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4 GULLAH/GEECHEE  
5 CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR  
6

7 PUBLIC INPUT MEETING  
8

9 JUNE 26, 2009, 6:30 P.M.  
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16 THE SAMS MEMORIAL CHURCH OF GOD  
17 DARIEN, GEORGIA  
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1 MEETING DISCUSSION

2 MS. CYRIAQUE: Good evening.

3 THE AUDIENCE: Good evening.

4 MS. CYRIAQUE: Thanks for coming out on  
5 this hot night in Darien. I'm Jeanne Cyriaque,  
6 and I'm secretary of the Gullah/Geechee  
7 Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, and I'm  
8 also a commissioner from Georgia.

9 I'd like to introduce you to my other two  
10 commissioners; Althea Sumpter and Jamal Toure.  
11 And we'd like to welcome you to this public  
12 meeting.

13 For the past month, we've been having  
14 small public gatherings like this around the  
15 corridor, and we'd like to use these meetings  
16 as an opportunity to meet people from the  
17 various cities and towns in our area of the  
18 corridor.

19 The purpose of the meeting is because we  
20 are now doing a management plan for this  
21 national heritage area. So let me kind of  
22 bring you up-to-date on what has happened since  
23 2006.

24 In '06, we received a designation from  
25 Congress that designated Wilmington, North

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2 Carolina all the way down to Jacksonville,  
3 Florida, all the barrier islands, and 30 miles  
4 inland as the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage  
5 Corridor.

6 And since '06, the first thing that had to  
7 happen with the new national heritage area is  
8 to have some type of body to oversee what is  
9 going to happen in it.

10 And so the act specified that we create a  
11 commission for this heritage corridor that was  
12 comprised of people from the four states. So  
13 all four states; North Carolina, South  
14 Carolina, Georgia and Florida, we went through  
15 a process of about six months of seeking people  
16 to apply to be members of this commission.

17 This happened throughout all the corridor  
18 and 24 people were originally named to the  
19 commission of which the three of us are part of  
20 that. Once the commission was formed, which  
21 was in -- right after October '07, it took  
22 about a year for all of that happen.

23 Then we had to get right down to the  
24 business of what our purpose was. And when you  
25 are building a national heritage area, almost

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2 as soon as you get designated, you have to  
3 begin a planning process whereby you say what  
4 the blueprint is, what our heritage area is  
5 supposed to look like.

6 So unfortunately with our corridor, about  
7 as soon as we got designated, all of the press  
8 all up and along the corridor said that we got  
9 a \$1,000,000 from Congress.

10 Well, I'm here to tell you that's not how  
11 it worked. There's no national heritage area  
12 -- there are over 40 now -- that has received  
13 \$1,000,000 a year from Congress. That's the  
14 ideal.

15 Some of more experienced heritage areas  
16 have received up to \$700,000 or thereabouts,  
17 but they have been in business a while. We're  
18 a new commission and we're just getting  
19 started.

20 So our first and second year, we have  
21 received from Congress \$147,000. Now, we're  
22 hopeful that there will come a time in the life  
23 of this heritage area, which is generally 10 to  
24 15 years, that we will receive more money from  
25 Congress, and we will be in a position to

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2 offset and create grant programs to  
3 organizations, and hopefully give that back to  
4 the organizations that do the work in the  
5 heritage area.

6 But we're not there yet. So the purpose  
7 of these meetings is for us to now hear from  
8 the people that live in the corridor. What is  
9 it that's important to you to preserve?

10 What sites are important? What cultural  
11 resources are important to the corridor. So  
12 that's what we're going to do tonight. You're  
13 not going hear me up here talking a long time,  
14 because we want you to come to the mic and say  
15 what you're doing.

16 So that's what we want to hear tonight and  
17 I'd like Reverend Lotson to come and give us a  
18 prayer before we get started, and then we'd  
19 just like people to come to the mic and say  
20 what your vision is of this corridor and what  
21 it is you would like to do.

22 (Prayer)

23 REVEREND LOTSON: Just briefly, the  
24 Chairman of the County Commission, Boyd Gualt  
25 was going to be here, and his wife reminded him

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2 that he had a grandchild graduating. So he did  
3 send a letter for the secretary -- you can  
4 possibly read that because he really, up  
5 until today, he was going to be here.

6 He just apologized and apologized. Eunice  
7 Moore of City Council, which is a direct  
8 descendant from the Bin Yah through her family,  
9 and she also called. And there was a wake this  
10 afternoon. One of the fathers of this  
11 community had passed. And of course, I decided  
12 to be here and go to the funeral tomorrow.

13 So Eunice Moore wanted to offer that too,  
14 city councilwoman, she served as a delegate  
15 for the City Council of Darien. So thank you.

16 MS. CYRIAQUE: So we have a court reporter  
17 here and a videographer. So when you come to  
18 the mic, if you could just state your name.  
19 They will capture all the information and what  
20 you have to say, because we have to turn in  
21 this data to our consultants who are doing the  
22 management plan. So who is going to go first?

23 MR. BACOTE: I want to say something  
24 first.

25 MS. CYRIAQUE: Okay. Can you go back --

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2 MR. BACOTE: Yes, I can.

3 MS. CYRIAQUE: Or you can use this --  
4 would you rather us bring mics to you?

5 MS. SUMPTER: One thing we would like for  
6 you to do is we can carry this around to  
7 anybody who wants to speak and raise your  
8 hand, but we ask that you give your name before  
9 you start to speak, so that we know exactly how  
10 to record your interest, your concern.

11 MR. BACOTE: Good evening. My name is Jim  
12 Bacote and -- good evening. My name is Jim  
13 Bacote, and for the record I would like to  
14 first state that no sour grapes.

15 I think we might be just getting a little  
16 ahead of ourselves, because we're proceeding  
17 with a management plan when we don't have a  
18 full allotment of commissioners for the State  
19 of Georgia.

20 And as a citizen of Liberty County with  
21 connections in all six of the coastal Geechee  
22 Counties in Georgia, we feel grossly  
23 underrepresented. And I think we might -- this  
24 commission might be proceeding a little too  
25 fast with a management plan, when we're not

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2 even fully staffed for all the heads that will  
3 be collaborating within the commission as a  
4 whole to make decisions on this management  
5 plan.

6 And I think that at one point the  
7 Honorable Mr. Clyburn said sour grapes about  
8 who is not on the commission. I'd like to  
9 state for the record that there are no sour  
10 grapes. I am for working with Jeanne, Jamal  
11 for the success of this commission, but my  
12 problem is not at all who is not on the  
13 commission, but it is who is on the commission,  
14 and who is on the commission should be  
15 individuals who are involved and are  
16 representative of the Geechee community and our  
17 interests.

18 So I'm just thinking that maybe we need to  
19 address that, at least proceed with a full  
20 deck, if Georgia is going to be a like adequate  
21 part of it, you know, when even some of the  
22 selected commissioners don't have time to even  
23 be here to see what's happening.

24 I think that maybe that needs to be  
25 addressed. If I'm out of order, I certainly



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2 apologize, but I did want to put that in for  
3 the record that I think, you know, that's a  
4 little shaky. Thank y'all and I'll say some  
5 other stuff later after we get this issue  
6 straight. Thank y'all.

7 MS. CYRIAQUE: We usually don't respond to  
8 what people bring up at the meetings. It is  
9 your time to talk, but the structure of the  
10 commission is such that 15 commissioners were  
11 appointed and nine alternates.

12 Since we got started, which has been now a  
13 year, there have been some people who have left  
14 the commission. And currently we have -- we do  
15 have an alternate vacancy in Georgia.

16 In Florida, we have a commissioner  
17 vacancy, and in North Carolina we have  
18 alternate vacancy. Currently, we are not able  
19 to fill these because there has been a change  
20 in the federal government, and the Obama  
21 Administration is reviewing not only our  
22 commission, but all federal commissions. As  
23 soon as we have the go ahead, each state will  
24 move forward to fill those positions.

25 MS. BROWN: My name is Elaine Brown, and

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2 I'm living in Savannah, and I want to follow up  
3 on what Jim Bacote just said because I'm not --  
4 I don't think we have to make any apology about  
5 questioning the structure, because none of us  
6 knew how the vote went down.

7 We don't know to this minute how anybody  
8 got elected. But I certainly advocated for,  
9 and Jim doesn't want me to say his name, but  
10 I'm prepared to say I advocated for Jim  
11 Bacote because I'm a member of the Geechee  
12 Council of which he is the co-director, as well  
13 as the Executive Director of Geechee Kunda, but  
14 the kind of work that this man has done, and  
15 the international relations that he has built  
16 up on the continent, and the kinds of relations  
17 he has within the State of Georgia can't be set  
18 aside, whatever the Obama -- I don't see any  
19 record anywhere that the Obama Administration  
20 had said we can't forward with voting on the  
21 commission.

