

**THE GULLAH/GEECHEE
CULTURAL HERITAGE
COMMISSION MEETING**

Tuesday, April 7th, 2009
7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.

The GULLAH/GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE
COMMISSION MEETING, taken on the 7th day of April,
2009 at the Howard Auditorium, located at 1610 Hawkins
Street, Georgetown, South Carolina 29440.

CP-26 REPORTING

Melissa M. Decker, Court Reporter
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APPEARANCES:

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Commissioner Veronica D. Gerald
Commissioner Nichole Green
Commissioner Michael Allen

ATTENDEE SPEAKERS:

Ms. Vermelle "Bunny" Rodrigues
421 Petigru Drive, Pawleys Island, South Carolina 29585

Ms. Zelma Fraser Carr
204 South Merriman Street, Georgetown, South Carolina 29440

Mr. James Wragg
81 Boykin Street, Georgetown, South Carolina 29440

Mr. Andrew Rodrigues
2281-D Andover Drive, Surfside Beach, South Carolina 29575

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pryor

Ms. Lilly Jean Johnson

Ms. Zenobia Washington

Mr. David Drayton

Mr. Louis Ventors, Francis Marion University

Mr. Ray Funnye

Ms. Charlena B. Johnson
100 Arcadia Road, Pawleys Island, South Carolina 29585

ALSO PRESENT:

Sunny Fry, Videographer

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1 to develop a management plan that will
2 implement, spotlight, highlight,
3 preserve, recognize our culture. And we
4 think the community is very important
5 because you, more than anyone, can tell
6 us what it is that you feel is important
7 as your community, around your
8 community, and in your families, your
9 churches; where you live, where you used
10 to live. Where your mother grew up,
11 your uncles, your aunts and that kind of
12 thing, so this is a public engagement
13 meeting and we're not going to hold you
14 long; we're simply going to let you know
15 what we're doing to keep you abreast of
16 what we're doing so that you will be a
17 full partner in this endeavor. There
18 are three of us, three Commissioners
19 here tonight and they will introduce
20 themselves as they come forward. But we
21 want to move now to bringing in, and I
22 have to put on my glasses. Did you know
23 that one of the features of Gullah
24 culture is Presbyopia? After you turn
25 40 most Gullah speakers move to glasses.

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1 COURT REPORTER'S
2 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)
3 COMMISSIONER GERALD: At any rate, we're
4 going to begin the program by calling
5 forth one of your community members. I
6 call her Bunny, but I think you all know
7 her by several names: The Gullah Uhman
8 (phonetically spelled) is one, and
9 Vermelle is another. We're going to ask
10 her some questions as part of your
11 community just to kick things off. And
12 I'm going to ask Nichole Green, who is a
13 Commissioner as well; Nicole is the
14 director of the Charleston Slave Market
15 Museum. People who are members of this
16 committee come from all spectrums of the
17 Gullah world, and we all at some point
18 have worked in the field to preserve and
19 to highlight this culture. And Nichole
20 is one of our northern members. She's
21 from McClellanville, and we're going to
22 ask her to come up and engage Bunny
23 Rodrigues in her questions.
24 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Good evening.
25 AUDIENCE: Good evening.

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1 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Tell me, Ms. Rodrigues:
2 Do you want to stand and do this; do you
3 want to sit; how should we do this?

4 DR. GERALD: Well, she's going to
5 need a mic.

6 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Because we want to make
8 sure that she's heard.

9 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay. I'll use this
10 mic over here.

11 COMMISSIONER GERALD: That's Ms. Rodrigues
12 here.

13 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay, just a couple of
14 technical difficulties. Good evening,
15 again. Ms. Rodrigues, it's a pleasure
16 meeting you in-person. I've heard so
17 much about you so it's finally nice to
18 meet you face-to-face. So I just wanted
19 to ask you a couple of questions here.
20 Is it okay if I'm sitting; is that okay?

21 MS. RODRIGUES: Sure; that's the Gullah
22 way.

23 COMMISSIONER GREEN: That's the Gullah way.
24 I wanted to get close to you. Now, my
25 first question is: As a community

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1 organizer you've worked tirelessly in
2 this community and especially in the
3 early stages of the Gullah/Geechee
4 Special Resource Study, especially with
5 Michael Allen and National Park Service.
6 And one of the first things I want to
7 ask you is: Seeing the group gathered
8 here today and you think back on all the
9 work you put in on the Special Resource
10 Study; what are you feeling today
11 looking at this crowd and seeing how far
12 ---

13 MS. RODRIGUES: Well, it isn't ---

14 COMMISSIONER GREEN: It's a good group.

15 MS. RODRIGUES: Yeah, and I'd like to
16 thank the Commission for being here.
17 And I'd like to thank everybody who came
18 out today, tonight. And do you really
19 want to know how I feel? I even worked
20 before the resource committee; I have
21 always been Gullah/Geechee. And on the
22 19th of this month I'll be 71-years old,
23 so I've been Gullah/Geechee all my life.
24 When I left Georgetown I always told
25 people that I was a saltwater Geechee

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1 Gal. Always proud of who I was and my
2 culture, and knew my culture very, very
3 well. And when I came back in the 80s,
4 or the early 90s, they had a meeting at
5 Brookgreen Garden, and like usually,
6 most of the people in Georgetown did not
7 know. And I called Michael Allen and
8 that's how I got involved. And at that
9 time it was not the Resource Study; it
10 was the Gullah Consortium and I was
11 involved with an awful lot. And as I
12 was away from home I was always involved
13 in talking about my culture. So it's
14 easy for me to come back home and to
15 really get involved in anything that had
16 anything to do with preserving the
17 Gullah/Geechee Culture. And my husband
18 and I, and a lot of times we'd take Mr.
19 Drayton with us, over here, the
20 Georgetown community worked tirelessly.
21 I mean we worked for this, the one day
22 we would have a Commission. And I want
23 to tell you a surprise thing about it.
24 You know the Commission is representing
25 four states and in South Carolina that's

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1 when you got on the Commission. And I
2 realize that Georgetown, because we were
3 always, I was always preaching about
4 Georgetown. One day someone said that
5 they weren't coming into Georgetown. I
6 got on that telephone; I called Michael
7 Allen. In two minutes he had Cynthia
8 Forshee calling me and she was up here.

9 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay.

10 MS. RODRIGUES: And I think sometime we
11 forget the people are here and the
12 Gullah culture, whether in Wilmington,
13 all of us are Gullah/Geechee, you know.

14 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Right.

15 MS. RODRIGUES: If you're a descendant
16 of Gullah/Geechee people. And to me the
17 Georgetown culture is just as important
18 as the one in McClellanville, Awendaw,
19 Charleston, Beaufort, but sometime we
20 feel as though we're being left out.
21 And I'm quite sure that the people in
22 Georgetown must have felt it when they
23 organized the Commission and it's really
24 split us right up. Because you know
25 they say, oh, they not even low country

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1 up here in Georgetown. And one person
2 called me all the way from Beaufort, and
3 they said, you know, Bunny, she said
4 they, this lady was bragging; said they
5 had five Commissioners out of the
6 Beaufort area; that's the first thing.
7 And I think the people in Georgetown
8 felt it because we worked hard. We,
9 some of us we worked hard so that we
10 could be part of this Commission. And
11 I'm still working hard and even though
12 we're not on the Commission but we are
13 still working, and we have so many
14 things that you'd really be surprised
15 that we have in Georgetown.

16 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Now, tell me a little
17 bit about what your definition of
18 Gullah/Geechee Culture is, and do you
19 think it's something, a culture of the
20 past, or do you see that culture here
21 and present; do you think it will ---

22 MS. RODRIGUES: When I was in
23 elementary school I had my first
24 geography class.

25 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Uh-huh (affirmative

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1 response).

2 MS. RODRIGUES: And you have to study
3 the past ---

4 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Right.

5 MS. RODRIGUES: --- to move over into
6 the future.

7 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Right.

8 MS. RODRIGUES: And to me, Gullah is
9 both.

10 COMMISSIONER GREEN: It's the past ---

11 MS. RODRIGUES: The present and the
12 future.

13 COMMISSIONER GREEN: --- the present and the
14 future.

15 MS. RODRIGUES: In order to move on, we
16 have to study the past. We have to
17 study the Gullah people. We have to
18 find out that in Georgetown County we
19 produce two-thirds of the rice so that
20 meant that we had more fatter baskets
21 than anybody else.

22 COMMISSIONER GREEN: And one of the last
23 things I want you to do is: Is speak
24 about if there are any particular people
25 or events or places, or things that make

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1 this term, "Gullah/Geechee" real to you;
2 any places in Georgetown, any things,
3 any particular people that really bring
4 this culture to life for you?

5 MS. RODRIGUES: Do you know that my
6 father used to say, we used to go from
7 this building over across the street,
8 Butts Street, the street that I grew up
9 on, and it was nothing but water. And
10 daddy would say, "Ain't nothing but a
11 old rice field." They never really
12 explained it. Like a lot of times, you
13 know if he was doing oyster shells and
14 he never explained. He just said, "Move
15 away from there because those oyster
16 shells gonna hit you in your eyes." And
17 I think the beauty of it, when I got,
18 and, but he would use the, you know, on
19 his garden. But he didn't tell us he
20 was using it for fertilizer. And then
21 when I got grown I found out how we, you
22 know, we used it and that's how we got
23 the tabbys, used it in the tabby and
24 whatnot. So this whole area ---

25 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Uh-huh (affirmative

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1 response).

2 MS. RODRIGUES: --- to me, it was
3 always something different about
4 Georgetown and just the low country.
5 You know I went away from home and I
6 just couldn't get, wait to get back here
7 ---

8 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Uh-huh (affirmative
9 response).

10 MS. RODRIGUES: --- you know. And it's
11 so much history here.

12 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Right.

13 MS. RODRIGUES: Can make your head
14 turn.

15 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Now one of the last
16 things I want you to do is ---

17 MS. RODRIGUES: So you're, we're on
18 holy ground. This is a rice field.

19 COMMISSIONER GREEN: A rice field?

20 MS. RODRIGUES: A rice field. See
21 that, Sampit River is ---

22 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Uh-huh (affirmative
23 response). And isn't this landfill; did
24 they just sort of fill it in a little
25 bit ---

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1 MS. RODRIGUES: I don't know. It's
2 still watery.
3 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Is it?
4 MS. RODRIGUES: Yes.
5 COMMISSIONER GREEN: When it rains does it
6 flood?
7 MS. RODRIGUES: Yes.
8 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay.
9 MS. RODRIGUES: Right.
10 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay. Now, one of the
11 last things I want you to do is: To wet
12 our appetites a little bit about what to
13 expect this weekend; what's coming up on
14 April 10th and 11th?
15 MS. RODRIGUES: We're having a
16 Gullah/Geechee Rice Festival.
17 COMMISSIONER GREEN: A Gullah/Geechee Rice
18 Festival?
19 MS. RODRIGUES: That's right. Because
20 that's why we came here because of the
21 rice.
22 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Right.
23 MS. RODRIGUES: Right. And we having,
24 we having very good entertainment, and
25 it just isn't entertainment; it's

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1 learning about the Gullah Culture and
2 teaching our children, and teaching
3 adults so they can teach their children.
4 And see, this is our problem: We, the,
5 the, the parents don't know who they
6 are, because they made us all these
7 years ashamed of being Gullah/Geechee,
8 the first language that our ancestors
9 had to use to communicate to help each
10 other. So now we have to make them feel
11 proud, and they are beginning to feel
12 proud. When I go to schools I never
13 says: May I have your attention, please.
14 Everybody, whether they're white, blue,
15 black or green, they are listening to
16 learn about this beautiful culture,
17 about the people who built, really built
18 America.

