, it brought to my mind my
16 childhood. I was reared on St. Helena and I lived in
17 Beaufort there for a while. But as a child, growing up
18 on St. Helena, I was the Gullah-Geechee girl. I was
19 teased a lot. I never knew that Gullah was a language,
20 okay, until they started, you know, talking about it.
21 As a young child, growing up, when I went from
22 St. Helena Elementary, in half of the second grade, to
23 Robert Smalls Elementary, I was teased about how I
24 talked. So it was mind-boggling for me, as a child.
25 But I learned, when I came back on St. Helena with my

00202
1 father on a weekend, I spoke Gullah. And when I went
2 back to Robert Smalls on Monday, I spoke the proper
3 English, in order for them not to tease me. So, years
4 later, as an adult and this all started, I'm saying, I
5 know two languages. But I'm thankful to the Lord that
6 I was smart enough. Because when I came over to
7 St. Helena, if I spoke that proper English, they would
8 say, Well, you think that you're better than them
9 people. So I learned, when I came over there, I forgot
10 all the other stuff I learned in Beaufort and vice
11 versa.
12 So I thank -- I'm very thankful to this project,
13 to let people know how important it is, how important
14 Gullah is, how important the history is.

15 And I, too, am putting some things down and
16 writing about my history. Because it's very important.
17 My mother speaks fluent Gullah. And she's been
18 videotaped and spoken to a lot of people who came over
19 to do documentaries and all this other good stuff. And
20 I love sitting down -- and I've tried to do some oral
21 history stuff, by recording some of the stories that
22 she tells in Gullah.
23 But it's so very important that our people know
24 how important our history is. So thank you. And not
25 be ashamed of it, like I was.

00203

1 AUDIENCE MEMBER: And I was, yes.
2 MS. MAJOR: Yes, not be ashamed of it. So I
3 am grateful to you for doing this.
4 MS. QUEEN: Thank you. Anyone else?
5 MR. JONES: I have a couple.
6 MS. QUEEN: Come on. It's like a buffet; you
7 can keep coming back.
8 MR. JONES: Well, there's a couple of points
9 that you made, that were important. I'm Samuel Jones
10 again, live in Sheldon.
11 My mother right now lives in Ridgeland Nursing
12 Home, okay? There ought to be part of this project, go
13 get some of those stories. Somebody should be talking
14 to those folks in the senior citizens and nursing
15 homes. Because that's where a lot of the stories are.
16 And even the children working with them in some ways.
17 Because over the next few years, that population is
18 only going to increase, especially in Beaufort County.
19 Because that's where we have most of the nursing homes
20 and assisted living and that sort of thing.
21 As far as the land, when people are in trouble, I
22 think that part of the funds available, so that people
23 who get sick don't have to lose the land to their
24 families because they're sick. If there's some sort of
25 special funding, can help, shows if this land has been

00204

1 in your family for X number of generations, that is
2 person should be eligible. Because they got sick, that
3 they shouldn't have to lose everything like that.
4 My father was a tailor. Did a bunch of things,
5 but one of the things, he was a tailor. Now, one -- he
6 sewed all the time. I never knew what a store-bought
7 suit was until I was 14 years old. The thing is, a lot
8 of his sewing machines, I still have. They're in not
9 good condition. I was always thinking, a lot of this
10 is part of our Gullah-Geechee Nation. Having -- I was
11 thinking, I would love to fix up those machines, put a
12 little shack together and some material, and anybody in
13 Sheldon who wants to come and sew, they have the
14 machine. They have people -- right now, especially
15 with this economy going the way it is, people being
16 able to learn those skills and people being able to
17 create stuff themselves. Up and down the corridor
18 here, people, with just a little piece of this land
19 here, and come and sew.
20 And that same process, I was thinking about some
21 sort of not so much a mentorship program, but an
22 apprenticeship program, where you actually have some
23 young folks coming and apprentice some of the old folks
24 who are doing work right now, whatever it is. I do Web
25 sites on the Internet, besides drumming. Wherever they