22 So I'd have to see some documentation to  
23 support that. The same concept, when there was  
24 an election, it went on in Atlanta. Nobody  
25 even knew how that election took place. So

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2 it's not a question of sour grapes or any other  
3 thing. There's a question of how did some  
4 people become members of this commission and  
5 others were not?

6 We don't even know how that vote took  
7 place, and this has to be open. And so we -- I  
8 except that as an order of business, and I will  
9 raise this whether you comment on it or not, it  
10 doesn't matter, but I think it's an order of  
11 business.

12 And for the record that this is -- this is  
13 not going to be legitimized -- this doesn't  
14 help us if we can't have a process that's open  
15 to the community, and open and fair where we  
16 understand what the vote is, and when the vote  
17 goes down, and who's voting for whom, because  
18 in Georgia we haven't even had the Georgia  
19 representative at the Georgia meetings.

20 MS. CYRIAQUE: I have been present at --

21 MS. BROWN: No, you have. You have been  
22 present, but everybody in -- from the Georgia  
23 commission -- committee members have -- has not  
24 been here.

25 And so I think that we're saying that we

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2 feel underrepresented, because our voices are  
3 not being heard. And there's a community here  
4 throughout here that -- for example, there's  
5 almost nobody here. So there needs to be a  
6 broadening of contribution communicated to the  
7 community, and there needs to be that, but I am  
8 for the record stating that I would like to see  
9 a vote taken.

10 I would like to have that position filled  
11 as soon as possible. I would like to see  
12 something that supports the notion that the  
13 Obama Administration has somehow shut down all  
14 possible voting here, and let us fill our spot,  
15 because how can you go forward, if the Obama  
16 Administration has put everything on hold?

17 We can't go forward even tonight. So I  
18 think that's probably -- probably maybe a  
19 mischaracterization of whatever situation may  
20 be due to the new administration.

21 I can't imagine that Obama's is going to  
22 be more restrictive than the Bush  
23 Administration, so I would imagine we'll have  
24 even more open possibilities --pardon?

25 MS. McINTOSH: Here, here -- I just was

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2 saying here here.

3 MS. BROWN: Oh, I'm sorry. And so the  
4 bottom line is we have to have people  
5 representing this community, who have the kind  
6 of respect of the community, that are going to  
7 do the work to get -- move an agenda forward.

8 And I don't think that we can talk about  
9 an agenda until we can talk about getting  
10 participation and getting these -- this other  
11 alternate, if that's all that's left is the  
12 alternate.

13 And what are the criteria for -- for  
14 membership, and are these things spelled out?  
15 What are the duties and responsibilities of  
16 commissioners and so forth? So I do think that  
17 that is an important piece, and I just wanted  
18 to -- to echo that. And I also want to make  
19 the record that I want to nominate, for  
20 whenever this process takes place, I want to  
21 put back Jim Bacote's name into this -- into  
22 the process, so that he can be considered as a  
23 serious and one of the best candidates that  
24 could possibly be on the commission for  
25 Georgia. Thank you.

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2 MS. COLLINS: Good evening. Can you hear  
3 me without the mic?

4 THE AUDIENCE: No.

5 MS. COLLINS: Okay. Anita Collins is my  
6 name, and it's good to see you. I have many  
7 concerns about the Gullah/Geechee Cultural  
8 Heritage Corridor. One of my concerns is for  
9 Georgia, this is my first meeting, but Elaine  
10 Brown has commented on one of them, and that is  
11 if we don't even have all the Georgia delegates  
12 in attendance, that concerns me greatly.

13 If you are supposed to be a commissioner  
14 representing the State of Georgia, why is it  
15 you can't be present at a meeting that is  
16 convened for the Coastal Georgia?

17 The other concerns that I have are the  
18 National Park Services intervention in the  
19 process. Why is it that everything I see has  
20 to have Michael Allen's name on it, rather than  
21 the officers of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural  
22 Heritage Corridor.

23 The National Park Service, as far as I'm  
24 concerned, really has no business with what we  
25 are about as Gullah/Geechee. We are not going

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2 to be in a museum, or in a box, a glass cage  
3 where you come and look at us, and then you  
4 leave and say oh, wasn't that beautiful?

5 This is not what our culture is about.  
6 This is not the story that we want to be told.  
7 Another concern that I have is I don't know  
8 what lead time was given in terms of organizing  
9 these meetings so the word could be gotten  
10 about, that's a grave concern that I have.

11 Another concern I have is where in Georgia  
12 are you going? You were in Savannah. Now  
13 you're in McIntosh. Where do you go next? I  
14 know you go to Sapelo tomorrow. Where do you  
15 go from there?

16 MS. CYRIAQUE: We were going to plan on a  
17 meeting in your hometown.

18 MS. COLLINS: And I thought June 30th was  
19 supposed to be the deadline for public input.  
20 So if June 30th is not the deadline for public  
21 input, if your -- if the schedule that you've  
22 outlined in your first newsletter has changed,  
23 whether you provide feedback or not, I would  
24 like that addressed. And I have several other  
25 comments, but I'll wait and allow someone else

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2 to --

3 MR. TOURE: I'm going to interrupt you on  
4 that. We have that occur at Montgomery. If  
5 you have some comments, I'm going to say this,  
6 because there's a time sequence that we're  
7 dealing with right now. So if you have got  
8 some comments, you need to make the comment  
9 now.

10 So that way we don't have any problems.  
11 So that's why again, don't wait to make a  
12 comment. So I'm asking you, I'm almost begging  
13 you, if you have some comment do it now. If  
14 not, then someone else take the mic.

15 We have some folks doing a lot of talking,  
16 so when it came down to someone making a  
17 comment, it was 8:00 o'clock. It ended. So --

18 MS. COLLINS: Okay. I can take the whole  
19 meeting if that's the case. Okay. I shared a  
20 couple points. Okay. I looked at the bios of  
21 all the people who are on the Cultural  
22 Heritage Corridor Commission, and one of the  
23 questions that I had was where are the plain  
24 folk. Because when I looked at the bios, I saw  
25 a lot of people who are just going to publish



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2 books, publish some videos, and get some money  
3 and run with it. And I'm not going to  
4 apologize. I mean, I think education is a  
5 wonderful thing.

6 I'm educated, but when I look at it, I  
7 don't see my grandmama on that commission, and  
8 she had many stories to tell. Okay. I don't  
9 see Mrs. Watts, who made beautiful quilts.

10 For those of you in McIntosh County, she  
11 was Ms. Riles before she became Mrs. Watts. So  
12 in other words what I'm saying is, I mean hey,  
13 I don't have a problem with people having  
14 doctorates. I don't have a problem with people  
15 having master's degrees, but when I look at the  
16 commission and I mean all of the commissioners,  
17 the people with the Phds, hey, it's tilted.  
18 The scale is this way.

19 The Phds are the ones up here and the ones  
20 with less than a Phd are not. I would prefer  
21 that we have a commission that was not so  
22 heavily university-controlled.

23 Because if they're universitycontrolled,  
24 then they speak on behalf of the university,  
25 because otherwise they don't get tenure to be

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2 correct.

3 If you have a grassroot's person who are  
4 speaking on behalf of us Gullah/Geechee, they  
5 will speak that grassroots perspective, and  
6 they will not be tied to whether their job is  
7 being threatened.

8 I also would like to share that we are  
9 about a movement. We are about uncovering a  
10 lot of dirt that has been covered on us,  
11 because when I was in school we couldn't speak  
12 in the Geechee tongue. It was removed from us.

13 Amy knows what I'm talking about. I mean  
14 we -- so we lost it, and we're in the process  
15 of now trying to reclaim what is our story and  
16 what is our heritage.

17 And that is so important for us, and in  
18 doing so, we don't need a process to be put in  
19 place wherein you don't reach out to us. And  
20 that is what I would like to see more of,  
21 reaching out, going to us. That may even  
22 entail not just having a meeting at Sams  
23 Memorial.

24 That may entail going down to the juke  
25 joint, okay, to hear some real people. That

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2 may ultimately entail going around to the  
3 corner where the brothers are standing around  
4 that -- what is that -- 50 barrel drum, you  
5 know. They may be drinking their malt liquor  
6 or whatever, but listen to them and talk to  
7 them, because they are our heartbeat, and they  
8 should not be discounted or ignored because  
9 they have some stories to tell.

10 Now, I know y'all want to find in terms of  
11 what should be restored, what should be kept.  
12 Well, all of it should be kept, in terms of  
13 what has happened to us as a people.

14 In my community, Brunswick, Georgia, we  
15 launched an effort to try to save a gymnasium,  
16 Seldin Park Gym. That was built by  
17 Gullah/Geechee hands.