19 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Now tell me: Where is
20 it going to be held?

21 MS. RODRIGUES: It's going to be held,
22 Friday we having a down home fish fry at
23 the Gullah Museum on 421 Petigru Drive.
24 And then on Saturday we have a parade
25 with horses. And you know, and this

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1 year we explained to the children what
2 the, how the word, "cowboy," came about;
3 cowboys, because they didn't call
4 anybody else, and how we, how we were
5 always the Fellany (phonetically
6 spelled) Tribe, the great horsemen's and
7 whatnot. And then we have other things:
8 the parade. The parade will end up in
9 the park when we have great
10 entertainment. We'll be making grass
11 dolls; that is an art form that we
12 brought here. You know everybody's
13 calling everything Gullah Dolls. No, we
14 only brought one. It was the Dan doll.
15 I have one that I had for 30 years. And
16 then my husband is going to be doing a
17 seminar on rice. And he's studied rice,
18 and he's doing a book. And we having
19 Gullah foods, because a lot of times I
20 go to some of these affairs and you know
21 they got fish and French fries.

22 COMMISSIONER GREEN: You going to have white
23 rice?

24 MS. RODRIGUES: We've got to have the
25 rice. Now the African believe the rice

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1 is the foundation of life, and this is
2 why we throw rice when we have a
3 wedding. And then the Africans always
4 said: If that love maybe get a little
5 slow, marriage get a little slow, add a
6 little hot pepper. Now you know we like
7 hot pepper. (Chuckling.) Okay.
8 Because you know you could get married
9 to a Geechee man and he says, "Sister,
10 well, I had macaroni and cheese and I
11 had potato salad, some pasta salad and
12 he had the nerve to tell me: Where
13 rice?" (Chuckling.)

14 COURT REPORTER'S

15 NOTE: (AUDIENCE LAUGHTER.)

16 MS. RODRIGUES: Rice is the foundation
17 of life.

18 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Yes; that's true. Well
19 thank you so much. I'm going to turn --

20 MS. RODRIGUES: Okay.

21 COMMISSIONER GREEN: --- everything back
22 over to Commissioner Gerald. Thank you
23 so much.

24 MS. RODRIGUES: Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER GERALD: That's wonderful,

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1 wonderful. You know, I do feel so very
2 closely to what Bunny was saying because
3 I come from the Brookgreen people.
4 Broogreen Plantation; it's down in
5 Murrells Inlet and was one of the
6 biggest rice plantations furnishing 40
7 percent of the world's rice supply back
8 in the eve of the Civil War. So our
9 people, you know, we feel like we were
10 kind of, everybody was thinking that
11 Gullah/Geechee people had to live in
12 Charleston or on the Sea Island, but
13 that's only because people were talking
14 about us from the outside. And so now
15 what we're trying to do today is: to
16 engage an inside perspective of our
17 people. And we thank Ms. Rodrigues for
18 setting the pace. And the reason why
19 I'm calling her name is because we're
20 needing to document who said what, when
21 and where. And that's all a part of
22 history. So that's Vermelle ---

23 MS. RODRIGUES: Yes. May I ask you
24 something?

25 COMMISSIONER GERALD: --- Bunny Rodrigues.

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1 MS. RODRIGUES: May I say something?
2 You know, I thought this Commission was
3 going to be like a pot of gumbo soup.
4 When you have everything in there: the
5 okra, the corn, and the tomato, and you
6 know being a community action person on
7 that Commission, I don't see Aunt
8 Sookie, because that's where all of
9 these years that we got our inspiration
10 from. And she knows more about the
11 Gullah/Geechee than all of these,
12 everybody else.

13 COMMISSIONER GERALD: The doctors?

14 MS. RODRIGUES: Huh?

15 COMMISSIONER GERALD: The doctors and lawyers
16 and ---

17 MS. RODRIGUES: Dr. Sookie, right. And
18 then you know the sweetgrass people have
19 held us up all of these years, and
20 there's no sweetgrass lady on that
21 Commission. So we need to put some of
22 the other flavor into that pot of gumbo
23 soup in order to make it taste good.

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And that's a good
25 scenario and you're looking at gumbo

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1 Michael Allen.

2 MR. ALLEN: Where's the spoon?

3 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Oh, he's

4 Gullah/Geechee, too: Kingstree.

5 MS. RODRIGUES: When I met him he

6 didn't know he was Gullah/Geechee. I

7 said, "He's from Kingstree. Sometime I

8 don't even understand what they're

9 talking about."

10 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Thank you, Veronica ---

11 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Uh-huh (affirmative

12 response).

13 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: --- for stirring up the

14 pot. Thank you, Bunny, for putting the

15 fire under the pot. And now I have to

16 manage the pot.

17 MS. RODRIGUES: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: As I was driving up

19 here today, I realized I had an awesome

20 task to come and talk to you. Some of

21 you I've been knowing for the last

22 decade and longer than that. And some

23 of you I just met the other day, but

24 it's an honor to be a part of this

25 endeavor, to be a part of this journey.

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1 And some folks say: Well, how did you
2 get into this pot to become the glue and
3 to become the paste, and to become the
4 okra and to become the shrimp and the
5 corn of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural
6 Heritage Corridor? Let me let you know
7 as you sit here tonight in this
8 auditorium: In this country today there
9 are approximately 50 national heritage
10 areas, 50. In fact, we got, you got 10
11 brothers and sisters about two weeks
12 ago, okay, because two weeks ago there
13 was only 40 but now there's 50. But of
14 the 50 national heritage areas across
15 the entire United States, the one that
16 you're sitting in tonight is the only
17 one that's dedicated to the African-
18 American experience, lifeways, history,
19 culture and contributions, so I think
20 that's important for why we're here
21 tonight. A lot of folks: Well, how did
22 you all get to be a part of the 50? And
23 Sister Bunny talked a little bit about
24 that and Veronica and Nichole, about
25 what we did to get to this point. In

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1 2000, our good congressman, Congressman
2 James E. Clyburn, tasked the National
3 Park Service to do what we call the
4 Special Resource Study. And what that
5 really was, was an opportunity for the
6 National Park Service to leave the
7 office; get away from the computer; put
8 the telephone down and to come out and
9 talk with people like yourself. And to
10 ask very basic questions as Bunny
11 answered tonight: What is Gullah; what
12 is Geechee? What's the history? What
13 are the opportunities; what are the
14 threats, if there are threats? What
15 does the future look like? What type of
16 partnership can be brought to ensure the
17 blessings that I see here tonight can be
18 continued off into the future? So we
19 began this journey in 2000 and we called
20 it Exploring the Soul of Gullah/Geechee
21 History and Gullah Culture. And today I
22 was flipping through the Special
23 Resource Book and I realized that in
24 2000 and in 2002, we were in Georgetown.
25 The first time we came we asked those

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1 questions I just said to you. And some
2 of you all I see here today were there
3 back in 2000, and you gave us your
4 thoughts, your desires, your hopes, your
5 dreams, your aspirations. And we took
6 notes, like we're doing here tonight, to
7 be historic. But we knew this was
8 different. We didn't want to follow the
9 same old script, so we kind of put
10 together what we thought we heard you
11 said and then we came back in 2002 and
12 said: We were here two years ago. We
13 thought we heard you said this, but we
14 want to make sure this is what you truly
15 said. Can you check what we're showing
16 to you tonight? And so you walk out and
17 said, you know, I didn't say it like
18 this or I did said it like this or you
19 got it; you don't have it. So we went
20 back and re-tuned that. And by 2005 we
21 took all the comments and all the
22 suggestions from five years of
23 conversations, and wrapped it into a
24 package that was called the Low Country
25 Special Resource Study Guide Book,

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1 because the president said that we have
2 to return something to the Secretary of
3 Interiors' Desk in a period of time.
4 Thank you, ma'am. (Speaking to Ms.
5 Rodrigues, who passed a copy of the
6 Resource Study to Commissioner Allen.)
7 So this came out of our journey and our
8 conversation. In fact some of y'all are
9 on the front cover. Now, we gave an
10 advance copy of this to the architect,
11 Congressman Clyburn. So he was pleased
12 which is great, and he was satisfied,
13 which is even better. He was excited,
14 which was even the best; that he took
15 the elements of what's in here and he
16 introduced in 2005: The Gullah/Geechee
17 National Heritage Act, which codified
18 everything that you all had said to us
19 out in the open. And what that did was
20 ask Congress to establish the
21 Gullah/Geechee National Heritage
22 Corridor, which was stretched from
23 Wilmington, North Carolina all the way
24 down to Jacksonville, Florida, as you
25 see on that map off to my right,

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1 encompassing our conversation with you.
2 Why transition from being a community
3 organizer to a congressional act, and a
4 congressional page, working with
5 Democrats, Republicans all over this
6 country to help lobby the passage of the
7 Gullah/Geechee National Heritage Act?
8 And in 2006 it was passed making where
9 you sit here tonight the first national
10 heritage area in our nation, dedicated
11 to the African-American experience and
12 the way of life. But you know sometime
13 you've got to read the fine print
14 because that was just the beginning of
15 the journey. Because inside of the fine
16 print gave the boundaries, but it also
17 said that there must be a commission of
18 individuals made up of individuals from
19 up and down the coast. And so, again, I
20 think in 2006 I went and I began talking
21 and sharing, encouraging people to put
22 their name in a hat. And by 2007 that
23 hat was clear that we renew the
24 Commissioners, as you see two of them
25 sitting here tonight. But there was

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1 still more fine print in the legislation
2 because it says within a defined period
3 of time these two women here must put on
4 the Secretary of Interior's desk, a
5 codified plan like the Bible says,
6 "right division." So you have to
7 provide division to the Secretary of how
8 Gullah/Geechee history and culture would
9 survive; because it will survive; it is
10 surviving. So staying itself, partner
11 with others, and move forward and
12 educate, too. So the key to us here
13 tonight is in the fine print. So while
14 I'm engaging here tonight, you can see
15 very clearly, as our new president tells
16 us: that we are transparent. From the
17 background to the Special Resource
18 Study, what is the national heritage
19 area? How is it different from the
20 National Park Service? At this point
21 what the Commission says is: Their
22 vision, their mission and their purpose,
23 and also now that we have this
24 Commission, it's incumbent upon you to
25 participate; that's why these panels are

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1 here. And the one on the far to end
2 there, basically was their initial
3 attempt to identify important
4 Gullah/Geechee sites along the coast of
5 South Carolina. But they are
6 transparent enough to tell you that they
7 knew that they didn't identify every
8 place. They're being open and honest.
9 So a part of us here tonight is to
10 engage you to let us know places that we
11 feel we left off. Places Veronica and
12 Nichole might not have even thought
13 about; places that you know that you
14 want to share. So at the end of the day
15 when this is all wrapped back up and
16 placed on the desk of the Secretary of
17 the Interior, I'll be able to say well
18 done. These two women will be able to
19 say well done, but you all will be able
20 to say that we listened and we took in
21 what you said. So as I share with two
22 ladies here tonight, this is history.
23 The same way we look back to the W.P.A.
24 project in the 1930s and what we've
25 learned and what we've gained from those

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1 narratives. And we're going to that
2 step tonight, through the court
3 reporter, and through the videographer.
4 50 years from now, 100 years from now
5 people will look and see what you said
6 here tonight and they will be able to
7 pass on to their kids. So as the glue,
8 as the referee, sometime as the go-
9 between; that's my job. And I take it
10 personal, professional and spiritual
11 because of this gift that God has given
12 me to be a part of this endeavor. I
13 didn't realize 29 years ago when I
14 started working for the National Park
15 Service that I would be responsible for
16 this; didn't know 29 years ago that I
17 would work hand in glove with the
18 highest ranking African-American in our
19 United States Congress. I didn't know,
20 I didn't know I would meet Bunny 29
21 years ago, but that's the path He's put
22 me on. That's the path that these folks
23 have been made to walk in, and that's
24 why we're here tonight, to listen.
25 Thank you.