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1 can apprentice, somebody ought to take them under their
2 wing. Go back to apprenticeships. So any sort of
3 funding of those sorts of programs.
4 I think I covered everything that I had written
5 down. Thank you so much again.
6 MS. QUEEN: Thank you.
7 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Did you say it was like a
8 buffet?
9 QUEEN QUET: Yes, it's like a buffet. And
10 Queen Quet again, for the record.
11 Again, just to tag, dovetail on what the brother
12 just said, the South Carolina Arts Commission has a
13 folklife apprentice program. And so if anyone here
14 knows someone that you want to nominate to that, that's
15 something you could do right now; you don't have to
16 wait until this whole process comes through. That is
17 something in South Carolina that's available, that you
18 can apply. And I was -- I was a master artist for that
19 program and did work along with a young lady, Regina
20 Williams on St. Helena Island, to teach her
21 Gullah-Geechee language and how to present it, you see,
22 to people, live, and so that she can carry that on.
23 And so you can do it in anything. You can do it in
24 drumming, quilting, canning, anything, cast net making,
25 boat making. So that's something that's already

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1 available and has some funding attached to
2 apprenticeships.
3 Also, what was stated by you and Ms. Legare was
4 talking about a fund for land and just having a source
5 to help families with land. Again, some things that
6 are already available is there is an Heirs' Property
7 Law Center and the heirspropertylawcenter.org, if you
8 look it up, or dot-com. Online, you find that. And
9 they're in North Charleston, okay? And then there's
10 also the heirspropertypreservationproject.org. Now,
11 the latter one will give you information and just help
12 you to understand what to do. But the Heirs' Property
13 Law Center actually has attorneys that can help you
14 with clearing land titles and various things. So just
15 so that you know that, as some information, that those
16 are things that are available right now, so that you
17 can also use those as some other resources.

18 MS. LEGARE: Thank you.
19 Since this is a kind of a brainstorm session, this
20 was something I also wanted to mention. Where I live
21 today, it is so difficult for me to find a licensed
22 plumber, a licensed carpenter, a licensed bricklayer, a
23 licensed electrician within our community. But times
24 in the past, we had all of those people and we could
25 just call them. Now I'll have to call Beaufort. And

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1 they have to charge, like, an 80 dollar trip charge or
2 an hourly rate. And I just feel like there is a need
3 for more apprenticeship in the trades, because we have
4 a tough time getting carpenters. I mean, licensed
5 ones, not someone who just comes and puts a nail and
6 then two weeks later, you know, it's not done right,
7 especially in plumbing. Because we need those things
8 when we get homes built, bathrooms added. Roofers, we
9 need more trades. There's a lot of people who really
10 aren't -- they really don't want to go to a four-year
11 college, but they have a skill with their hands. And
12 we need to encourage people that that's a very good way

13 to make a living. Plumbers make more than master's
14 candidates. Plumbers make quite a bit of money, so do
15 carpenters. So we need to encourage some of our people
16 to try to go and take up a trade. I know that begs the
17 question, Where is there a trade school? Well, that
18 has to -- Penn Center has facilities, where we need to
19 talk about that, to locate something in the trades,
20 somewhere there. So that was a suggestions that I
21 wanted to make.
22 Thank you.
23 MS. QUEEN: And also a lot of our local
24 technical colleges, they offer those trades as well.
25 And even what we call ACE, the Academy for Career

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1 Education, they offer a lot of those trades for
2 everyone.
3 MS. LEGARE: ACE is in Jasper County?
4 QUEEN QUET: Yes. And then -- but TCL is in
5 Beaufort County, Technical College of the Lowcountry,
6 which is the old Matthis School. Exactly.
7 MS. LEGARE: Oh. Do you know if there is
8 enough students, like, from the island area,
9 African-American students trying to go into the trades?
10 Ms. QUEEN: I would really have to check with
11 them. I know, in the past, we had a lot of our
12 students go into those trades. I don't know if
13 there's --
14 MS. LEGARE: But you live on the island.
15 QUEEN QUET: Uh-huh. Yes. And I know a lot
16 of the young men who are doing that. But I don't know
17 if they're going, as you mentioned, to get a full
18 degree --
19 MS. LEGARE: Yeah, a license.
20 MS. QUEEN: -- and -- and going to get their
21 licenses after. So we'd have to check into those
22 numbers. That's a good idea. I think that's a very
23 good suggestion.
24 Anyone else? Yes.
25 MS. SINGELTON-PRATHER: Good evening to