18 That didn't happen. It was not preserved.  
19 It was torn down, and when that building was  
20 torn down it sucked the life out of Seldin  
21 Park, literally sucked the life out of Seldin  
22 Park.

23 When I talked to a woman at Wal-Mart two  
24 days ago, she was able to tell me who lived  
25 here, who lived there. Where is this being

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2 maintained, because we have stories, we have --  
3 we can remember, but we are at a point, all of  
4 us in this room, we are on the downside.

5 By that I mean our years left on this  
6 planet are diminishing. Okay.

7 Where -- where are the artifacts? We have  
8 tremendous artifacts right in our homes;  
9 letters, pictures, bibles. All of that is a  
10 part of our story, but do we just want to be  
11 somebody sitting in a glass cage, where you pay  
12 come and pay a fee, oh, isn't that cute like at  
13 Hawkwood, talking about a rice plantation.

14 I'm not knocking Hawkwood, but  
15 Gee Willikers, I mean come on. It's more than  
16 that. It's about -- it's about the blood  
17 that's running through our veins.

18 It's about the fact that when that whip,  
19 the lashes from the -- what is it, the whip  
20 that is penetrating into us how we overcame  
21 that and what we offer and what we can  
22 contribute. So, with that I'll have to take  
23 a seat.

24 MS. SUMPTER: Okay. No, I really  
25 appreciate your concerns. And because I lived

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2 that concern as well. And because I'm from St.  
3 Helena Island, South Carolina, with my  
4 grandmother and growing up, and not having to  
5 deal with islands and all this sort of holding  
6 on to the land, and everything you have already  
7 mentioned.

8 That's why there are quite a number of us  
9 who are scholars, who are also Gullahs,  
10 Gullah/Geechee. And all of us -- I think just  
11 about all of who are academics are from the  
12 islands. And so we wear that hat, so we can be  
13 able to help to broach both areas for all of  
14 our concerns, so that we know how to walk  
15 between two worlds, and that world which is  
16 from the islands which is about us, and also  
17 about being able to interpret for our long-term  
18 understanding about our culture.

19 So I will live with that concern as a  
20 Gullah person from St. Helena Island. And what  
21 we're trying to do, I do appreciate what you  
22 said, and what we'd really like to do is to  
23 hear about those things. Like I grew up at St.  
24 Helena knowing and understanding that this  
25 particular praise house is what I'm concerned

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2 about and want to know and make sure is going  
3 to be part of the inventory to keep, so that we  
4 know that when some city, municipality wants to  
5 come through and widen a road -- no, they can't  
6 do that, because this is what is part of our  
7 culture and this is who we are.

8 We want to know about this particular  
9 house, where it has been part of where, you  
10 know, the doctor who has lived in and been part  
11 of our community and taken care of us, because  
12 this is all we had to do to go to this doctor's  
13 house, this nurse -- this -- my grandmother was  
14 a midwife.

15 My grandmother's house was where a lot of  
16 people came to because there was no doctor in  
17 the county to take care of us. We want to know  
18 about those things that are your concern,  
19 because I know and I understand, and as a  
20 commissioner and we have a full commission --  
21 we have a full commission in Georgia. We're  
22 one of the places with a full commission.

23 MS. BROWN: No, you don't.

24 MS. SUMPTER: We have --

25 MS. BROWN: Everybody hasn't been there.

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2 MS. SUMPTER: -- and we're all volunteers.  
3 And so as volunteers we don't get paid to do  
4 this. We also have keep our jobs and try to  
5 rotate and help each other out in making this  
6 entire commission work.

7 So as we help each other go through these  
8 public input gatherings, we really would like  
9 to hear from communities, and hear from people  
10 who want to make sure that you contribute, you  
11 contribute to those places, those areas, those  
12 concerns that you want to have us make sure not  
13 only we know about, but the municipalities know  
14 about, so they don't come around and knock  
15 things down and because it's some old building.  
16 And, you know, that's what we want to know  
17 about. So does -- anybody would like to speak?

18 MS. ROSS: Yes. My name is Joann Ross  
19 and I'm a Darien Geechee, Gullah/Geechee  
20 Shouter.

21 But I've heard kind of the same things I'm  
22 here tonight. We appreciate the commission and  
23 you're greatly appreciated. But I think what's  
24 been missing is that in the small neighborhoods  
25 like -- like we have here in Darien and the

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2 surrounding areas, we have a lot of history.

3 I had one lady come to look at my son's  
4 artwork. And I just happen to mention that oh,  
5 my son draws. So from that he has -- she had  
6 -- he had composed many drawings, and they are  
7 now being recognized.

8 So there is a lot of history that hasn't  
9 been pulled out of the neighborhood. There are  
10 the old relics like iron, like cast iron and  
11 stuff -- keeping the fire. Lots of people have  
12 these things stored away in their home, but  
13 it's up to us on the local level.

14 If y'all will agree with me, if you can  
15 collect -- not a commission -- but a small  
16 search committee within a community that can go  
17 out and pull these artifacts from people home,  
18 these stories from people home, bring it to the  
19 table and then present it to y'all, we don't --  
20 I don't have a problem because I feel like you  
21 have a lot to offer, but we also have a lot to  
22 offer you too, because we live here and we know  
23 what's here.

24 And the quilting mills are about two miles  
25 from my house on either side, got two, and



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2 nobody knew that. They're still preserved.  
3 It's still quilts.

4 Nobody knew that until recently when I  
5 pulled the story out from my bag. I said, oh,  
6 you know, such and such a person is right  
7 across the road there.

8 And I was able as to direct this person  
9 there, but that's something we should have  
10 written. We should come to the table. We have  
11 the greatest port right here in McIntosh,  
12 Darien, Georgia. None of this has been  
13 exercised because it hasn't been heard.

14 So if we can get somebody to act on our  
15 behalf, in the local communities, to pull this  
16 information together, I'm sure you will be  
17 great, greater and greater.

18 VOICE: Right --

19 MS. SUMPTER: That is exactly what we're  
20 trying to do, and why we're doing this. This  
21 is exactly what we're trying to do in trying to  
22 do this, because we're trying to find those  
23 people who can direct us to that. Okay. So  
24 you want the mic?

25 MR. KADALIE: My name is Modibo Kadalie.

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2 I live in Riceboro, Georgia, grew up in  
3 Riceboro, Georgia, 66 years old now, got Social  
4 Security and everything. I teach at  
5 Fayetteville State University, and I've driven  
6 this corridor from -- I've driven 17 beyond the  
7 corridor, but I've driven specifically the  
8 whole corridor.

9 And I've seen the pressure that these  
10 communities are under, the land pressure. And  
11 I've seen -- I mean, I don't mind, you know,  
12 preserving the irons and the quilts and all  
13 that, but we have whole communities that are  
14 under great pressure.

15 And land question is very, very pressing  
16 on all of our communities. These communities  
17 should be named. They should be documented.  
18 They should be preserved, not just -- I mean  
19 geographically preserved, not just getting a  
20 quilt here and an iron there, but Briar Bay  
21 needs to be regarded as a Gullah/Geechee  
22 community --

23 MS. ROSS: It is.

24 MR. KADALIE: -- but it needs to be --  
25 because in Liberty County we have got a lot of

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2 it all up and down the Chapman River and Briar  
3 Bay --

4 MS. SUMPTER: Say that again.

5 MR. KADALIE: -- Homestown, Chapman,  
6 Riceboro, Briar Bay, Retreat -- Retreat  
7 Community, Peter King Road, Cross Road,  
8 Sandhill, just all of them.

9 And these communities are up and down, and  
10 down -- I had a chance to drive off 17 to go  
11 back into Buck Swamp. Do you know Buck Swamp?  
12 They're under tremendous pressure. They're  
13 being pushed all the way back. There's still  
14 people there, still hanging on there. There's  
15 people still hanging on there.

16 But that's the kind of thing I'd like to  
17 see. Then there are graveyards. There are  
18 people who are paving over peoples' graves.  
19 There's the technology now available to  
20 identify where these people are and to preserve  
21 -- even the native American people, prior to  
22 the coming of the international capitalist  
23 system and enslavement of our people, but the  
24 point I'm making is this is the kind of work  
25 that needs to be done, and can only be done by

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2 people who understand and know it.

3 People already on the ground started this  
4 kind of stuff. But the point is when you have  
5 a commission coming in -- I've been to a couple  
6 of these meetings. I always see Jamal, who is  
7 an alternate. He is not a commissioner.