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1 COURT REPORTER'S
2 NOTE: (Audience applause.)
3 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Michael didn't tell you
4 that he's also a reverend, so I wouldn't
5 mind going to his church. That was
6 good, wasn't it? Anyway, we're going to
7 move on and let you have a say. You
8 know we don't believe in coincidences in
9 this culture, do we? Now, some people
10 say that's a coincidence that I met
11 Bunny or I met Nichole on the train, or
12 what have you. We always say that
13 there's something behind that; there's a
14 reason. So while we don't have an
15 auditorium full of people tonight,
16 there's a reason that you are here. And
17 I tell my students all the time: History
18 is being made right now. Because what
19 has happened is at this point we are all
20 together in this auditorium. The only
21 reason that, that won't be viewed as
22 history is because somebody might not
23 put it in the McMillan school book and
24 students may not study it. But we are
25 here together. Nowhere else in the

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1 world is this happening right now, so
2 we're going to use this opportunity to
3 make it work; make it happen. We're
4 going to start with asking you a general
5 open-ended question, and we have set up
6 a mic here. And the reason we need you
7 to speak in the mic is because we are
8 recording this; making it history. So,
9 now, is anyone here who doesn't feel
10 like coming up to the mic; I think this
11 one is long enough where I can bring it
12 out to you? But we're going to start
13 with an open-ended question: What is it
14 that you feel is important in your
15 community that should be a lifetime
16 monument that becomes history; what is
17 it that's historical to you in your
18 community that you would like to have to
19 be a part of this corridor? Give you a
20 minute to think. And while you're
21 thinking, I'll tell you: I asked my
22 mother that today. She's from Murrells
23 Inlet. She said in Murrells Inlet there
24 was a place where they had designated
25 you to dump your clam shells. And over

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1 the years that dump became so popular
2 that it became a site. You know, you
3 might want to meet your boyfriend; meet
4 me at the clam bank. It became a part
5 of the community. So and so, when he
6 got killed, somebody killed him and they
7 dumped him down at the clam bank. So
8 something as minute to us is historical.
9 Because when this one particular guy,
10 named Jaelin, got killed and dumped by
11 the clam bank, it blossomed into a two-
12 hour story my mother told me. He left
13 home and his momma ain't know where he
14 did go. And then he come back and he
15 look all funny in the eye. And then
16 they take him and at some point he put
17 him in the car. And I mean that story
18 went on and on until I had a history
19 list just because of the clam bank. So,
20 anybody want to start?

21 COURT REPORTER'S

22 NOTE: (Audience member
23 responds.)

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD: You want to come up?
25 And we need you to give your name.

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1 Barack Obama has a Gullah wife, so it
2 won't make it to the White House.

3 MS. CARR: Well, that has
4 something to do with what I want to say.

5 COMMISSIONER GEARLD: Oh, see, I told you:
6 no coincidence.

7 MS. CARR: Okay. My name is Zelma
8 Fraser Carr. I was born right here in
9 Georgetown on the corner of Merriman
10 Road and Winyah Street; just two blocks
11 up the street.

12 MS. RODRIGUES: Taylor Street.

13 MS. CARR: Beg your pardon?

14 MS. RODRIGUES: Taylor Street.

15 MS. CARR: It used to be Taylor
16 Street; that's right. It was called
17 Taylor Street at that time. But when I
18 heard about this meeting, and I told my
19 daughter: Oh, I have something that I
20 want to share. Back in the early 70s,
21 and since we have our new president,
22 President Obama and his wife, who's
23 really roots is South Carolina; it's
24 Georgetown. Well in the early 70s her
25 grandfather lived in the house right

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1 next door to us. His name was Fraser
2 Robinson. He lived right, we rented.
3 He was renting. He had moved down from
4 Chicago and lived in the house. And I
5 remember the grandmother often talking
6 about Michelle; how smart she was. And
7 I said well, maybe we need to have a
8 plaque. Maybe we need to have a plaque
9 on this house to say that Michelle
10 Obama's grandfather and grandmother
11 lived in this house. I was also a
12 classmate of her aunt, her great aunt.
13 We graduated high school together. My
14 mother was a classmate of her
15 grandfather. They graduated. So we
16 have a little connection there; that's
17 what I wanted to share. Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Great; great. That's
19 what we're talking about. That's what
20 we're talking about because ---

21 MS. RODRIGUES: Well everybody tell me
22 where when grandfather came back,
23 grandfather lived on every street in
24 Georgetown.

25 MS. CARR: Well he lived in that

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1 house for many years.

2 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And what's the
3 address?

4 MS. CARR: 206 South Merriman
5 Road.

6 COMMISSIONER GERALD: 206 South Merriman
7 Road.

8 MS. CARR: Georgetown.

9 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And we appreciate that
10 because these are things that are lost
11 in generation. I attended a funeral
12 today of a woman who lived to be 107 in
13 Conway, and never before have I realized
14 the saying that every time an elder dies
15 a library closes. And when I saw Ms.
16 Ella today and just so blessed that I
17 was allowed to go over and talk to her,
18 just be a part of her, you know of
19 recording her history. Anybody else got
20 a -- Yes, Mr. Wragg, W-R-A-G-G.

21 MS. RODRIGUES: My babysitter.

22 MR. WRAGG: Going to tell you a
23 story.

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD: He's got a different
25 story.

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1 COURT REPORTER'S

2 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

3 MR. WRAGG: Good evening. My name
4 is James Wragg. I was born right here
5 in Georgetown, South Carolina, the next
6 street behind me. I just want to say,
7 this is a wonderful school. I hope the
8 City of Georgetown never try to tear it
9 down because we have a lot of smart
10 people come out of this school,
11 especially the class I came out of in
12 1952.

13 COURT REPORTER'S

14 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

15 MR. WRAGG: The smartest class that
16 ever came out of Howard. I was going to
17 tell y'all was the dumbest class, but
18 I'm going to leave that alone. But,
19 anyway, I was thinking, I don't know if
20 the other part of the story has anything
21 to do with this part, but the other part
22 of the story is this: Winyah High School
23 and Howard High School, when I was in
24 New York I brought my three daughters
25 down here. We come down for the summer.

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1 And we was coming down Highmarket Street
2 and I said, "See, that's the white
3 school." They said, what daddy? I
4 said, "Yeah, that's the white school."
5 I said, "Now, come on; let me show you
6 where the black school is." So I
7 brought her up over here and showed her
8 Howard. And they, they, they couldn't
9 believe it. Another part of the story
10 is: We had the lady in our church, after
11 they built this, they built Howard, all
12 right? The lady thought that this
13 school had a swimming pool underneath
14 the building. And she didn't know
15 because everybody thought Howard school,
16 you know. And she, she says, because
17 I'm saying, if you have to stop and
18 think, they wasn't going to put a
19 swimming pool in Howard and don't have
20 one in Winyah, you know, just stop and
21 think about it.

22 MS. RODRIGUES: My yard has a swimming
23 pool.

24 MR. WRAGG: Huh?

25 MS. RODRIGUES: In the yard there was a

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1 swimming pool.

2 MR. WRAGG: Yard, there's a

3 swimming pool. Bunny, you're not,

4 you're older than any 71 if you can

5 remember all that.

6 COURT REPORTER'S

7 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

8 MR. WRAGG: You know, we, we raised

9 up on the same street. Like I said, she

10 is two years older than me because her

11 father had a whole other children.

12 COURT REPORTER'S

13 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

14 MR. WRAGG: But this school, see,

15 when I went to this school we didn't

16 have no, it was -- You, also, Zelma.

17 When you went here they didn't have no -

18 --

19 MS. CARR: Auditorium.

20 MR. WRAGG: --- auditorium.

21 MS. CARR: Not yet.

22 MR. WRAGG: We, wasn't even like a

23 gym or nothing.

24 MS. CARR: --- house. (Speaking

25 same time as Mr. Wragg.

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Unintelligible.)

MR. WRAGG: Right. See, I remember this school was built in 1940--, they start building this school in 47; I think, and they opened up in '49. And my brother was the first, they only had 11th grade at that time. And they put, they added the 12th grade on and my brother was the first classmate came out of that school in 1949. They had to go a extra year and everybody was mad. Because I know my cousin been, put the gun on the police when, on the principal and say you're going to give me my diploma because I'm going to New York.

COURT REPORTER'S

NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

MR. WRAGG: But Smith was the principal at that time, not you, you were, you were still in school.

COMMISSIONER GREEN: So where was the old Howard?

MR. WRAGG: The old Howard, way downtown on King and Highmarket, King and Duke.

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1 MS. RODRIGUES: No, we still have a
2 part of the old Howard High School.
3 MR. WRAGG: Yes.
4 MS. RODRIGUES: Right up there.
5 MR. WRAGG: Right.
6 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Tell me where ---
7 MR. WRAGG: But that one's too
8 small up there. She want to know the
9 school itself, Bunny ---
10 MS. RODRIGUES: No, but this is ---
11 MR. WRAGG: --- not the little
12 part.
13 MS. RODRIGUES: --- this is part of the
14 old Howard School.
15 MR. WRAGG: Yeah.
16 MS. RODRIGUES: Right up there at, you
17 go over to the next ---
18 MR. WRAGG: Block.
19 MS. RODRIGUES: --- block. And it's a
20 white building.
21 MR. WRAGG: White building.
22 MS. RODRIGUES: And it's right there.
23 It's on the ground. And this has always
24 bothered me. I don't know why they
25 decided to move that school from where

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1 it was and brought it all the way over
2 here and it's now an administration
3 building.

4 MR. WRAGG: Building.

5 MS. RODRIGUES: But it's on the same,
6 all of this is part of Howard School.

7 MR. WRAGG: All, yeah.

8 COURT REPORTER'S

9 NOTE: (Chatter amongst
10 audience.)

11 MR. WRAGG: You know when -- Go
12 ahead.

13 MS. RODRIGUES: No, no. We're talking
14 about Duke and King.

15 MR. WRAGG: Yeah, Duke and King.
16 Uh-huh (affirmative response). And they
17 opened up that school in 19 what: 1909?
18 I remember 1909; you would remember
19 1909.

20 COMMISSIONER GREEN: (Shaking her head.)

21 COURT REPORTER'S

22 NOTE: (Audience chatter.)

23 MR. WRAGG: There wasn't much of us
24 around at the time then. Okay. But it
25 was, it, it, it was nice. And that's

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1 one thing I hope the city will know
2 this: Do not touch this school, please,
3 and don't touch Winyah because it's
4 something I would like to tell my
5 grandkids about. This is the school
6 that I went to. You see, I don't want
7 it to be like a shell, like on King and
8 Duke. Now they do have a signature
9 there that, you know when the school was
10 put up and stuff and whatnot. I would
11 like to see this stay right here so I
12 can tell the kids. And I'd like to see
13 Winyah stay there so I can tell the kids
14 this was the white school and this was
15 the black school. Okay. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Thank you.