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1 everyone. My name is Anita Singleton-Prather. Most
2 people know me as Aunt Pearl Sue. I'm an historian
3 and storyteller. And I'm always excited about anything
4 that deals with the Gullah culture. Born and raised
5 here, part of the time in the city of Beaufort and then
6 the other half at -- by the time I was in fourth grade,
7 we were on Lady's Island.
8 But just like Carrie, or I should say Evangelist
9 Major, was talking about coming from the island into
10 town and being ridiculed, I went from Beaufort to
11 Howard University being ridiculed. But the good thing
12 about that is, that I was fortunate enough that my
13 grandmother was a very positive mentor in my life. And
14 so we were never taught, like a lot of the children
15 from Beaufort, to be ashamed of the culture. So when
16 everybody went to New York and Philadelphia and D.C.,
17 tried to get rid of their accent, I made mine stronger
18 so nobody could understand me at Howard. And so a lot
19 of times they would ask me, Are you from the islands?
20 And I said, Yeah. Because, you know, I grew up on
21 Lady's Island. So once you cross the bridge from
22 downtown Beaufort, you were considered -- that was the
23 island. They'd say, What island? St. Croix?
24 St. Thomas? And I won't tell y'all the bad words I

25 used in Gullah, but they knew they were bad words.

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1 But, again, you know, I was always taught to be
2 very proud of my culture. And that was the good thing.
3 That was -- that was the saving grace for me. Never
4 wanted to get rid of my accent. I slowed it down since
5 I've gotten back home. Because when I was in D.C., I
6 made it real fast so they either thought I was from
7 Africa or the Caribbean islands.

8 And a lot of people had never heard about Beaufort
9 County. Then, when you finally mention Beaufort
10 County, the only thing they know about Beaufort County
11 is Dr. Buzzard. So I guess, if I had sense back then,
12 I could have been a rich woman. I was at Howard
13 University.

14 But one of the things I wanted to mention, a lot
15 of times we get -- when we start talking about the
16 Gullah culture, we get concentrated just on St. Helena
17 Island. But there's so much more culture. And we --
18 when we talk about the Gullah-Geechee Nation and the
19 corridor, we start talking about North Carolina, all
20 the way down to Florida, and then you have Texas, and
21 you have Oklahoma, and Caicos and Turks Islands, and
22 Mexico. So we can't allow people, and even those of us
23 that are preservers of the culture, to minimize the
24 impact of Gullah. Because it's very powerful.

25 When I was growing up in the city limits of

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1 Beaufort, one of the exciting things for us was
2 Decoration Day. I mean, that was a big thing. And
3 that was the Memorial Day celebration that we do now,
4 that the Gullah Festival was birthed out of that
5 festival. And if you can just imagine the carnival
6 coming into town two weeks prior, and you had the only
7 building in the deep, deep South for the Grand Army of
8 the Republic is the Grand Army Hall on Prince Street in
9 Beaufort, which is still there, still owned by the
10 black community. It's not owned by any one individual
11 family, but by the black community. Came out of those
12 black women, during the Civil War, that became
13 contraband and became the nurses and formed the Womens'
14 Relief Corps.

15 There is a lot of history in the city limits of
16 Beaufort that a lot of times is omitted because
17 everybody concentrates just on the Penn Center area,
18 which is very important. Because it was in a place
19 where they were able to record a lot of the history
20 during that time, whereas in the city limits of
21 Beaufort, a lot of that history got kind of passed
22 over. You still have General Robert Smalls and his
23 connections. And then Matthis School itself, where a
24 lot of young people don't know it, know it as TCL, but
25 they don't know the significance of Matthis School. So

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1 there's lot of history that we've missed out on.

2 And even with coming into Colleton County, with
3 the Combahee River being raided. And Harriet Tubman.
4 A lot of people only hear about Harriet Tubman coming
5 down (inaudible.) In June of 1863, she freed 700-plus
6 Africans from just Colleton County, right across the
7 river.

8 There is a lot of history that we're missing, that
9 I think that we need to make sure that the corridor be
10 mindful of that, not necessarily try to -- maybe try to

11 learn it all. But let's find those people who do know
12 about those particular histories, and let's make sure
13 that there's a resource bank, if you want to hear about
14 Decoration Day, you want to hear about the Grand Army
15 Hall, if you want to hear about the Combahee River
16 Raid, if you want to hear about all these other
17 different things.

18 See, like, my grandfather on my father's side was
19 born Cherokee Plantation. That's Colleton County.
20 Now, when we talk about Gullah, even in that area, you
21 need an interpreter because you won't understand
22 anything they say. Even when I go, and I'm a Gullah
23 historian, researcher, translator, and everything else,
24 sometimes when my cousins come, I have to slow them
25 down, say, Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. You know, but it's

00213

1 still a very strong Gullah culture, where the language
2 is still practiced on a daily basis. So a lot of those
3 things, we need to understand and make sure that
4 information is out there.