8 MS. BROWN: That's right --

9 MR. KADALIE: You're a commissioner, but  
10 you're from South Carolina.

11 MS. SUMPTER: I'm from Georgia. I'm a  
12 Georgia commissioner.

13 MR. KADALIE: Sorry, but you're --

14 MS. SUMPTER: I live in Georgia.

15 MR. KADALIE: Fine, fine. That's all  
16 right. That's all right.

17 VOICE: Do you live in Geechee Atlanta --

18 MS. SUMPTER: I'm from South Carolina. I  
19 live in Atlanta. I've met you --

20 MR. KADALIE: See, that's the point.  
21 That's the point. Excuse me. Excuse me. I  
22 have the mic here. I have the mic. The point  
23 is that the people who live in these areas and  
24 the people who understand these areas would be  
25 much more able. And people have already been

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2 in action doing this kind of thing already.

3 These are the people who should be  
4 involved in this process, otherwise the process  
5 becomes very, very suspect. It would be almost  
6 like the native -- Native Indian Commission.  
7 You know, when they're trying to civilize the  
8 native people. And they went in there, brought  
9 the commissioners, brought everybody, and cut  
10 everybody's hair and took everything from them.

11 And now it's in the Smithsonian. You  
12 know, we don't want to do that. Sister Elaine  
13 and others have mentioned, we don't want to be  
14 a part of that process. We want to be a part  
15 of the process whereby we define our own  
16 salvation, as opposed to some people coming in  
17 picking this, picking that, writing a  
18 dissertation.

19 And by the way, I'm a scholar, but the  
20 point is when you write a dissertation, you  
21 shouldn't write it for opportunistic reasons,  
22 for tenure and all that kind of stuff.

23 Books should be enlightening to people.  
24 Books should -- should be really the people  
25 telling you and you simply writing it down.

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2 But the point I'm getting at is, and this is  
3 where I'm coming from; I'm bothered by this  
4 process. There are people on the ground --

5 MS. BROWN: That's right.

6 MR. KADALIE: -- who are here doing this  
7 work. Why don't you just involve them? You  
8 know, it will be kind of like I know it sounds  
9 foreign, but Geronimo has more to say about  
10 Indian preservation, you know, than Custer did.

11 I'm just mentioning this point. And the  
12 people in the area here, you know, the point  
13 is Crazy Horse, they finally got a statute to  
14 him at long last.

15 But the point is he had more to say about  
16 what the Indians are than the President of the  
17 United States or the Indian Commission or the  
18 commission from here to there.

19 So the point is, we want you to know that  
20 we are linked to this and we will be here  
21 involved in the process anyway. So I would  
22 suggest that really, we ought to work together,  
23 get these resources, get our work together and  
24 preserve these communities, and the heritage of  
25 these community in a very real and continuously

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2 living way. That's what I wanted to say.

3 Thank you very much.

4 MS. SUMPTER: Thank you very much. Next.

5 MS. LEAVY: I'm Sudy Leavy, and of course  
6 I'm really not Gullah/Geechee, but I have a  
7 great fondness for the coast of Georgia.

8 I also have a great fondness for the  
9 history of the coast of Georgia, and I began  
10 attending these meetings -- I think the first  
11 one I attended was Jacksonville, and we were  
12 talking about that.

13 I went because I went representing a  
14 forgotten white woman named Lydia Parrish who  
15 started the Georgia Sea Island Singers, and I  
16 began to get up and do portrayals of her.

17 Nobody remembered, they didn't remember  
18 that she was married to one of the most famous  
19 artists in America, that she lived on St.  
20 Simons, that she brought people to the cabin  
21 there.

22 I went and read her papers at Dartmouth  
23 and how much she cared about recording the  
24 songs. So then that led to my finding out  
25 about Robert Gordon, who came to Darien,

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2 Georgia in 1924.

3 He wasn't an academic person. He was from  
4 Harvard, but he'd been at Berkeley, but he got  
5 the idea that he wanted to come. He'd been in  
6 Ashville, North Carolina, and wanted to come  
7 record songs in Darien, Georgia before the  
8 Lomaxes, really I think before Lorenz Dodge  
9 Turner.

10 And so in 1924 for two years he lived out  
11 at the ridge. He went around with his car with  
12 the celluloid in the back getting people to  
13 sing the songs. He went on to found the Folk  
14 Life Museum at the Library of Congress. And  
15 you can access it, and you can hear relatives  
16 announcing these different little communities  
17 that have been forgotten. And they will stand  
18 up and say which one they're from.

19 And they have been able, with the marvel  
20 of technology to take them off all the old  
21 celluloids. So I feel like the music that  
22 came and was saved out of this part of the  
23 country is in an important part of the  
24 Gullah/Geechee story.

25 I also feel since I wrote a book on



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2 Hofwyl Broadfield Plantation, and have since  
3 taught to the woman who was working for the DNR  
4 at the time they put together the program -- we  
5 had lunch on St. Simons -- and she said to me,  
6 we were talking because her work at the moment  
7 has been to help make PinPoint and Sandfly to  
8 get their applications in as National Trust  
9 areas, and Patty DeVoe said to me, Sudy,  
10 Ms. Athelia would be shamed if you didn't tell  
11 the other story of Hofwyl.

12 And the other story of Hofwyl, of course,  
13 is the African Americans who worked there. And  
14 when you go back and you look at Dr. James  
15 Toup's will in late 1840s, he specified that no  
16 slaves were to be sold, that they were to find  
17 out to how to raise the money, it took nine  
18 years or eight to settle that estate.

19 John Cooper came over from St. Simons and  
20 put the estate back in the black and families  
21 not taken apart.

22 And so there's so much history that we  
23 don't know. There's some really good things  
24 going on. I know we can get upset with the  
25 university, but we've been become a four year

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2 college here.

3 We have the resources of the University of  
4 Georgia. I was up at the library the other  
5 day. I was telling them how I feel the  
6 Gullah/Geechee corridor is one of the most  
7 important things that has happened to coastal  
8 Georgia.

9 And we need to get past, and I'm not being  
10 ugly about this, because I understand quotas  
11 and all of that, but we need to get past  
12 arguing about how it's set up. Let's get on  
13 and get these quilts.

14 They've got an exhibit of Gee's Bend  
15 quilts down at Jacksonville this very minute.  
16 We may have quilts in McIntosh County that are  
17 every bit as good as those that have been all  
18 over the United States.

19 And then when you read the oral histories  
20 like Ms. Annie Polite died at 101. I sat on  
21 her porch and talked to her, learned that she  
22 went to school in Brunswick, Georgia made --  
23 took Latin and piano and then worked and played  
24 both of the black churches on Sapelo.

25 She told about seeing Mr. Reynolds come by

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2 and wave to her every time she would be in  
3 there playing in the church. So all of these  
4 stories are important and need to be recorded.  
5 Likewise, we have two churches in our area  
6 that are the celebrating their 150th  
7 anniversary, and I don't think anybody --  
8 anybody is doing anything about -- the sign  
9 fell down this week. It's lying on the ground.

10 It was founded in 1859, the church on St.  
11 Simons, the African Baptist founded in 1859  
12 before the war between the states. All of this  
13 is history that we need to make other people  
14 know. I've talked long enough. Thank you.

15 MR. TOURE: I'm going give this mic to  
16 someone else, but one of the things I want to  
17 make sure that this is abundantly clear, no  
18 different than what I said in Savannah, no  
19 different than what I said in Montgomery, you  
20 know when you see me I'm going to speak my  
21 mind, I'm going to let everyone know.

22 When individuals have been critical  
23 with regard to academicians, that tone and  
24 tenor has been in summoned from the time of the  
25 special resource study. So many of may think

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2 you're hearing it for the first time.

3 The special resource study was done. That  
4 is what was said. One of the things -- I'm  
5 going to put someone on the spot. That's not  
6 to say to discount any other commissioners at  
7 all, Jeanne Cyriaque was at the meeting down  
8 in Camden County, you had individuals who also  
9 said at the time we want to see commissioners  
10 who are tied to the communities.

11 The tone has not changed, so when people  
12 try to project that, you're absolutely wrong.  
13 And I'm saying that for those of you this is  
14 the first time you even understand what's going  
15 on, that no, this has been said. Jeanne,  
16 Michael Allen, everyone has heard that in  
17 particular in Georgia.

18 One of the things by me having ties to  
19 South Carolina, that's one of the things I said  
20 because I'm able to see Georgia is totally  
21 different from many of other states, because  
22 Georgians have said we want see people on the  
23 coast.

24 That's not -- this is before the process  
25 occurred. So no one is being critical of

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2 universities, because many of us have three  
3 degrees. We have three degrees, but we're  
4 saying that just like Dr. Kadalie said, we want  
5 to see blended. We want to see a blend where  
6 people are able to touch and relate.

7 And with regard to the meeting, yes, we're  
8 not just here just as someone came and said  
9 about volunteers from the Gullah/Geechee  
10 community, I allowed that to go on and finally  
11 those in Savannah saw when I got up and listen,  
12 we're not volunteering for anything.