17 MR. WRAGG: And I was born right
18 back there, Butts Street. This is
19 Hawkins.

20 COMMISSIONER GREEN: How do you spell
21 that Street?

22 MR. WRAGG: Butts Street, B-U-T-T-
23 S.

24 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Butts Street?

25 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Oh, B-U-T-T-S.

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1 MR. WRAGG: Yes. Not no English
2 name, now, old, old fashioned country
3 name. Maybe I can't speak too good, you
4 know. I'm an old fashioned Geechee,
5 like Bunny, here.

6 COURT REPORTER'S

7 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

8 COMMISSIONER GERALD: That's right, now, Mr.
9 Wragg. We're just trying to make sure,
10 and you know that's another thing that
11 we have to remember: sometimes a street
12 can be historic. What happened to us is
13 when we learned history, a European
14 approach to history, we began to think
15 of things as being history only. So we
16 have to kind of recondition ourselves to
17 think; it's like the clam bank story.
18 Just like Butts Street or that there
19 needs to be the black high school and
20 the white high school for it to make
21 sense in history. So go back deep in
22 the mind and think: Was there a
23 particular pastor who came to
24 Georgetown, who changed the community?
25 Were there campfires where they had

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1 church in a field? Was there a field
2 where they always had the big revivals?
3 MR. WRAGG: Uh-huh (affirmative
4 response).
5 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah.
6 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Or baptismal spots.
7 COMMISSIONER GERALD: These are the things
8 that we need to know. Huh?
9 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Baptismal spots.
10 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah, baptismal spots.
11 Where did they baptize in Georgetown?
12 When they went and baptized in the
13 water, where was that done?
14 MS. RODRIGUES: I know Georgetown is
15 full of A.M.E. churches. (Chuckling.)
16 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Now ---
17 MS. RODRIGUES: But they used to, I
18 know where they used to baptize.
19 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah. Where was that?
20 See, these are things that we're trying
21 to do because ---
22 MS. RODRIGUES: At the, one of my old
23 friends told me that they were baptized
24 at the end of Highmarket Street.
25 COMMISSIONER GERALD: At the end?

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1 MS. RODRIGUES: In the back, by that,
2 they call it Back Landing.
3 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Back Landing?
4 MS. RODRIGUES: Yes. Yes.
5 COMMISSIONER GERALD: So all churches went --
6 Now, I'm A.M.E. Now we do have total
7 emerging if you want to.
8 MS. RODRIGUES: Yes. But I'm talking
9 about we weren't ---
10 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah, they were trying
11 to be all that way at the time as my
12 daughter says. So Back Landing was
13 where all of the churches went to
14 baptize. And did the whole community
15 go; what did they wear? What did people
16 wear to baptisms; was there a dress
17 code? These are things we got to start
18 thinking about because someone may want
19 to draw a picture of it to seal it in
20 stone in a textbook because the people
21 are no longer here. What was the first
22 church here?
23 MS. RODRIGUES: The first church ---
24 MR. WRAGG: Bethel.
25 MS. RODRIGUES: --- in Georgetown

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1 County and it was put up and it's still
2 ---

3 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Little Bethel.

4 MS. RODRIGUES: --- Little Bethel on
5 the Santee River Road. And the
6 congregation was established in 1859.
7 And they had a congregation of 1700.

8 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Before ---

9 MS. RODRIGUES: Because, see, on
10 Santee Road you have all of these
11 plantations there that connected to the
12 Canal, and that was the first church in
13 Georgetown County. Bethel A.M.E. Church
14 on Broad Street was the first free
15 church in Georgetown city.

16 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Now would Santee Street
17 be a street where lots of historical
18 things happen; is that what you're
19 saying?

20 MS. RODRIGUES: Well, the church, the
21 building is still there. The only thing
22 from the original building, because it
23 used to be two-story, is, is the
24 steeple. And they still have the
25 original furniture on the inside. They

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1 have not used the church for, for, for a
2 while. And you've got about 11
3 plantations on the Santee River Road.
4 You have a canal there that they
5 advertise for Negro winches to help dig
6 that canal.

7 COMMISSIONER GERALD: That's just what we're
8 talking about.

9 MR. WRAGG: Yeah.

10 COMMISSIONER GERALD: That's what we're
11 talking about. Santee River Road then
12 is important to the history of the
13 Gullah heritage.

14 MR. WRAGG: But, see, that area
15 where she's talking about, they got
16 about, they got about 11 plantation.
17 They got about 11 plantation in that
18 area, in the Santee area.

19 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And ---

20 MR. WRAGG: Between there, that's
21 North Santee. See, you got two type of
22 Santee on this one 17: north and south.
23 This would be in the south, the North
24 Santee area, where they got about 11
25 plantation right in that area.

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1 MS. RODRIGUES: Plus, the next thing
2 here, and since we're in the Santee
3 area, that's where the blacks owned
4 plantations, rice plantation, and had
5 some slaves' advocate. I mean they had
6 slaves there, you know, was part of it.
7 They were the Bellatis family. They
8 were the Harris and ---

9 MR. DRAYTON: The Collins.

10 MS. RODRIGUES: --- and the Collins,
11 the Mitchell. And, you know, we have a
12 place down at Harris Landing. And some
13 of the, some of those families from the
14 Collins family still lives there in that
15 area.

16 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Now, are these biracial
17 people?

18 MS. RODRIGUES: Well, what do you mean
19 biracial?

20 COURT REPORTER'S

21 NOTE: (Audience chatter.)

22 COMMISSIONER GREEN: I think they identify
23 as African-American. The Collins I know
24 from the North Santee.

25 MR. WRAGG: Yeah. Uh-huh

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1 (affirmative response).
2 MS. RODRIGUES: Yeah.
3 COMMISSIONER GREEN: But, you know, there
4 are so many people of African descent --
5 -
6 MS. RODRIGUES: They were, I mean even
7 then they were black ---
8 COMMISSIONER GERALD: There's European and --
9 -
10 MS. RODRIGUES: --- but I mean you know
11 biracial is a new term.
12 MR. RODRIGUES: (Inaudible. Speaking
13 while approaching front of auditorium.)
14 There's three families. The Holden
15 family was one of the families. He was
16 a slave trader when the Constitution was
17 written and slavery was to be abolished
18 in 1808. He had either a white, a black
19 wife or a black concubine, and he had
20 four children: two males and two
21 females. And he brought them here to
22 South Carolina to establish them on a
23 plantation of their own. With the
24 Mitchell family, they were the Mullaatto
25 children of a slave planter in the

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1 Charleston area who established them
2 with a plantation, and the same thing
3 basically with the Collins. So they
4 were that first generation with biracial
5 children. I don't know what you'd call
6 it, a quadroon, a octoroon and all that
7 other foolishness.

8 MS. RODRIGUES: They were black.

9 MR. RODRIGUES: But they were, in
10 effect, according to the rules set forth
11 in this country, they were Negros.

12 VIDEOGRAPHER: Sir, could you say your
13 name, please?

14 MR. RODRIGUES: Oh, I'm sorry. My name
15 is Andrew Rodrigues and Vermelle
16 Rodrigues is my domestic leader.

17 COURT REPORTER'S

18 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

19 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: You got that?

20 (Speaking to court reporter.)

21 COMMISSIONER GERALD: I hope so.

22 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Now that we've
23 travelled, this is like going out of the
24 Parks. Now that we've travelled to this
25 sensitive area, it's important that we

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1 bring the record out as Andrew said very
2 clearly of the lineage. My question to
3 you all, you can think before you
4 answer: Are there descendants of these
5 families that you described here living
6 in the Georgetown area today; there's
7 some areas you described, but are
8 descendants still living here?

9 MS. RODRIGUES: The Collins.

10 MR. DRAYTON: Yeah, the Collins.

11 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: The Collins' are here?

12 MS. RODRIGUES: Uh-huh (affirmative
13 response).

14 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Now here's my historian
15 cap. You all have put them out there
16 through your description of their
17 genealogy, haven't you? Now, could we
18 engage them in a conversation of their
19 history, or if not, we're just talking
20 in this auditorium because ---

21 MR. WRAGG: Yes.

22 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: --- a lot of us, our
23 journey is to bring things out that
24 people were embarrassed, didn't want to
25 talk about, or secrets. So now that

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1 you've put them on tape, you blast them
2 out. As a historian, my step, my next
3 thoughts is: We want to be able to
4 engage these individuals because there
5 may be deeper things that you all don't
6 know, which you didn't say tonight, that
7 they may have, that needs to be added to
8 the picture. So I just want to put that
9 out there; that's a part of history.

10 MS. RODRIGUES: You know sometimes
11 when I talk to you and I talk to Ron,
12 you said you were bringing it here, to
13 Georgetown, and I said, yes, there's
14 some history in Georgetown. But a lot
15 of our history is in the rural area.
16 And I suggest having a meeting -- Bunny,
17 Vermelle, Bunny Rodrigues; I suggest
18 having a meeting in those areas: your
19 Santee, your Andrews area, that's where
20 we had the Andrews. And I says
21 Williamsburg, that's where we had the
22 Indigo and whatnot. Because all of us,
23 even though sometime this is they 30
24 miles from the ocean. And you know
25 Kingstree and Williamsburg County is a

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1 little more than 30 miles from the
2 ocean. And all of us, you know, it's
3 important to bring this puzzle together.
4 In order to bring the puzzle together we
5 need all of these communities, and I'm
6 quite sure we have a meeting. And I
7 suggest bring them in on buses or
8 whatever. It's kind of, it's kind of
9 difficult but it can be done because
10 it's very important for us to do it the
11 right way. And as long as I'm around
12 and I'm an elder, and I'm going to make
13 sure that everybody who is
14 Gullah/Geechee is included, and no one
15 person is an expert on the Gullah
16 Culture.

17 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Anyone else?

18 MS. PRYOR: Yeah. I'm probably
19 loud enough that you can hear me.

20 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: But identify yourself,
21 ma'am.

22 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Just identify yourself.

23 MS. PRYOR: Oh. Alisha Smith
24 Pryor, and my husband is Charles Pryor.
25 We are not from the city limits of

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1 Georgetown. We are from the Choppee
2 area ---
3 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Uh-huh (affirmative
4 response).
5 MS. PRYOR: --- and he's from Leeds
6 Creek. And I think you're right,
7 there's a lot of heritage out there.
8 MS. RODRIGUES: That's very true.
9 MS. PRYOR: We're a little bit
10 younger so we wouldn't know a lot of it.
11 But stories, my dad is only 65, 66. The
12 stories that he has told us about being
13 baptized in Black River; I was told
14 there's a lot of heritage out in that
15 area. A lot of it I can't talk on, you
16 know, but there's just a lot of heritage
17 out in that rural area, like you said.
18 MS. RODRIGUES: There sure is.
19 MS. PRYOR: And a lot of older
20 people out there that, you know, would
21 probably be willing to give account and
22 stories about what they know. I think
23 that Choppee High should be a really
24 historic place. It's a, it's a former
25 school that's now closed down, but at

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1 one time that was a all black school and
2 there wasn't too many of them left.
3 They have now integrated. It's not all
4 black anymore but, and it's a different
5 name. Do you have anything you want to
6 add? (Speaking to her husband, Charles
7 Pryor.) His dad's a preacher so he
8 might know a lot more than I do.

9 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Identify yourself
10 before you speak.