5 One of the things we have to do is that we
6 concentrate with these -- when we have these
7 gatherings, that we basically have adults. And we're
8 interested. But we're going to have to start dragging
9 children. Because that's what my grandmother did. I
10 didn't have a choice whether or not I wanted to go to
11 the Decoration Day Planning Committee, like they would
12 have said back then, meetings. But she dragged me.
13 And, because of that, that kept a connection in my head
14 that I was able -- now I'm able to put that on the
15 stage, so that other people can experience that
16 Decoration Day atmosphere.

17 One of the things that I'm doing, and I did it a
18 couple of years back, in 2003, because I -- all --
19 any -- any -- I do musical theater. So any of my
20 productions have to be historical based. I don't try
21 to tell the whole Gullah story. I try to tell my
22 Gullah story, what it was like for me growing up in
23 Beaufort County. And so what I did is I had -- I
24 planned a luncheon for the elders in the community. I
25 just went around, What you do you remember about

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1 Decoration Day? And I had Paul Kaiser there. We
2 recorded it, audio, you know. We have an audio
3 recording of it. But I'm getting ready to do another
4 one. Because every time we do our show, we do it as
5 part of the Gullah Festival now. Every year, I want to
6 have new information. So I go, Tell me what you
7 remember about Decoration Day. Tell me what you
8 remember your mother saying. One of the things my
9 grandaunt used to tease my grandmother about was that
10 her boyfriend -- because you got there any way you
11 could -- her boyfriend came and picked her up on a
12 white ox, to bring her to Decoration Day.

13 Another story I heard from Ms. Emma Washington,
14 before she passed, was that the foghorns that she would
15 hear from the steam ships coming from Charleston and
16 Savannah bringing people in. And you would hear the
17 foghorn. And all the people would get up and run down
18 to the docks. It would be like a fashion show. The
19 people actually came 5:30, six o'clock in the morning
20 in evening gowns. And if you happened to live in New
21 York, you were only coming home one time. Blacks folks
22 really didn't -- we didn't -- we didn't really

23 celebrate 4th of July. We came home for Decoration
24 Day. So if you knew you were up in New York, and you
25 had a fur coat, that's all right if it was 90 degrees

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1 May 30th. You had to wear that fur coat, so that
2 everybody would know how prosperous you were doing up
3 in New York. So those were some of the things that I
4 remember as a child. And by the time day broke, you
5 could not -- you literally could not drive the streets
6 of Beaufort County. And if you could just imagine
7 around 1887 or 1897 -- I always get it off about ten
8 years. If you could just imagine 10,000 black folks
9 gathered around the Beaufort National Cemetery.

10 And then we had that connection to the movie Glory
11 and those African-American soldiers that died at Fort
12 Wagner.

13 So all those stories have to be told, that we
14 leave out so many different aspects, so that we have to
15 make sure that we make Gullah an inclusive thing and
16 not just a black thing.

17 I'm always glad when I come and I see other faces
18 here. Because when you talk to people like (inaudible)
19 who came and visited in the black communities back
20 then, when the communities were truly segregated, but
21 he came in and he knew Dr. Eagle and he knew Sherman
22 McTier (ph). He could tell me stories. So I don't
23 limit myself to just black folks when I'm talking
24 about, What you do you remember about Gullah? We have
25 to tell the total story. So I'm exited about this.

00216

1 Another thing would I like to see happen, I think
2 we have some wonderful things going on in Beaufort to
3 help preserve the culture. We have the Native
4 Islanders Celebration on Hilton Head in February. Then
5 we have the Gullah Festival in May. And then, by the
6 time September comes, we have River Fest down at Lands
7 End, and then Heritage Festival in November. Now we
8 have the Lowcountry Gullah Christmas Festival. We have
9 five extremely exciting festivals. And we're basically
10 telling the same stories. But everybody is trying to
11 advertise simply on limited budgets. Why not pool some
12 of these resources and market the area? Because that's
13 why -- that's why the mall works better than just the
14 store on the corner, by itself. People like to have
15 variety. So if we start -- because I notice right
16 around, I think by September or October, I'm getting
17 mailings from Myrtle Beach. We have about five or six
18 theaters advertising everything that's going on
19 Christmastime. So they come together. They do a
20 marketing campaign to market the area of Myrtle Beach.
21 I think we can do the same thing in Beaufort. We have
22 some excellent things. But it's sad when all the
23 planning and all the volunteers come in, and they put
24 all the hard work in on limited resources and you don't
25 have people to see what's here. Because we have -- we

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1 don't have the marketing dollars. So I would love to
2 see us not try to market Queen Quet or (inaudible), but
3 let's market everything that we have here to offer the
4 world. Because I think the world needs to hear what we
5 have to say.