13 We volunteered too long with regards to  
14 our culture and information. We will be paid  
15 to do that, because the experts are the people.  
16 That has been the tone and the tenor that has  
17 been set out there, that the people -- that you  
18 are the experts.

19 It's not even about Jamal Toure, because  
20 again, we feel the pulse of the community. We  
21 feel the pulse of the community, and that's  
22 what's going on. So yes, there are going to  
23 be those who are critical of the commission,  
24 and I sit on the commission.

25 I have no problem with you being critical

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2 of it. Also, I know I need to hear about the  
3 resources, but then understand you have the  
4 right to voice your opinion regarding how you  
5 feel about the commission, the National Park  
6 Service, the United States government.

7 It does not matter. This is your  
8 opportunity to do that, and then if you want to  
9 talk about the resources you see, you do that.  
10 We will not stymie the public input, and again  
11 I do that because I'm all over the entire  
12 corridor.

13 I traveled it and I know what the people  
14 have said, not just in Georgia but in South  
15 Carolina, and they do think -- they are not  
16 happy because too many museums are the ones and  
17 also CDBs are coming to the meetings in other  
18 areas in South Carolina. And they're the one  
19 trying to dictate it.

20 Again, we need more people. As I said in  
21 Savannah, this is paltry, this is frightening  
22 to me the numbers we see here. This is a sad  
23 statement

24 MR. KADALIE: No reflection on you.

25 REVEREND LOTSON: Yes, yes. I know we've

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2 got about 30 minutes left --

3 MS. BROWN: No, we've being going an hour.  
4 We started a half hour late. We started a half  
5 hour late.

6 REVEREND LOTSON: What I would like to  
7 say, and I want to be middleground and I like  
8 what Jamal said there that's what these  
9 meetings are about for everybody to give their  
10 viewpoints. And I want to try to show both  
11 sides of what I've learned in working with the  
12 Geechee/Gullah corridor and working with other  
13 groups.

14 I think something that this commission can  
15 do and maybe start this year or next year,  
16 because I'm in it for long haul, and I know  
17 it's 10 years it's going to be there, and  
18 there's many other commissioners that's on  
19 there, they are not going to be on there.

20 Some of them are dropping off now and  
21 there will be time for Jim and others to get on  
22 the commission. So we do have some, that's  
23 now. What I would say in my opinion, I don't  
24 have any big ill feelings with the commission.  
25 Let me explain before I get kicked out of my

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2 own church.

3 Those of us in the trenches, we meet and  
4 work together all the time. Geechee Kunda has  
5 not received one dime from the commission.

6 MR. BACOTE: Or anybody.

7 REVEREND LOTSON: Amy, Lotson, Robert, not  
8 one dime has descended from the -- the Darien  
9 Geechee Shouters have not received one dime  
10 --they might have got some money, I don't know.  
11 He's on the board -- I'm just teasing Jamal. I  
12 say that comical, but the truth of the matter  
13 is, those of us that are in the trenches, we  
14 were here working hard before the commission,  
15 and God will still be God, we're going to be  
16 here after the tenure is over.17 So I said that to say this about the  
18 commission, one thing you can make plain, that  
19 the commission was not ordained by God from  
20 heaven that all of us have to put our eggs in.21 I will use the commission -- commissioners  
22 need to leave right now -- I will use the  
23 commission just like I used the federal  
24 government to develop this 10 acres you see out  
25 here. We own everything, the apartments, we



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2 run a full summer program. The Georgia  
3 Department of Labor is training kids from this  
4 community for regular jobs.

5 So we used them to get what need. We used  
6 their consultants. We used their money, and  
7 Darien Geechee Shouters are getting ready to  
8 get some more of that money to help us go to  
9 another level.

10 So I say this commission, you need -- what  
11 you want commission from us, you need to make a  
12 plan that you are not our savior. We know it  
13 already, but a lot of people think that you  
14 guys are going to take us to the promised land.

15 We know if we are going to get there,  
16 we're going to take ourselves there. My hope  
17 is that y'all will help the Amy that I know  
18 that's trying to write her book, that I know  
19 Jim that's trying to get his pavilion finished  
20 and people from all over the world have been  
21 there. May be famous -- what is it -- the BBC  
22 what are they England somewhere. It was  
23 because of Jim and Jamal. It wasn't the  
24 commission. So we travel to universities now  
25 and colleges.

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2 I mean, we do this now without the  
3 commission, so you might need to make that  
4 plan, but we also want you to help us, because  
5 the commission will never finish its job if it  
6 don't help us in the trenches.

7 We need help, and we're going to move  
8 forward so when the funds do start coming in, I  
9 would like to see the spokesperson just like on  
10 any major motion picture, you want to it to  
11 faster and sell tickets, they will always send  
12 the stars.

13 And the stars in this building here  
14 tonight, some of them are here tonight. I have  
15 performed with some of them that are here  
16 tonight. Denise right here, my God, I mean  
17 there are a lot of people here, but you need to  
18 make a plan to the regular citizen.

19 I appreciate what you guys are doing. I  
20 saw you out there in that heat. I don't know  
21 how you took it, but on Saturday out there all  
22 day long, Jim and Pat. It was just to carry  
23 the culture. It was Amy sick. I'm just -- I'm  
24 just glad she's still here today. The heat was  
25 rough. So and I say this and I'll shut my

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2 mouth.

3 Please, we are still going to go on, but  
4 we need your help. Just like we used the  
5 federal government, we're going to use you guys  
6 to help us to get to where we need to be.  
7 Thank you.

8 MR. GRANT: My name is Gregory grant I'm  
9 from Walthourville, Georgia which is in Liberty  
10 County. And my usual complaint and something I  
11 would like for the commission to see how they  
12 can do is without land there is no  
13 Geechee/Gullah corridor.

14 MS. BROWN: That's right.

15 MR. GRANT: And at the rate the land is  
16 going, there will be -- all of this will be in  
17 a museum, and you can collect and view and see  
18 anything you want to by paying.

19 MS. BROWN: That's right.

20 MR. GRANT: There were 20 men who met  
21 with the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton and  
22 Major General William T. Sherman. The 20 men  
23 were ministers and community leaders in  
24 Savannah on the 12th of January 1865. The  
25 resolution that they formulated was put into

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2 place the 16th of January 1865.

3 That included lands from South Carolina,  
4 from Charleston, to the St. John's River which  
5 included, which this commission does not  
6 include St. Augustine.

7 This was known as Special Order 15. If  
8 you will look at the Geechee/Gullah corridor  
9 right now, it is -- 50% of that corridor is  
10 Special Order 15.

11 In 18 -- 16 -- 1526, 34 years after  
12 Columbus came here, you had your first black  
13 revolt in the Pee Dee River area. So if you go  
14 from 1526 roughly to 1865, we're looking at 350  
15 years.

16 You add 50 years for reconstruction which  
17 I don't think is over even today because I'm  
18 still suffering --

19 MS. BROWN: That's right.

20 MR. GRANT: -- from it -- my ancestors  
21 were put up under. So I'll just say 50 years,  
22 give you 400 years. What I would like to see  
23 the commission doing, since we cannot get our  
24 40 acres and a mule, which I think they should  
25 be working toward, but is to see 400 years,

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2 which I don't think is very long, that people  
3 who are Gullah culture or heritage, who have  
4 land, that their land is preserved tax free for  
5 the next 400 years.

6 Any land or any product that comes out of  
7 the Gullah culture should be -- nothing that  
8 comes out of here, out of any other area should  
9 be able to carry the label Gullah or Geechee.

10 You can do it for the onion. You darn  
11 sure can do it for the culture. We have stuff  
12 coming from China. We have stuff here that has  
13 Gullah and Geechee on it. They're not Gullah.  
14 They're not Geechee.

15 The land is important. Without land we  
16 have nothing. My -- what I would like for this  
17 council to do to them, since they will be at  
18 Sapelo, count the number of black people you  
19 have there. Come back next year and see how  
20 many black families you have.

21 Now, something was mentioned about St.  
22 Simons. How many people, blacks on St. Simons?  
23 They have to go to their black church coming  
24 from the mainland. We want land.

25 MS. BROWN: That's right. That's right.

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2 MS. SUMPTER: Is there anybody that hasn't  
3 spoken that would like to speak? Oh, I'm  
4 trying to make sure that everybody --

5 MS. BROWN: I'm going to finish -- finish  
6 what I started.

7 MS. SUMPTER: Oh, okay. I just wanted to  
8 make sure that everybody was being -- try to be  
9 mindful of other people --

10 MS. BROWN: I am mindful of other people,  
11 Sister, but I think that one of the things to  
12 not -- to get past this notion of we can't  
13 complain or criticize, we're going to complain  
14 and criticize, so we don't need a defensive  
15 attitude.