11 MR. PRYOR: My name is Charles
12 Pryor, Jr. And just to reiterate what
13 my wife said, probably like she said,
14 the Black River is like the only like
15 place that I know. But like my
16 grandmother is still alive. I'll give
17 you her phone number. She could tell
18 you a lot more than I can. But down in
19 that area: Dunbar, Leeds Creek, Oakland,
20 the Brown's Ferry area, areas of that
21 nature ---

22 MS. RODRIGUES: That's right.

23 MR. PRYOR: --- there were black
24 beaches.

25 MS. RODRIGUES: Deep history.

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1 MR. PRYOR: I remember they used to
2 do a lot of tobacco. I cropped tobacco
3 when I was younger and stuff of that
4 nature. But as far as like the real
5 history, I don't know. I just came to
6 like to get more information on it, but
7 in that area a lot, there's a lot more
8 heritage, also. So I'll give the
9 information to them. You'll probably
10 have to go to them because they probably
11 can't travel and stuff like that so
12 that's where a lot of them are at.

13 MS. RODRIGUES: You have to take it to
14 them. That's our culture ---

15 MR. WRAGG: Yeah.

16 MS. RODRIGUES: Take it to them.

17 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Give it to Lilly.

18 MS. JOHNSON: I am Lilly Jean Johnson
19 and I do live here in the city of
20 Georgetown. I think I would just like
21 to skip around and maybe add a point or
22 two. Going back to Little Bethel, even
23 though the church is not active anymore,
24 families are still being buried out
25 there. The cemetery is still there.

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1 COMMISSIONER GREEN: And that's the one on
2 North Santee River Road?
3 MS. RODRIGUES: North ---
4 MS. JOHNSON: Yes.
5 MS. RODRIGUES: --- Santee River Road.
6 MS. JOHNSON: Yes, it is. It's the
7 same church that they spoke about
8 earlier. On my end of town there is a
9 building that was originally called The
10 Hall. It was built by an organization
11 called The Christian Friendly Aide
12 Society. And that was a meeting place
13 for the people in the community. The
14 people who built that structure came
15 from Weehaw. They moved. Weehaw is off
16 701; what we call the Conway Highway.
17 And when they moved to town they built
18 that structure and the purpose of them
19 forming themselves as an organization
20 was to be a support for the community.
21 If someone was sick in the community and
22 they needed someone to come and clean
23 the house or sit with the person or take
24 care of that individual, then those
25 members were there, or if someone died.

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1 It was really a support organization for
2 that area where I live in. At one point
3 it was a school. In fact, I went to
4 school there for maybe about two or
5 three years before I went to old Howard
6 on the corner of King and Duke. The
7 structure is still there and it's right
8 now being rented out by a church. The
9 organization, Christian Friendly Aide
10 Society, is not active because the older
11 members are dying out and I guess I may
12 have joined it maybe 10 or 15 years ago.
13 Well, my sister now has a deep interest
14 in it and she's been on my back for
15 maybe a year or two because at one point
16 the organization had talked about
17 disbanding and sharing out the little
18 bit of money that's there. And then
19 there is a family who is interested in
20 purchasing the property to build a house
21 but we were able to convince the members
22 not to do anything until we have done
23 some research and see what kind of funds
24 are out there so that building can be
25 restored and used for not only the

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1 benefit of the mixed community, but all
2 of Georgetown County. So we certainly
3 would like to see that building that's
4 still standing be a part of this
5 heritage group.

6 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Lilly, how do you, it's
7 Weehaw; W-E ---

8 MS. JOHNSON: You know, I'm not sure.
9 I think W-E-E-H-A-W, Weehaw.

10 MS. WASHINGTON: Hey, everybody. My
11 name is Zenobia Washington, and I wasn't
12 born here but all my people are from
13 here. My mother's, mother's mother and
14 my father's mother's father and all of
15 that, and I was raised here every
16 summer. We moved here when I was eight
17 years old so we are from this community.
18 There are several things that I really
19 think that are important, not so much in
20 the form of a building but I really and
21 truly would like to see some type of a
22 curriculum that directly connects rice
23 cultivation to the knowledge that the
24 Africans had, not just to the labor part
25 of it. So I would love to see somewhere

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1 where we can truly discuss how
2 architecture played a part. The
3 knowledge that Africans had about
4 architecture, engineering, astrology,
5 astronomy, and all these things, and put
6 it together, and not just talk about the
7 laborious part of the rice, of the rice
8 culture. I also think that there needs
9 to be more done about getting
10 information to our young people about
11 who Joseph Rainey really was; his impact
12 into the whole country. And that he
13 was, he's from here, you know, so, and I
14 don't think that people really realize
15 that. They don't know how important
16 that is. I don't think that we pay
17 enough attention to the whole area,
18 political area of reconstruction and how
19 much, you know of a part that played in.
20 You know people think of the Voting
21 Rights Act as being something that
22 happened in, within many of our
23 lifetimes. But, you know, what happened
24 during reconstruction played a big part
25 in, you know, how the United States goes

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1 around, and there was Florida. And Mr.
2 Drayton did some wonderful work with
3 that at Coastal Carolina University.
4 But to see those things kind of expanded
5 on a broader scale. What is, what is
6 Slab Town; what is Fanny Village? I
7 hear of all these black places that were
8 all over Georgetown; really, what is the
9 West End? I mean we hear about the West
10 End, but what did the West End look like
11 and feel like, you know, before we were
12 around? What about McKenzie Beach and
13 Myrtle Beach; is McKenzie Beach and
14 Bernie Beach and Magnolia Beach all the
15 same beach or were they different
16 beaches?

17 MS. RODRIGUES: The same beach.

18 MR. WRAGG: The same beach.

19 MS. WASHINGTON: All the same beach?

20 MS. RODRIGUES: The same beach.

21 MS. WASHINGTON: But for people my age,
22 and I'm 42, some people say Magnolia
23 Beach is across this way and Bernie
24 Beach was across that way, but we really
25 rarely hear about entertainment and how

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1 African-Americans found a way to
2 entertain each other and entertain
3 themselves and to find some sense of
4 relief unless we're talking about the
5 church. We always talk about what
6 African-Americans did in terms of
7 release in terms of church, but not what
8 we did, you know, socially, right; that
9 type of stuff. And the political light
10 of people in Georgetown. I have always
11 been told that people out where you're
12 from and where your husband's from were
13 much more politically bent and motivated
14 than people who lived in the city, so is
15 that true, you know? How were we all
16 connected politically? So those are
17 some of the things. And death and
18 burial practices on a wider scale. I
19 mean we took part as young people on
20 the, you know, it was an honor to take
21 the last breath of a dying person. Why
22 do people cover burials and pick them
23 up? You know what I mean? And put this
24 in a respectful content, not necessarily
25 a hoodoo, voodoo kind of witchcraft, but

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1 why do people really do those things?
2 And to show that they are connected to a
3 heritage that is much deeper than just
4 right here. So, thank you so much.

5 MS. RODRIGUES: I'd like to say
6 something. We are, we did mention
7 McKenzie Beach in the Resource Study and
8 the day we went there, there was a young
9 man digging clams. And he was digging
10 clams with his hands. I know that some
11 of us do not know but we did an awful
12 lot of different places. As a matter of
13 fact, some of the places that some of us
14 have mentioned, and then when I'm doing
15 a tour. Mr. Drayton did a fantastic
16 tour on historical Georgetown; that's in
17 the historical district. But when I
18 take people on tours, I do the
19 historical district. I also do the
20 district in the West End of Georgetown
21 and I do out in the rural area. When
22 you are coming off of those two bridges
23 in Georgetown or going out of
24 Georgetown, people don't know those are
25 rice fields, you know. And you can

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1 actually see the canals. And then we
2 talk about tabby and we brought that
3 process here. When I was a little girl
4 I used to laugh at that little tabby
5 house, or the oyster house that I called
6 on our street. And then when we, this
7 building here is historical, but so is
8 Hawkins Street. At the end of Hawkins
9 Street you have a slave cemetery which
10 is called Muckle Grove; it was on the
11 Myrtle Grove Plantation. We move in, we
12 move into Butts Street. Grandma
13 Williams was the only person, enslaved
14 person that I've ever talked to. And we
15 have, on Butts Street, we do have her
16 wash pot and we do have her pestle that
17 she used to use in the rice field. And
18 she was out of Kingsfield Plantation.
19 And on Butts Street we also have a house
20 that, now we had stated, and she used to
21 get this, oh, she used to get a pension
22 check. Guess what, that check was from
23 the Confederate. Her husband died in
24 the Confederate Army and that was her
25 pension money. And then I had an

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1 opportunity, I lived on Butts Street so
2 I have an opportunity to have spent many
3 days playing with Ernest Evans, that's
4 Chubby Checker. And I have, I do have a
5 picture. And the house, the foundation,
6 the house is gone but the foundation is
7 still here. Chubby came out of
8 Georgetown County, Spring Gulley; moved
9 on Butts Street. And from Butts Street
10 he moved into Philadelphia. When we go
11 up to the next street over we have
12 CAAHO. We used to call it the center.
13 That was also a school. We do not have
14 a historical marker there and hopefully
15 one day that we will get one there. It
16 had been many things and people always
17 say well it's the Band Room. It was
18 been, it has been many things, but I had
19 my second grade classes there. Then, on
20 that same street, at, across from the
21 CAAHO, the last black person that left
22 the House of Representatives, Mr. John
23 P., I think, P. Bolts. He lived there
24 and that, he was the last one; that was
25 in 1902. As we go further down the

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1 street, and each one of those streets in
2 that West End of Georgetown, I can give
3 you some history. And I don't want to
4 take up any time, but I'll be more than
5 glad to share whatever I have with the
6 community because I think that
7 Georgetown is very important. And the
8 other thing is: You need someone on this
9 committee, need to contact Joyce Cox.
10 She's been working on a book and she
11 connects everybody in Georgetown County.

12 MR. DRAYTON: You talk about Joseph
13 Rainey, one blessed thing is we have a
14 picture of Joseph Rainey, so we know
15 what Joseph Rainey looks like. We've
16 got a picture of John Bolts. We've got
17 a picture of a lot of the black, early
18 black politicians. One black
19 politician we don't have a picture of,
20 he was Superintendent of Education in
21 Georgetown for 22 years, from 1880 to
22 1908. I can't find a picture of him
23 anywhere, but I know he was a black man.
24 And those are some of the folk we have
25 that some people, who we can tell you

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1 their names, but we don't have a picture
2 or anything of them.