6 God bless you for coming. Thank you. I'm Aunt
7 Pearlise Sue, Gullah storyteller (inaudible) native
8 Beaufortonian. God bless.

9 MS. QUEEN: Any more input? All right.
10 I think we have gotten a considerable amount of
11 input tonight. And that's what I always tell people:
12 I never worry about the crowd. It's about the content.
13 And this has been some very, very powerful content here
14 tonight.
15 And just want to share with Sister Prather, when
16 you mentioned that fur coat, I have a history tie-in.
17 Because I won, at the Water Festival, years ago, the
18 talent show. And I had on a full-length mink coat,
19 real mink coat. And it was 90 degrees. And when I
20 came out, people were like, Lord. My mama was like, I
21 can't look. I can't look. Because they just knew I
22 was going to faint. And they were late, too. And I
23 was there with my coat. I was like, I'm going to leave
24 this coat on my shoulders. It's mind over matter. I'm
25 going to get on the stage soon. And I got up there and
00218
1 I sang my heart out. And the reason I had the coat,
2 because the song said, She wears a long fur coat of
3 mink, even in the summertime. And so I was right on
4 it. I finished that line so I could lick that coat on
5 the ground, okay, and went on and finished the song.
6 And when they said I won, I was like, Thank you, Lord.
7 At least I didn't pass out and I get to take money
8 home. So I love it, because there was that -- I guess
9 that ancestral energy of stepping off the boat with the
10 fur coats on, that I was carrying and didn't even know.
11 So it was wonderful.
12 And definitely I think there have been a lot of
13 great things stated here tonight. And these will go
14 into this process.
15 And you will hear of us announcing meetings again
16 in the fall. Because at that point, we will come back
17 to various communities and we will present what we call
18 interpretive themes and what has emerged from the 25
19 meetings that we are having from February to next week
20 or so. Two weeks from now will be the last sets of
21 these meetings and all of the comment cards. And there
22 are still more comments cards on the tables. And,
23 also, the agendas have the Web site on them.
24 So please take -- take the extras that are here.
25 You can pass them on to others. You can mail them back
00219
1 in. So you go home -- you know how you do. You get in
2 your car and you go, Oh, I just remembered something
3 else. Well, write it on the cards, send it in, e-mail
4 it in. Write your letters.
5 And definitely, on behalf of the entire
6 Gullah-Geehce Cultural Heritage Corridor, thank all of
7 you for coming out tonight to Yemassee. We want to
8 thank the Gullah-Geechee Sea Island Coalition for
9 providing the copies and our reception at these last
10 meetings that we planned. We want to thank the mayor
11 and the Town of Yemassee because they provided this
12 facility for us tonight, Fennell Elementary.
13 And because it's a small town, I won't be
14 surprised if the mayor calls me later and says, Queen,
15 I was in a manhole, I'm sorry I didn't make it there.
16 Or, I got called to some other thing in town. Because
17 he literally is a working mayor, okay. So Mayor
18 Goodwin, we appreciate.
19 And we appreciate this town. And Josie Rivers at
20 the town hall for the work they did to make sure this

21 facility was here. And also the principal, who let me
22 know I can lock up everything when everybody goes this
23 evening forth. So it's nice when people welcome you in
24 their house and when they trust you and they leave you
25 with the key, all right? So I thank you all.

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1 And I would ask Missionary Carrie Major, please
2 come up and give us our benediction.

3 And before you leave, our sign-in sheets were to
4 be brought here. Because they were not brought in, I'm
5 going to do something that won't look as professional
6 as we normally have it, but I am going to have you each
7 please sign in and provide us with your name and
8 address, e-mail and phone number, so that we can add
9 you to our database, so that you'll know when the next
10 newsletter comes out.

11 (Benediction.)
12 (The proceeding concluded at 7:21 P.M.)
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