16 We need an attitude of accommodation to  
17 the whole of the people, people that have  
18 legitimate criticism. This business of  
19 patronizing and talking about the singing and  
20 capturing the singing; we're not here to  
21 celebrate the plantation lifestyle, at least  
22 I'm not here for that.

23 Okay. So I want to be clear I think what  
24 has been said by Brother Greg, and this Brother  
25 here Modibo, Dr. Kadalie, that we are talking

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2 about the land. We're not talking about  
3 artifacts and celebrating and doing dances, as  
4 the sister said, and being examples of so forth  
5 and so on.

6 Now, I'm not talking to you in particular  
7 Sudy. There's an axe to grind here that is  
8 disturbing to me, a tremendous axe that is  
9 disturbing me on the part of the commissioners  
10 here. So I want to say it is important that we  
11 do straighten up the commission.

12 It needs to be straightened up and not  
13 pretend that they're completely representative  
14 of the people from this community. It is not  
15 representative of the people from this  
16 community, and it needs to be. And I'm going  
17 to say again that Jim Bacote should be on the  
18 commission.

19 Whether anybody likes that or not is not  
20 important to me. We're not going away.  
21 We'll be at every one of these meetings until you  
22 decide to have open and fair elections,  
23 within the commission, or we remove a few  
24 people who don't want to have open and fair  
25 elections and put the right kinds of people in.

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2 Now, that's just my point. Now, I would  
3 like to read a resolution that I know you  
4 cannot pass today, but I'm going to read it  
5 anyway, because we had a wonderful meeting with  
6 these Brothers from Sierra Leone.

7 I'm going to read proposed resolution.  
8 I'm going to hand it to whoever wants to take  
9 it and record it. If you want to have your  
10 recorder record it or I'll hand it to somebody.  
11 I would like to make this on behalf of the  
12 Geechee Council of Georgia, if I may.

13 Brother Jim, this is the proposed  
14 resolution we'd like to have from the  
15 commission at some point sooner than later.

16 Whereas of the nearly -- and by the way  
17 may I just mention before this, this is not  
18 about a cultural way of life. This is about  
19 slavery, so let's get it right.

20 This is about the 400 and some years our  
21 people were enslaved in the building up of  
22 Hofwyl and various other plantations. This is  
23 not about the celebration of singing. It's  
24 about what has happened to slave people and how  
25 we held on to our lives despite everything.



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2 So let's get the issue straight, because  
3 we are pretending with this Gullah/Geechee  
4 cultural question that this is some kind of new  
5 little group of people that we're going to talk  
6 about.

7 These are African slaves now. Whereas, of  
8 the nearly 500,000 captive Africans, who were  
9 brutally imported into the United States as  
10 slaves in the formation of the United States of  
11 America, approximately 350,000 were captured  
12 from Sierra Leone via Bunce Island there at the  
13 rate of 6,000 captured slaves per year from  
14 1750 to 1807.

15 And whereas, these exporter Africans who  
16 were known as expert rice growers came to be  
17 enslaved in South Carolina and Georgia and  
18 elsewhere along what it is now identified as  
19 the Gullah/Geechee corridor to -- to and did  
20 develop the massive rice plantations in the  
21 corridor, primarily via the slave trading  
22 enterprises of Henry Laurens after whom, and  
23 his descendants, the counties of Laurens in  
24 both Georgia and South Carolina are named.

25 And whereas, the capitol City of Sierra

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2 Leone, Freetown, was established by former  
3 African slaves of the corridor.

4 And whereas, as a result of this barbaric  
5 slave exportation, Sierra Leone lost half its  
6 population to U.S. slavery in the corridor  
7 leaving the country devastated and defenseless  
8 against British colonization, and as its sons  
9 and daughters were forced to labor for free in  
10 the U.S. slave institution as it existed in the  
11 corridor to develop the rice plantations, that  
12 not only greatly enriched slave-holding  
13 planters, but also provided the riches for the  
14 British colonies to form a new country, declare  
15 independence from the British as the United  
16 States of America in 1776.

17 And whereas, the separated Sierra Leonians  
18 suffered ongoing colonization in the  
19 motherland, and endured the savage and inhumane  
20 cruelties of hundreds of years of enslavement  
21 in the corridor, the terrible ramifications  
22 which are felt to this day and reflected in the  
23 fact that Sierra Leone is the poorest country  
24 in the world, and the African slave descendants  
25 in the United States have the greatest

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2 percentage of poverty in this country; the  
3 Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor  
4 Commission, in its capacity as official  
5 guardian of the cultural heritage of the  
6 corridor representing more than 1,000,000  
7 Gullah/Geechee of the people corridor declare  
8 that Sierra Leone is our homeland, and that the  
9 people of Sierra Leone are her Gullah/Geechee  
10 people, as the Gullah/Geechee people of the  
11 corridor are Sierra Leonians.

12 And finally, this commission declares that  
13 all interests and rights of heritage of the  
14 Gullah/Geechee in the corridor extend to the  
15 people of our homeland Sierra Leone.

16 MR. KADALIE: This is a very quick point,  
17 very quick. Sometimes I read -- I read a lot  
18 of books and I read books by people who  
19 interviewed people about their heritage and  
20 about their families.

21 And I realized when reading these books,  
22 these people are not talking to -- from their  
23 heart. They're talking to the person writing  
24 the book. And so if somebody from outside, you  
25 know, somebody who is white, somebody who is

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2 from someplace else trying to get somebody to  
3 tell a story about their life, people aren't  
4 going to tell them that.

5 What should happen is we should be helping  
6 their daughters and their granddaughters to  
7 interview their own people, so that they can  
8 tell their stories.

9 I've seen this thing happen with my own  
10 mother. My mother is a 96 year old. She's at  
11 the crossroads. A lot of people come to  
12 interview her to write books and things. So  
13 when she tells them, she says some people don't  
14 really want to know, so I just tell them what  
15 they want to hear.

16 Then there are other people who want to  
17 know and I tell them a little about what  
18 they are searching for. And I said, but I  
19 know. She said, well then, what you should do,  
20 you should interview me, and I'll tell you the  
21 whole story.

22 MS. McINTOSH: My name is Ruth McIntosh.  
23 That should tell you something about me, since  
24 my slave owners were McIntosh. I left here  
25 when I was five years old, because I was born

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2 in Harris Neck. The government came in, took  
3 over the land.

4 They didn't put in a school for black  
5 children. And my parents thought that I was  
6 bright. They thought that I was reading. I  
7 had memorized many books.

8 I don't want to bore you with my  
9 biography, but I went to Savannah and then New  
10 York. I don't know this place.

11 I've been back here about a year and a  
12 half and I'm very disturbed. I studied  
13 anthropology at Columbia, did my field work in  
14 Nigeria, and I'm very disturbed by the lack of  
15 authentic information.

16 Because, you know, there's a notion that  
17 black people feel that they can trace ancestry.  
18 Can't do it. Up in Yale, they're trying to do  
19 it with DNA.

20 You go to Nigeria, you walk around and if  
21 you don't open mouth they think you're  
22 Nigerian. You go to Ghana and you open -- you  
23 don't open your mouth -- I know that people  
24 think that I'm Nigerian because I look very  
25 Nigerian. That's what -- and I did my field

## 1 MEETING DISCUSSION

2 work in Nigeria.

3 But what disturbs me is that it's not  
4 about where you came from. It's where you're  
5 going. And the whole notion of whether or not  
6 you're from Sierra Leone, you can't prove it.

7 They are now going to be able to prove it  
8 because they're now -- have DNA. And you are  
9 going to be able to say, see the thing about  
10 Africa is those communities were not static,  
11 you know.

12 So somebody sold me over to Ghana, or I  
13 went over to whatever county and you can't tell  
14 where I came from, because the Africans also  
15 sold slaves.

16 They were big slavers. They -- our people  
17 sold us. So when you get up and say, I'm from  
18 Sierra Leone, I'm in a church and I was about  
19 to say something and I realized. And I come to  
20 this church. I realized I was about to say it.

21 But, you know, I look at so much. My  
22 friend Sudy gave me a couple of books that I've  
23 been reading -- not happy about what I'm seeing  
24 in them, because I read this book -- what do  
25 you call it -- Praying for Sheetrock.

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2           Everybody in the book, all the black  
3 people lived in cabins. Now I just happen to  
4 know a guy, Curry -- I can't think of Mr. Henry  
5 Curry. He lived in this wonderful house down  
6 on Highway 99.