3 VIDEOGRAPHER: Please tell me your
4 name.

5 MS. RODRIGUES: He said it was David
6 Drayton.

7 MR. DRAYTON: David Drayton.

8 MR. RODRIGUES: Andrew Rodrigues. When
9 you keep talking about the North Santee
10 Road and you talk about the Santee River
11 you need to think about the fact that
12 when they were building the Santee
13 Canal, the general who came from Harlem
14 to build it could not find any
15 engineers, but yet they said that the
16 European settlers and planters were the
17 engineers who either quickly learned
18 engineering to be able to lay out all
19 those rice fields and whatnot. So when
20 we look at these things we see just the
21 opposite of what the history books say.
22 If he couldn't find any engineers, if he
23 had to rely on slaves to pretty much do
24 the engineering or at least do the job
25 they knew how to do, which is what

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1 happened during the early, 'specially
2 the Colonial period, when they were
3 introducing all their ideas. Now some
4 have mentioned something about the
5 history books. We've got to get to the
6 point where we stop protecting the
7 reputation of certain historians in this
8 state. By protecting their reputations
9 we do not tell the true story because
10 they have created a series of myths, and
11 you can't destroy those myths without
12 accusing them of either being a
13 plagiarist or being intellectually
14 dishonest. So we need, that needs to
15 happen so that then they can write the
16 true history. And once they write the
17 true history then you can merge that
18 true history into the history books that
19 they use. But right now what they claim
20 to be the history of the Gullah people,
21 the African-Americans in South Carolina
22 in the history books that are used is a
23 lot of misinformation. And think, what
24 another thing is: That in this county we
25 do not have one monument, not one, that

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1 talks about the contribution made by
2 enslaved Africans and Gullahs in the
3 creation of the rice culture and the
4 Indigo culture; it wasn't Europeans.
5 Believe me, it was enslaved Africans and
6 African red rice that created the rice
7 culture here. And I'll get into my
8 arguments with certain professional
9 historians, but they never say I'm
10 wrong; they only say certain people
11 didn't have access to certain
12 information or you need to write about
13 the laws of slavery because that's
14 something you might have a better
15 interest in. And the point is: They
16 don't disagree with me so by implication
17 or by inference they agree with me but
18 don't want to say so. So, what we need
19 to do is: Get the real history into the
20 history books. And this is part of the
21 responsibility here. And the other
22 thing is: To have a monument in the
23 county. I don't care where you put it
24 in the county, but there needs to be one
25 monument in here to show what the Gullah

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1 people have contributed. Because South
2 Carolina never would have had an
3 agricultural economy, which was their
4 only economy during the Colonial period,
5 but for the knowledge of enslaved
6 Africans with respect to rights in
7 Indigo. So, give some thought to that.

8 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Thank you, sir.
9 Anybody else?

10 MS. RODRIGUES: I would like to suggest
11 that you have a meeting at CAAHO. We
12 have a lot of history. Mr. Drayton,
13 Lilly Jean and Thelma, and there's some
14 other people that worked very hard. And
15 you ask the Commission to just get a lot
16 of information about just going into
17 that building. We have the information
18 packets right there and I think that we
19 need to do that.

20 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: I want to also add,
21 too, that you all talked about cultural,
22 we talked about historic; we talked
23 about preservation. We talked about the
24 buildings; we talked about sites. We
25 talked about monuments. We talked about

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1 historic markers and you also talked
2 about the natural environment. So I
3 just want you to know that you all are
4 tasked to everything we wanted to ask of
5 you because we want to hear information
6 about all those pieces. Because some
7 time we leave some of them out. But
8 through you all's conversation today,
9 you all hit all of the buttons. And
10 it's important that we talk about the
11 natural aspect of it all because that's
12 where the change is occurring. When you
13 all talked about places that you used to
14 have baptisms but now there may be a
15 house there. It could be the 18th green
16 for some places in the corridor. There
17 could be a bridge there, condominium
18 there, shopping center there, school
19 there. So it's important that as we
20 journey and have these conversations
21 that you pull out what you remember
22 seeing in the natural environment
23 because I think that's where the
24 challenge is, in preserving and
25 protecting the natural environment.

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1 Because the natural environment gave
2 light to everything else you all
3 described here. So I just want to
4 commend you all that in your dialogue
5 you all talked about the natural
6 environment. Because that's, that's
7 where really the battlefield is, is in
8 that natural world in terms of the
9 things that shape and mold you all. The
10 place that you raise children; the place
11 that you enjoy; the places you went to
12 bury individuals; the places that you
13 went for various things. And so I just
14 wanted to be very clear that anything
15 involving the natural environment is
16 important. And I would also add, too:
17 Being transparent and a part of our
18 responsibility is not only to engage you
19 all as the general public, but also
20 anyone sitting here today that's an
21 elected official representing the city,
22 county, federal, state and local
23 government, because at the end of the
24 day we want to be able to tell the
25 Secretary that we talked to everybody,

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1 but we're doing in a way that we're
2 listening, but city and county and state
3 government officials, we can't leave
4 them out because a lot of time that's
5 the, that's the second battlefield as to
6 the issues that you all described here
7 tonight. So I need to be very
8 transparent and very open that a part of
9 our journey is also engaging officials.
10 And one of the things that we're going
11 to really want is making sure we have
12 good conversations. Now, you all are
13 journeying through a process now of the
14 tragic event that happened on Sandy
15 Island a couple weeks ago. Those are
16 Gullah/Geechee people. I made it my
17 business to talk to some folks within
18 the county structure to make them aware
19 that we're concerned how that's going to
20 shake out. So at the end of the day
21 this Commission, or our involvement,
22 well we didn't worry about that. We
23 wouldn't be doing our job if we were not
24 concerned about it. And so I just
25 wanted you all to know that as we move

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1 from this place to other places along
2 the coast, these are the buttons that we
3 have to hit. Remember I said it: You
4 all are one of 50, but you're unique.
5 But in my travels I know that there are
6 other communities around the country
7 that desire to have the opportunity that
8 you all have here tonight. Many times
9 Veronica and I, or Nichole and I, we're
10 traveling on this path without a map.
11 I'm a mapmaker. We're charting it out
12 as we go along and these ladies here are
13 documenting our trip.

14 COURT REPORTER'S

15 NOTE: (Referring to
16 videographer and court reporter.)

17 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: So when future
18 generations or other areas around the
19 country, I know right now there are two
20 other major African-American groups
21 around the country desire what you have
22 here tonight. In Alabama, the black
23 belt, Central part of Alabama, they're
24 looking to move to where you all are
25 tonight. I traveled to Chicago last

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1 summer, to Blondesville, which is in the
2 south part of Chicago. They're looking
3 to travel where you all are tonight.
4 Both of them have threats because of the
5 opportunities of the future. The folks
6 in Blondesville now may be wiped out by
7 the 2016 Olympics. The Olympic
8 Commission is in Chicago right now as we
9 speak looking at the city. Now if you
10 travel to Atlanta and see where places
11 are being used, we lived there before
12 the Olympics got there. But they didn't
13 have the opportunity to have this
14 dialogue that you're having here
15 tonight. And so, again, I'm just adding
16 more understanding to why this is so
17 important.

18 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Thank you so much, and
19 thank all of you. Now, we have homework
20 for you. Did you get this comment card
21 as you came in?

22 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: It's inside the
23 newsletter.

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD: It's in the newsletter.
25 If you will, I don't know, we should

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1 have some extra.

2 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Inside the newsletter

3 there's a comment card.

4 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah. If they ---

5 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: There's a bunch in the

6 back.

7 COMMISSIONER GERALD: I want them to take

8 some. The gentleman mentioned a

9 grandmother or aunt ---

10 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: I'll get some in the

11 back.

12 COMMISSIONER GERALD: --- or other people, if

13 you will take some with you to those

14 people and engage them as we have

15 engaged you. We need a kitchen meeting

16 in each of your houses after dinner on

17 Sunday; you know that's what we do

18 anyway. And get these, let's blossom

19 out from this meeting more and ask them

20 some of the same questions that we asked

21 you. And then get that information back

22 to us. So even though there are 25 of

23 us here tonight, there could be 200, if

24 we use the old grapevine method. So

25 that's the homework. So if you'll get

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1 place where Shaggy was born, and those
2 kinds of things? So we got to think out
3 of the box if we're going to capitalize
4 on what is being done here. We are a
5 unique corridor that is attempting to
6 interpret a way of life of a people.
7 You know some of the heritage areas are
8 like, what is -- Name one that's like a,
9 just a place, Yellowstone Park or
10 something.

11 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Well, there's steel.
12 This whole industry of steel.

13 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah, see that, steel,
14 that's a thing, but we are a people, a
15 living people. This is amazing what's
16 happening to our culture. And I applaud
17 Zenobia because she's taking it a step
18 further. Because her stuff that she's
19 talking about is going to end up in
20 curriculum, so it's not just a
21 conversation that we're having in
22 Georgetown in old part Howard High. So
23 get some more of these. Take them;
24 let's make this 25, 200, and get it back
25 to us so that as we put these pieces

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1 together and make this gumbo soup that
2 it will be even better.

3 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: I just want to add:
4 Being transparent, is anyone here
5 representing any county, city or state
6 government; I need to ask that, or any
7 organizations or groups?

8 MS. JOHNSON: I'm here but I'm not
9 representing anybody ---

10 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Okay.

11 MS. JOHNSON: --- but Lilly Jean
12 Johnson.

13 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Okay.

14 MS. JOHNSON: I serve on County
15 Council.

16 COMMISSIONER GERALD: We can separate it.

17 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Okay. It's in your
18 blood so you count it.

19 MS. JOHNSON: (Inaudible.)

20 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: So I need to say that
21 because that's important because a part
22 of my journey and my report will be, not
23 only become public, but also an elected
24 official -- Part of this process, too.
25 Yes, sir.

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1 MR. VENTORS: I'm not an elected
2 official but I'm a professor of history
3 at Francis Marion University.
4 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Okay.
5 MR. VENTORS: And I work for the
6 Francis Marion Trail Commission.
7 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Okay. All right.
8 MR. WRAGG: I'm surprised that
9 Bunny didn't mention this but Francis
10 Marion, Francis Williams, we had a
11 nursing home on King Street before they
12 built the hospital for the, for the,
13 anybody, white or black, long as you was
14 poor. And getting back to you, you
15 mentioned the juke joint; we had 25 juke
16 joint from Hawkins Street to Highmarket
17 Street, and the main one was Hop Alley.
18 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Sticks.
19 MR. WRAGG: Huh?
20 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: When I was there it
21 was Sticks.
22 MR. WRAGG: Six, okay.
23 COMMISSIONER GERALD: You got to think out
24 of the box. You got, those places are a
25 part of the history.

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1 MR. WRAGG: History. I understand
2 Hop Alley a part of our history.

3 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And how many people had
4 events happen in those places?

5 MR. WRAGG: Oh, yeah.

6 COMMISSIONER GERALD: You know that. So one
7 story, history is real, you've got to
8 think out of the box with it. It's not
9 the traditional kind of thing you
10 learned that the Louisiana Purchase was
11 1803, and Columbus, none of that. But
12 what grew out of Sticks? How many
13 people did this man educate? How many
14 children of his went on to become
15 lawmakers and politicians and it's just,
16 the story has to be well thought out,
17 not just in a meeting.

18 MS. RODRIGUES: Can I trust the
19 National Park Service because you know
20 because sometime they says, well, you
21 know, might sound nice to us and then
22 when you all get to Washington you get
23 those charts and whatnot and you said
24 this doesn't mean anything. Because you
25 know when I look at this resource book -

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1 --

2 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Uh-huh (affirmative

3 response).

4 MS. RODRIGUES: --- and I do this all

5 the time. And I see where you got most

6 of your information from because you're

7 dealing, or you're just, you know,

8 thinking about just that particular area

9 ---

10 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Uh-huh (affirmative

11 response).

12 MS. RODRIGUES: --- you know?

13 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Uh-huh (affirmative

14 response).

15 MS. RODRIGUES: Okay. So I hope that

16 it does not happen this time.

17 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Let me speak to it.

18 She asked a good question.

19 MS. RODRIGUES: Because that's a

20 political ---

21 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Yes.

22 MS. RODRIGUES: --- thing.

23 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Yeah. Remember I said

24 we're traveling on a road that we're

25 charting the course; I didn't mention

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1 tonight but we have engaged the services
2 of a part of the Park Service called
3 Denver Service Center. They're part of
4 our agency that does management
5 planning, and they're the ones that
6 usually help craft us. Traditionally,
7 when they're a part of this journey,
8 they would be the one up here talking.
9 They're in Denver. So whatever we pull
10 together and submit to Denver, whatever
11 you send to Denver is utilized in the
12 scope and the scale that we set in
13 place. Because I've worked with the
14 agency long enough, and have connected
15 with it long enough, folks of authority
16 know that this is going to be a
17 challenge to the system. I don't have a
18 problem with it being on the tape
19 because I told the folks in D.C. that
20 very clearly, in Atlanta and in Denver.
21 In the agreement that's between the
22 Commission in Denver, we said very
23 clearly: This engagement of the public
24 of Gullah/Geechee history and culture is
25 unlike any public engagement that's ever

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1 been undertaken by the National Park
2 Service. That said, we even went to the
3 point into how we capture the data; how
4 it's going to be analyzed. The very
5 terminologies, am I right, ma'am?

6 COMMISSIONER GREEN: (Moving head up and
7 down.)

8 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: That we are using is
9 beyond what they're accustomed to. So
10 that's why we need your help. We've
11 already laid the foundation that we are
12 different; we're handling this
13 different. This is not the same normal
14 ballgame. And so that's why we're being
15 open to capture what you have so we can
16 set things in place, so those who come
17 behind us won't have to travel as we're
18 traveling here today. I asked, as I
19 asked you in 2000, to trust me. I
20 asked, as I asked you in 2000, am I
21 right, Bunny, to pray for me, I'm being
22 honest.

23 MS. RODRIGUES: And you know I will
24 call you.

25 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: And to call me, too.

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1 And so that's why we are at the place
2 that we are at tonight, to engage you
3 all in this endeavor, because we see
4 this as historic. We see this as
5 groundbreaking. And we see this as an
6 opportunity to put some things in place
7 that have not been put in place before.

8 MS. WASHINGTON: I'd like to say just
9 one other thing and I'll make it very
10 brief.

11 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: That's all right.

12 MS. WASHINGTON: I want to, I think that
13 this is a wonderful opportunity and I
14 think that it can be like the
15 cornerstone. But I would love to see
16 other things shoot out from this and not
17 for everybody to just wait to see how
18 this one particular entity is going to
19 perform. I mean there should be all
20 kinds of other initiatives that come
21 directly from the community, funded by
22 the community, created by the community
23 that don't necessarily have anything to
24 do with this, but could all tie in
25 together and support it. So it's not

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1 like we're just waiting for this to come
2 and support it.

3 COMMISSIONER GERALD: A good kitchen meeting.

4 MS. WASHINGTON: Exactly. And so there
5 can be buildings and museums and
6 monuments and all those things that we
7 are eventually going to be creating, and
8 then we could learn from you guys and
9 tap you guys and rack your brains to
10 figure out how we can do ---

11 COMMISSIONER GERALD: That's what we want.

12 MS. WASHINGTON: Exactly, all these
13 things, too, so I would love to be able
14 to see that and be a part of it and get
15 a lot of the young people involved in
16 it, too. One of the reasons why I think
17 that things like these are important is
18 because if the young people, which I'm
19 not anymore, 20 and 19 and 9, if they
20 know that it really means something
21 other than a history lesson that they
22 know that they can take it to do
23 something tomorrow or the next day, then
24 it will always, you won't always have to
25 keep jumpstarting it.

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1 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah. You can go up to
2 Walmart, and I went to Walmart in
3 Georgetown before I came to this meeting
4 and Gullah/Geechee people all over the
5 store. Challenge Walmart to give you
6 500 digital cameras and put it in the
7 hands of young people and send them out
8 to be, to the Aide Society Building to
9 where Sticks used to be; have them take
10 pictures of these sites. Give them
11 something to do.

12 MS. WASHINGTON: That lady right over
13 there, Ms. Dorothy, she has a son who
14 lives in Texas, who has an organization
15 called Preservation LINK. And that's
16 what he does: puts the cameras, puts
17 cameras in the hands of young people
18 and, and, and encourages them to be
19 sociologists through that realm.

20 COMMISSIONER GERALD: These kids know how to
21 do those things.

22 MS. WASHINGTON: You've got experience
23 all over this ---

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD: That's good.

25 MS. RODRIGUES: And he's done that

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from, through CAAHO.

MS. WASHINGTON: He's wonderful.

COMMISSIONER GERALD: Well from what you are saying in this short meeting and usually from our experience, this meeting only tipped, was just a tip of the iceberg. So from what we've heard, you need 500 cameras again. And these young people know what to do with that stuff. Now you might be thinking you're old and standing still and they know what to do. They know how to, my daughter was telling me, and this is totally ignorance on my part. She said that you can send a text message across the world.

COMMISSIONER GREEN: You didn't know that?

COMMISSIONER GERALD: No. I don't even text. I can't see.

COURT REPORTER'S

NOTE: (Audience chatter.)

COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah, I do it on the T.V. I mean on the computer. But my point is: These young kids know these things. They can take this project to

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1 another level. And I agree with you.
2 They can carry it to places where the
3 National Park Service Commissioners
4 never thought.

5 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: That's true.

6 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And so those kitchen
7 meetings that we're challenging you to
8 have and those, engaging young people
9 and just getting a breath of energy from
10 this meeting is what we're trying to do.
11 Because you know 25 people cannot record
12 the Gullah/Geechee Heritage Corridor;
13 that doesn't even make sense. It didn't
14 make sense when they said we needed a
15 25-member Commission. I'm like, huh?
16 My culture has boiled down to 25 people,
17 so you know it needs more. But I'm
18 going to let Nichole give you some
19 announcements and then I'll tell you a
20 message from Ron.

21 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay. Before I give
22 these announcements, I don't know if
23 Commissioner Gerald or Michael Allen
24 mentioned what the newsletter has
25 inside, but there's comment cards inside

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1 those newsletters that you picked up on
2 the tables outside with some questions
3 on it. You can fill those questions out
4 and just throw it in the mail, postage
5 free. You don't have to pay any
6 anything.

7 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: You already paid for
8 it.

9 COMMISSIONER GREEN: You already paid for
10 it. So just throw it in the mailbox and
11 we'll get that. Also, there's a ---

12 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: You can go online, too.

13 COMMISSIONER GREEN: You can go online and
14 our, the website address is on that
15 newsletter. You can go to the
16 Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage
17 Corridor Commission's website and also
18 answer those questions on our website.
19 And we get that information.

20 COMMISSIONER GERALD: If you don't do online,
21 Michael's number is there.

22 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Yes.

23 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Call Michael ---

24 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Call Michael.

25 COMMISSIONER GERALD: He can tell you what to

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do.

MS. JOHNSON: A comment. I just wanted to let you know I dutifully filled out the newsletter that I received in the mail and I hope it's not going to be thrown aside.

COMMISSIONER GREEN: Oh, no.

COMMISSIONER ALLEN: It won't be.

MS. JOHNSON: And I am so happy that Bunny brought up the point: verify, clarify and documenting and not rushing through this process. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Can I add? You brought up the fact of the newsletter. 7,000 newsletters were sent out from Wilmington, North Carolina to Jacksonville, Florida. The Park Service has never sent out 7,000 newsletters for anything, and they've been around for almost 80, 90 years.

MS. RODRIGUES: We are different.

COMMISSIONER ALLEN: That's how far I've pushed. That's how far I've pushed this process. Because people tell me, say: Well when you gone stop sending me your

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1 address? I said when people stop
2 sending me, I'll stop sending you. Send
3 the 7,000. Yeah, and some came back,
4 yes, we had a bad address; some people
5 were dead. That's a reality. I have a
6 bag of them, a box of them. And some
7 came back; that's a reality. But the
8 bottom line now, ma'am, is: 7,000 went
9 out.

10 MR. FUNNYE: Just quickly ---

11 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Identify yourself.

12 MR. FUNNYE: My name is Ray Funnye
13 and I'm from the country, Plantersville.

14 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Plantersville.

15 COURT REPORTER'S

16 NOTE: (Audience speaking same
17 time as Mr. Funney. Inaudible.)

18 MR. FUNNYE: And actually there's a
19 meeting scheduled for May for the folks
20 from Plantersville and Dunbar and other
21 places in the rural areas, and I just
22 wanted to come tonight to see what was
23 happening so I could better prepare my
24 people to come to our meetings ---

25 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: (Unintelligible.)

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1 MR. FUNNYE: Yeah, okay. And to see
2 what kind of questions were raised and
3 responses were given and shared. But I
4 think this is a great opportunity for us
5 to get together and collaborate. I'm
6 really interested in some of the details
7 my mom used to tell me from the
8 plantation. She'd walk from the
9 plantation all the way to her school,
10 which is some three, four miles every
11 morning and every afternoon. And there
12 was things that I think we should be
13 reminded of: the trails they had to walk
14 from plantations. And I'm a young guy.
15 My mom is 81-years old but she had those
16 memories. And, yeah, I think the
17 plantations are really monumental in my
18 community, because what developed from
19 the plantations; we had the villages.
20 We have villages now that we live in and
21 I think all of those could be really
22 something that we need to identify it in
23 the study, to identify those villages
24 and how we came from the agricultural
25 era to the industrial era. And what led

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1 from the families when we didn't have
2 farms no more. I think when we had
3 farms we had kids busy, being busy and
4 doing other things. Now the kids are
5 not doing anything and it really has had
6 some major impact on our community. And
7 so I just think this is great and I'm
8 looking forward to bringing other people
9 on May 7th to Bethel.

10 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Thank you, sir.

11 MS. CHARLENA JOHNSON: Hello, I'm Charlena B.
12 Johnson, Brave Johnson, and actually I
13 am just so excited to be here at this
14 forum tonight because truly it has
15 brought back so many memories, because I
16 can stand before you and say that I am
17 blessed to be an heir of an individual.
18 My grandfather was a rice grower. I
19 grew up off of South Island Road here in
20 Georgetown. We're called the Brave
21 Family; yes, the Brave Family Homestead.
22 There I know about rice. I know about
23 the growing of the rice. I know how it
24 is to help to gather that rice; store it
25 in the barn for the drying out process.

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1 How to use, I always called it, and I
2 think I told Bunny this: It was like it
3 was a huge log that was hollowed out on
4 the inside where you put the rice in
5 there and you took the pedal and you had
6 to beat ---

7 MS. RODRIGUES: Pestle.

8 MS. JOHNSON: --- the pestle and beat
9 it out of the hut. And once you went
10 through that process you scooped it out,
11 then you put it on the fanner. And you
12 had to do this so all of the husk would
13 come to the top. So it just really
14 brought back so many memories for me
15 tonight of my grandfather. My dad, who
16 after my grandfather passed, daddy, for
17 a period of time, continued to grow.
18 We, he didn't grow rice to sell it. He
19 grew it because I'm from a family of 13
20 children ---

21 MR. WRAGG: Yeah.

22 MS. JOHNSON: --- and of course I
23 grew up at a time where whatever we grew
24 it wasn't necessarily to be sold. But
25 we gave it away throughout the community

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1 ---

2 MS. RODRIGUES: That's right.

3 MS. JOHNSON: --- to help other

4 families.

5 MS. RODRIGUES: Always.

6 MS. JOHNSON: So I am just so happy

7 to be here tonight and I will certainly

8 be passing the word about the forum

9 because I think several years ago,

10 Bunny, I think you started with these

11 forums. But I certainly will pass the

12 word along, and thanks for bringing back

13 the memory of the rice wine, too.