7           It was not a cabin. It was not a cabin.  
8 And I drive around now and I see this place and  
9 that place, but people come in -- this woman  
10 came in with her husband, and not an author,  
11 didn't know how to write, went back to New York  
12 and she wrote a book. All black people didn't  
13 live in cabins. They didn't live cabins 75  
14 years ago.

15           I'm sort of going out -- I'm sort of being  
16 -- going off on a tangent, but I don't know  
17 what this commission is about, but I think and  
18 I'm not against academics because I'm one, but  
19 I think there are a whole lot of people who are  
20 not academics who have a lot to say.

21           And I think you -- you can't have -- you  
22 can't do research without the people who have  
23 the information. Now, when I was at Columbia  
24 they gave us money when you went to Nigeria.

25           They said -- I was a single woman, and

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2 they said -- Martha Reeves, I don't want to  
3 drop names, but I studied with her, and she  
4 said you single women, those brothers are going  
5 to be coming to your cabin at night.

6 I don't know where you did your field  
7 work. They're going to be coming, so you had  
8 to walk around the community with a particular  
9 man so they think they connect you with this  
10 man so they won't be coming for sexual favors.

11 Collecting information is very difficult.  
12 Music is very important. It's a part of our  
13 culture. Religion is very important because it  
14 is universal. Religion is universal. So is  
15 music.

16 You can't -- unfortunately, we can't say  
17 I'm from Sierra Leone. I'm from Nigeria. I'm  
18 from Ghana. Go to some of these places and go  
19 do some DNA.

20 I'm disturbed in this county that I have  
21 returned to that people are so myopic, and you  
22 have a need to connect yourself. First of all,  
23 we're universal. And unfortunately, we're all  
24 mixed, whether we like it or not. However  
25 white you look, however black you look, you're



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2 very mixed, and any DNA will tell you that.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. TOURE: It is 7:56.

5 MS. ROSS: I can relate to what she says  
6 about Praying for Sheetrock -- Joann Ross. I  
7 can relate to what the young lady was saying  
8 about Praying for Sheetrock because I lived in  
9 that area.

10 And I lived with a particular lady who  
11 would lay on her bed and pray for sheetrock to  
12 finish her block house, not a cabin but a block  
13 house.

14 Matter of fact, I visited her many a time  
15 because actually the person that formed the  
16 Darien which is now the Darien Shouters, she  
17 was that was her mother.

18 So I knew a lot about that, and I know how  
19 the trucks used to wreck on Highway 17 and we  
20 got good shoes and everything else out there.  
21 I know about the accidents and that sheetrock  
22 came from there.

23 MR. BACOTE: Hi. My name is Jim Bacote.  
24 And I would like to say that the Sister is  
25 right. It's not really important. The

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2 important fact is when we were brought Africa,  
3 wherever we came from, we didn't stop being  
4 African people, okay. And to me I think it's  
5 ridiculous, this whole notion of buying into  
6 another buffer of marketing theme to sell DNA  
7 testing.

8 MS. BROWN: That's right.

9 MR. BACOTE: I think that whenever I see  
10 brown or black or any combination of the colors  
11 that encompass African people, that's good  
12 enough for me. That's my given. You're my  
13 brothers and sisters.

14 No matter where you are and you come here,  
15 you're either native Gullah/Geechee if you are  
16 African and everybody is from Africa, you too,  
17 yeah. If you are not native, you're returning,  
18 and it's about seriously what happened during  
19 our experiences as Africans here in America.

20 Tremendous psychic damage has been done,  
21 and that needs to be addressed or we'll be  
22 right in the same underclass position 400 more  
23 years from now.

24 And to piggyback on what Brother Greg  
25 Grant said, I want to ask a question; can the

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2 Gullah/Geechee Corridor Commission call the  
3 commission Gullah/Geechee.

4 MR. GRANT: Who?

5 MR. BACOTE: Can they call themselves  
6 Gullah/Geechee? Sure they can and Jeanne's  
7 always at the meetings. But --

8 MR. GRANT: Jeanne always here.

9 MR. BACOTE: -- I'd like to say it is  
10 about us doing what we can to right the wrongs  
11 that resulted of our enslavement here in  
12 America, and not just on the islands.

13 The islands are exotic, but we have the  
14 existence on the mainland too that's even more  
15 isolated, because -- because of the exotic  
16 nature of Sapelo and St. Helena and a couple  
17 other; they rush right past the piney woods and  
18 swamps and coastal plains to get there and left  
19 us to be our African selves.

20 But it is all about us working, the  
21 African people, and the buffer people working  
22 together to realize that we are not the  
23 underclass because of some shortcoming, and you  
24 are not the privileged class because of some  
25 inherent superiority, but because of your

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2 willingness to do a terribly wrong thing to  
3 another people.

4 And I'm going to stop. I'm glad to see  
5 everybody here. And I thank Sister Elaine fore  
6 reading in the resolution. At some point, I  
7 think the commission should include that just  
8 as a notion of respect and acknowledgement that  
9 our brothers and sisters of the continent were  
10 hurt too by us being brought here.

11 Often times Africans from America go to  
12 Africa and say boy, I'm glad I'm born here  
13 because of how it is there now. They don't  
14 realize that how it is there now is directly  
15 related to them bringing us here.

16 So it was all a part of a plot and a ploy,  
17 but we can do something about it, and the key  
18 to it is education, and looking at what  
19 happened, and working together to right it or  
20 have an equal playing field, ride off into the  
21 sunset.

22 And then maybe we can relax and celebrate  
23 and do all those wonderful things. Thank  
24 y'all.

25 MR. TOURE: We have nine more minutes. We

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2 did not start at 6:30, but 6:40, nine more  
3 minutes.

4 MS. COLLINS: Thank you, Brother Jamal. I  
5 just want to say to all of you who have come  
6 tonight thank you for coming, because we all  
7 have a lot that we could doing. Thanks to all  
8 of you who have come out.

9 And we -- I know this is being videotaped,  
10 but I'm not here to be on camera, so I just  
11 wanted to look at you so you understand that  
12 Gullah/Geechee is a proud people.

13 And we are people who want to and have to  
14 claim how proud we are. And also, we are  
15 people who must speak up and speak out about  
16 who we -- who we be.

17 In order to do that, we have to, as has  
18 been said already, make sure that we do all  
19 that we can to claim our own right of  
20 self-determination. That is something that we  
21 have not done, as we need to, and it is a very  
22 powerful thing when we are able to do so.

23 We also need to make certain that we have  
24 land to stand on and stay on. We used to have,  
25 back in the day they used to have parties or

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2 pass the basket so people could keep -- pay  
3 their taxes.

4 We don't do that anymore, but guess what,  
5 people are combing the paper every time they  
6 know there's going to be a tax sale so they can  
7 run and claim somebody's property.

8 And we need to be the ones combing those  
9 papers so perhaps we can combine our funds and  
10 help somebody stay on their land.

11 What will the corridor commission do in  
12 terms of helping us to stay on the land? They  
13 will write it down, but it's up to us to  
14 make certain that we have resources that we put  
15 in place, mechanisms where people can claim  
16 their land and stay on their land. Thank you.

17 REVEREND LOTSON: I will just piggyback  
18 off what she has said and give the mic back to  
19 Jamal, and we do need the commission to assist  
20 us. And we do know the problems, and that's  
21 where I compliment the commission.

22 I will say this in defense of the  
23 commission, the advertisements certainly went  
24 out. You can get a copy of the Darien  
25 news, and a quarter of page there. We run a

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2 local cable channel. We made sure it was  
3 there.

4 And now I know in the hot sun on Saturday  
5 they were passing out those flyers like they  
6 were free. And so that's internal things we  
7 can continue to do. I am proud to see Georgia  
8 now catching up, as I call it.

9 South Carolina seemed to be doing, before  
10 the commission, moving up. And Georgia came  
11 alive, I mean in a big way.

12 I didn't even know Jim and Pat Bacote and  
13 Geechee Kunda three years ago, and some of my  
14 other friends that I met because of the  
15 commission and in the early stages, and I want  
16 that to be known.

17 Sudy Leavy over there that's writing,  
18 because of the commission we hooked up  
19 together, and some of my research, a true born  
20 100% Gullah/Geechee, Geechee/Gullah whatever  
21 you want to call it was searching for the cup.

22 I was ready to go to England and come to  
23 find out the cup was right there, Jamal, in  
24 Savannah, Georgia from the Butler plantation  
25 -- a very famous cup.

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2 So all of us working together, I think  
3 we can make something happen. The commission,  
4 for the work that you're doing, continue to do  
5 it.

6 Do we have some problems we need to work  
7 out, yes. I think you need to listen to the  
8 people in and around Georgia and see if we can  
9 make it happen, and help us to get to our level  
10 that we need to do.