14 COURT REPORTER'S

15 NOTE: (Audience laughter and

16 chatter.)

17 MS. RODRIGUES: Always had that.

18 COMMISSIONER GREEN: That's going to be

19 Friday or Saturday?

20 MS. RODRIGUES: Saturday.

21 COURT REPORTER'S

22 NOTE: (Audience laughter and

23 chatter.)

24 MS. RODRIGUES: Mind you, it's a dry

25 wine.

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1 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay.

2 MS. RODRIGUES: Actually, I'm glad that
3 people are coming in and they're talking
4 because a lot of times you think of all
5 the history -- We have let people say
6 all of the history is in the Beaufort,
7 or all the history is on the island and
8 you know like Mr. Drayton told me a long
9 time ago, only 10 percent of the Gullah
10 people lived on the Sea Island, okay?
11 And I hope the Commission learned
12 something tonight. And we, you talk
13 about information, this place has never
14 been touched because you're always
15 running down there to the other place.

16 COURT REPORTER'S

17 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

18 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Okay. I just wanted
19 to bring your attention to four more
20 meetings we're having in Horry and
21 Georgetown Counties, and also northern
22 Charleston County, because our next
23 meeting is in my hometown, the little
24 village of McClellanville. And when we
25 were getting these ---

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1 MR. WRAGG: It's on the map?
2 COURT REPORTER'S
3 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)
4 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Yes. It's on the map
5 now. And when we were organizing these
6 meetings, Commissioner Gerald,
7 Commissioner Daise, Horry and Georgetown
8 Counties now, and thinking about that
9 area, but I wanted to include
10 McClellanville because growing up there
11 we came here when we needed to go
12 shopping or get anything. So ---
13 MS. RODRIGUES: Walmart.
14 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Exactly. Because my
15 mom was still in Walmart one night; I
16 think last week sometime I called her,
17 and she's still in McClellanville. I'm
18 in Charleston now. So I was trying to
19 reach her and didn't; she wasn't picking
20 up the phone. So I called Walmart and
21 asked them to say her name over the
22 intercom. 11:00 at night; still at
23 Super Walmart. So she came; she said
24 and "What you want?" And I just said,
25 "I was trying to reach you." So ---

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1 COURT REPORTER'S

2 NOTE: (Audience chatter.)

3 COMMISSIONER GREEN: So, and as we were
4 talking tonight and many people
5 mentioned these communities along the
6 North Santee River. Well where I come
7 from, my ancestors were from plantations
8 along the South Santee River and there
9 was a lot of mingling back and forth.
10 But Harietta, Hampton Plantation ---

11 MR. WRAGG: Seewee.

12 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Yes, that area. All
13 of those plantations, they migrated
14 into, you know, the South Santee and
15 then into McClellanville. So that,
16 those are the places where my ancestors
17 came from.

18 MS. RODRIGUES: A lot of them came to
19 the Bethel A.M.E. Church. I had a
20 girlfriend that her grandfather, out of
21 Hampton, they had to take the ferry and
22 then walk all the way down.

23 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Uh-huh (affirmative
24 response). Yes. Yes. Definitely. So
25 that, our next meeting is going to be on

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1 Monday, April 27th, from 7 to 8:30 and
2 that's going to be at Bethel A.M.E.
3 Church, McClellanville, on Society Road.
4 We also have a meeting Tuesday, April
5 28th, that next night; that's going to
6 be at Bethel A.M.E. Church in Conway;
7 again, still 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Then May
8 5th, Tuesday, May 5th, 7 to 8:30 we're
9 holding a public input meeting at
10 Atlantic Beach Community Center on 32nd
11 Avenue South in Atlantic Beach. And
12 then coming back together in Georgetown
13 on May 14th, Thursday, May 14th, 6:30
14 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Bethel A.M.E. Church
15 here on Broad Street in Georgetown. And
16 that's, we're really reaching out. And
17 I want to see all of you who came
18 tonight there again, and also reaching
19 out to those community members from
20 Choppee and Sampit and Plantersville and
21 Andrews and all of these other
22 communities that we heard about tonight.
23 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And wanted to make
24 sure that you know that the meeting on
25 the 14th is going to, all the

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1 Commissioners are going to be here for
2 that meeting, all 25. So you can come
3 and get to meet everybody and make your
4 points so everybody hears them, not just
5 ---

6 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Then the next day
7 you're at a business meeting and
8 everybody is welcome.

9 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And then the next day
10 we have a business meeting and the
11 public is welcome to come into the
12 business meeting that we're having. So
13 we're trying to be ---

14 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Transparent.

15 COMMISSIONER GERALD: --- transparent so that
16 everyone knows what we're doing. Well
17 we're getting ready to close. I just
18 wanted to invite you to our reception.

19 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: What time is the
20 meeting at the ---

21 COMMISSIONER GERALD: All of them are 7 to
22 8:30.

23 Unidentified female: Okay.

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Keep it simple and ---

25 COMMISSIONER GREEN: The last one at Bethel

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1 is 6:30, 6:30 to 8.
2 COURT REPORTER'S
3 NOTE: (Audience chatter.)
4 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Our meeting on
5 Thursday, May 14th at Bethel; that's
6 going to be 6:30 to 8, so we're starting
7 a little bit, 30 minutes earlier.
8 MR. WRAGG: Get me my glasses on.
9 COMMISSIONER GERALD: I got to have them.
10 That's another thing: your mind start
11 going bad. Our reception, I must
12 announce, is sponsored by the Georgetown
13 Chamber of Commerce ---
14 MR. WRAGG: Wow.
15 COMMISSIONER GERALD: --- has spread for the
16 reception tonight. And also Ron Daise,
17 who worked so much with getting this
18 meeting together, his father-in-law
19 passed on Tuesday morning. And so he
20 had to be with his wife and his kids.
21 And he wanted, he must have said it four
22 times, "Be sure to tell them I'm sorry."
23 And so he wants to send, let you know
24 that he's not here for that reason. And
25 I know you send him your prayers and

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1 strength for that. Want to say that
2 after you get your reception, go through
3 the reception, you can come in and just
4 take a quick, a more closer look at the
5 panels. Really you need to know as you
6 go out to spread the word, you kind of
7 need to know the terms: heritage area,
8 corridor. As a matter of fact, our logo
9 is the actual corridor itself, so
10 whenever you get your publications and
11 you see the logo for the Commission, it
12 is the corridor. Just kind of look at
13 where Gullah/Geechee people lived, and
14 30 miles inland. And really it's more
15 than 30 miles inland. It goes on up to
16 Sumter. Sumter has the largest Gullah
17 community I've ever seen. Eat more rice
18 than the law allow and then they'll come
19 to your presentations and who are the
20 Gullah people? You.

21 COURT REPORTER'S

22 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

23 COMMISSIONER GERALD: What was your point?

24 MS. RODRIGUES: The Gullah is far as
25 Erngeberg. (Phonetically spelled.)

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1 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Erngeborg.
2 (Phonetically spelled.)
3 COURT REPORTER'S
4 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)
5 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Good, gracious. So the
6 Gullah/Geechee Culture goes wherever its
7 bearers take it. Mr. Wragg, you grew up
8 in New York; you've met plenty of
9 Gullah/Geechee people. I mean you've
10 lived in New York for a long time. You
11 grew up with Bunny on Butts Street; I'm
12 sorry.
13 MR. WRAGG: Yeah. She can't get me
14 into it.
15 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah. Anyway, is there
16 anything else you want to bring before
17 we dismiss?
18 MS. CARR: I want to ask a
19 question.
20 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yes, ma'am.
21 MS. CARR: When you say Santee
22 Road, is it still called Santee Road,
23 because I don't know.
24 MS. RODRIGUES: Santee, North Santee
25 River Road.

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1 MS. CARR: Huh?

2 MR. WRAGG: Come by my house and
3 I'll take you there.

4 MS. RODRIGUES: North Santee River
5 Road.

6 MS. CARR: Okay. Because I don't
7 know, I don't know very much about that
8 ---

9 MS. RODRIGUES: It's right off, it's
10 right off of 17. It's the last, before
11 ---

12 MR. DRAYTON: Before you get to the
13 bridge.

14 MS. RODRIGUES: Before you get to the
15 bridge.

16 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And that might be
17 something, you might want to take
18 Bunny's tour. And actually, it wouldn't
19 hurt to go on the tour ---

20 MS. CARR: I'd just love to go ---

21 COMMISSIONER GERALD: --- because what
22 happens when you go on the tour is your
23 mind starts to moving. So that wouldn't
24 hurt at all. Any other comments for the
25 good of the order?

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1 MS. CARR: I just want to thank
2 you for this opportunity because I
3 remember when I was a girl we didn't, we
4 thought that Gullah was a bad language,
5 bad English. You didn't want to say
6 Gullah/Geechee. I'm no Geechee.

7 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah.

8 MS. CARR: Everyone that used to
9 call us; they say well you from down
10 there where they eat gator tails and
11 rice.

12 MS. RODRIGUES: And gator tail is good,
13 too.

14 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Yeah. That's why you
15 still look 50 and in the same class.
16 That's why ---

17 COURT REPORTER'S

18 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

19 Ms. RODRIGUES: But they made us
20 ashamed.

21 MR. WRAGG: I used to thought
22 Gullah people was, in reality I thought
23 it was on the Atlantic Ocean, you know.
24 When you go to Sumter, I didn't think
25 they was no Geechee.

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1 COMMISSIONER GERALD: They don't think so
2 either.

3 MR. WRAGG: Yeah, but I'm thinking,
4 look, when they brought them slave over
5 there from Africa, where the first place
6 they brought them at? To Charleston.

7 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Charleston.

8 MR. WRAGG: And then they, they
9 come back and people coming by and they
10 take them, take them, put all of them
11 right on this Atlantic coastline ---

12 COMMISSIONER GERALD: You go up there ---

13 MR. WRAGG: --- right on up by
14 Wilmington.

15 COMMISSIONER GERALD: You go up there and you
16 see more split in the front tooth than
17 the law allow.

18 COURT REPORTER'S

19 NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

20 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Anyway, on behalf of
21 Michael Allen and the National Park
22 Service and Nichole Green, my fellow
23 Commissioner and myself, we certainly
24 appreciate it. And we challenge you
25 again to help spread what we're doing

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1 here so we can get a real good picture.
2 Because we're tired of looking, you
3 know, Gullah Culture is located in
4 tourism areas. And you've got to be
5 careful with tourism areas because what
6 they're going to do is: Tap into your
7 culture and draw those things out that
8 sell.

9 MS. RODRIGUES: That's right.

10 COMMISSIONER GERALD: So if you want to be
11 sold ---

12 MS. RODRIGUES: That's what they're
13 doing now.

14 COMMISSIONER GERALD: If you want to be sold,
15 you keep these meetings real small like
16 this where nobody goes but two or three
17 people. But if you want to interpret
18 your own culture, you pack an auditorium
19 like this. You go and tell them: Get
20 there; we need you because they're
21 selling us down the river. They're,
22 every brochure that comes out of this
23 state has one of our baskets on it, but
24 we're still poor and unemployed. But
25 that's another meeting, isn't it?

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COURT REPORTER'S

NOTE: (Audience laughter.)

COMMISSIONER GERALD: And anyway, thank you
so much and we invite you to partake in
the refreshments that we have for you
and please come back in and talk more to
each other and look at the panels, or go
home.

(The meeting concluded at 8:45 p.m.)

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