11 If this commission can do anything, and I  
12 appreciate the knowledge that you guys have,  
13 and I hope you can just use it to help those in  
14 the trenches that's already working this doing  
15 a marvelous job that -- to help us get to our  
16 next level. And that's what I personally would  
17 like to see.

18 Jamal, keep up the good work that you're  
19 doing. Jeanne, we love you dearly, and you're  
20 doing a great job. Just keep on what you're  
21 doing. My good friend from the big city of  
22 Atlanta --

23 MS. SUMPTER: St. Helena, South Carolina.

24 REVEREND LOTSON: South Carolina, okay.

25 MS. SUMPTER: Thank very much, born and



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2 raised.

3 REVEREND LOTSON: Do what you're doing.  
4 I'll learn more about you as we go. And  
5 certainly Jim will make sure we learn as much  
6 as we can. And I say thank you for coming to  
7 little old Darien, Georgia.

8 The advertisement, we did do it very well,  
9 but we have to keep working. We have to keep  
10 working. But I'm proud to see Georgia is  
11 coming up now from the place we have never been  
12 before. So thank you. I'll turn it back to  
13 Jamal.

14 MR. TOURE: Four more minutes. Four more  
15 minutes.

16 MR. KADALIE: I would like to know who is  
17 the other commission from Georgia?

18 MR. TOURE: Charles Hall, Charles Hall is  
19 tied to Sapelo and Hilton Head. He lives on  
20 Hilton Head, but he's A part of SICARS.

21 Then also Dr. Deborah Mack, she lives in  
22 Savannah. She's an alternate, but Charles Hall  
23 and then there's the vacancy.

24 REVEREND LOTSON: What's the procedure for  
25 filling the vacancy...

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2 MS. CYRIAQUE: That is what we've been  
3 told, and we will certainly be addressing this  
4 again at our next commission meeting.

5 REVEREND LOTSON: But not to defend the  
6 commission, I've worked with the federal  
7 government. I get grants all the time too.  
8 The USDA, they have not appointed a new  
9 director... a whole new administration comes  
10 in, that's just the way the government works.  
11 I'm sorry. That's what they do.

12 MS. BROWN: That is not the way they do --

13 REVEREND LOTSON: I don't like it. That's  
14 what they do, I'm sorry. I want to compliment  
15 -- this is very important. They set up a  
16 commission and Elaine, I need your help. I  
17 need some help here.

18 They set up a commission for the abolition  
19 of slavery, abolishing slavery. They set up a  
20 commission from Congressman Payne, 2008, and do  
21 you know that upwards of today -- they've got  
22 one year to set the commission up and do all  
23 these wonderful things to celebrate. England,  
24 Great Britain has spent 40,000,000. Don't ask  
25 me how much America has spent. It's like zero,

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2 okay, and believe or not this board, you got a  
3 ways to go maybe, but they haven't even set the  
4 commission up yet and it ends in December.

5 I could not believe that. So, you know,  
6 I'm saying that as a compliment, and this is  
7 from Congress signed by the President, and they  
8 haven't even -- this is for all of America.

9 It's sad, so I don't even know what's  
10 going on. I just want to say that in the  
11 defense of this commission.

12 MS. MCINTOSH: I don't know what the  
13 minutes are, but is there anybody from the  
14 county on the commission?

15 MS. CYRIAQUE: Technically, Charles Hall.  
16 He's from Sapelo Island.

17 MR. TOURE: Excuse me. We're need your  
18 name, and this is going to be the last comment.

19 MS. EVANS: I'm Nettye Handy Evans and  
20 Charles Hall is the President of SICARS, which  
21 is Sapelo Island Cultural and Revitalization  
22 Society. And I've been their acting director  
23 for two years volunteer.

24 But Mr. Hall and I spoke today, and if you  
25 know anything about Sapelo, after 5:30 you

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2 can't get back to the island. He's over there  
3 and he could not be here tonight because he  
4 didn't have a way to get back home to the  
5 island.

6 But the commissioners are meeting on  
7 Sapelo tomorrow. I will be going over in the  
8 morning and so will they on the 9:00 o'clock  
9 ferry, so that's why Charles Hall is not here  
10 tonight.

11 But this is not the first time. We met  
12 here, Reverend Lotson, when were we here before  
13 -- wonderful turn out, so --

14 MS. CYRIAQUE: We had a commission meeting  
15 here. It was a lot of people. I remember you  
16 from the Shouters coming. Georgia, by the way,  
17 will be hosting our commission meeting in  
18 October.

19 We have not determined yet where we're  
20 going to have our meeting, but it will be  
21 somewhere in the corridor. We want y'all to  
22 come, because it will be part of the commission  
23 meeting we also have for the public.

24 MR. KADALIE: Just one question.  
25 What is the purpose of the alternate? I

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2 thought the alternate fills in when the  
3 commissioner has a vacancy. What does the  
4 alternate do?

5 MS. CYRIAQUE: Let me answer your question  
6 as best I can. From the time I was appointed  
7 to the commission, I think if my alternate not  
8 as -- not a fair replacement. I look at them  
9 as equals.

10 All of the commissioners for this  
11 corridor, we have same rights. We all come to  
12 meetings. We all work on committees. The only  
13 difference is when we vote --

14 MS. BROWN: Big difference.

15 MR. BACOTE: That's everything.

16 MS. CYRIAQUE: Now, let's say at the  
17 upcoming commission meeting, if I know I'm not  
18 coming and I am a primary commissioner, I can  
19 choose to have my alternate vote. So I know  
20 to the public it seems like you're thinking  
21 that it is not the same, but --

22 MR. KADALIE: It's not. That's the  
23 difference.

24 MS. CYRIAQUE: That is the only  
25 difference.

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2 MR. BACOTE: It's every difference.  
3 That's everything.

4 MS. CYRIAQUE: And One other thing, most  
5 national heritage areas that have commissions,  
6 they don't have a structure like that.

7 They have whatever the magic number is of  
8 commissioners and that's it. So in our  
9 heritage area, we really pushed for this kind  
10 of format, to make certain that we had as many  
11 people on this commission as possible.

12 MR. BACOTE: But they don't have any  
13 power.

14 MS. CYRIAQUE: One thing that I did not  
15 say earlier when you were asking me about all  
16 of this was that we do have fixed terms.

17 The idea is that people will rotate off  
18 the commission, and there will be  
19 opportunities, during the life of this  
20 commission, for people to apply again. I will  
21 not always be a commissioner.

22 REVEREND LOTSON: I believe you can  
23 appoint someone. Can you let us know, you say  
24 they say, who is they say we can't, because  
25 I've heard a lot of bylaws and the commission

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2 is set up. And it already has a system that's  
3 already for anybody to read in America.

4 You can appoint, if somebody leaves, quits  
5 or dies, you can replace somebody. You don't  
6 have to wait on the president. I will correct  
7 that statement. You can appoint someone. I'd  
8 like to know, let us know --

9 MS. CYRIAQUE: I'm saying we brought this  
10 up at the last commission meetings, because we  
11 had one of our commissioners that has left --

12 REVEREND LOTSON: Okay.

13 MS. CYRIAQUE: -- Who was a voting  
14 commissioner.

15 REVEREND LOTSON: Okay.

16 MS. CYRIAQUE: So immediately we would  
17 think -- we would like ideally for one of the  
18 alternate commissioners in that state to get  
19 the slot so we asked the --

20 REVEREND LOTSON: And they said.

21 MS. CYRIAQUE: Unfortunately, they don't  
22 always respond quickly.

23 REVEREND LOTSON: What did they say?

24 MS. CYRIAQUE: That's when we were told  
25 that they would have to clear this through the

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2 Obama Administration. There have been changes,  
3 as you know, in the National Park Service.

4 So they're probably taking a look at what  
5 they have. We're one of over 40 such entities  
6 that are now national heritage areas. So we're  
7 going to continue press that. But that's just  
8 my opinion. Now, since he is an alternate, you  
9 can express an opinion --

10 MR. KADALIE: Yes.

11 MR. TOURE: Well, I was going to say that  
12 time is up. I have no problem discussing it  
13 with you in, you know --

14 MS. CYRIAQUE: Turn the tape off and  
15 you're welcome to stay.

16  
17 (Concluded at 8:15 p.m.)  
18  
19  
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21  
22  
23  
24  
25



## C E R T I F I C A T E

G E O R G I A :

CHATHAM COUNTY :

I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript was taken down, as stated in the caption, and the questions and answers thereto were reduced to typewriting under my direction; that the foregoing pages 1 through 72 represent a true and correct transcript of the evidence given upon said hearing, and I further certify that I am not of kin or counsel to the parties in the case; am not in the regular employ of counsel for any of said parties; nor am I in anywise interested in the result of said case.

This the 22nd day of July, 2009.

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Kathleen Dore, Certified Court  
Reporter, B-2041