

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

Thursday, May 14th, 2009
6:35 p.m. – 8:05 p.m.

The GULLAH/GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE
CORRIDOR COMMISSION MEETING, taken on the 14th
day of May, 2009 at Bethel A.M.E. Church, located at
417 Broad Street, Georgetown, South Carolina 29440.

CP-26 REPORTING

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APPEARANCES:

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Dr. Emery Campbell, Chairperson
Commissioner Ron Daise
Commissioner Veronica D. Gerald
Commissioner Michael Allen
Bob Dobson, Superintendent, National Park Service

ATTENDEES/SPEAKERS:

Mr. Ray Funnye
Mr. Oneal Smalls
Ms. Minnie Kennedy
Mr. Steve Williams
Mr. Reginald Hall
Ms. Bunny Rodrigues
Ms. Zenobia Washington
Mr. Andrew Rodrigues
Mr. Michael Roberts
Ms. Gladys McCoy
Mayor Retha Pierce
Ms. Joyce Cox Simmons
Ms. Sandra Johnson

ALSO PRESENT:

Sunny Fry, Videographer

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INTRODUCTION/WELCOME

COMMISSIONER DAISE: Good evening.

AUDIENCE: Good evening.

COMMISSIONER DAISE: My name is Ron Daise.

I'm a member of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission and I welcome you to tonight's public engagement meeting. This is the fifth public engagement meeting that has been held in Georgetown, Horry, and Northern Charleston Counties that has been coordinated by myself and two other commissioners. We've learned a lot of valuable information from getting feedback from those who have attended the meetings about two important words; words that have become very important within the last 10 years. And I'm sure are important to each of you here. And I want you to call out what those words are, and they both begin with "G." One of them is?

AUDIENCE: Gullah.

COMMISSIONER DAISE: And the other one is?

AUDIENCE: Geechee.

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1 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Yes, terms that, you
2 know, just a few years past no one
3 wanted to be identified with. They were
4 sources of embarrassment. But your
5 attendance reveals that hopefully you're
6 appreciative of those words as a
7 culture, of, as an aspect of history,
8 heritage, as a language as well. The
9 purpose of this meeting is to collect
10 feedback about how the Federal
11 Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage
12 Corridor should be developed. We need
13 to know all of your thoughts, and we
14 welcome them. At this time I would like
15 to, if anyone has a cell phone, would
16 you please turn it to silent, or at
17 least to vibrate. I won't say you
18 should turn it off, but you could do
19 that as well. Because the information
20 that you will be expressing is so
21 valuable to the development of the
22 Corridor, it is being documented by a
23 court reporter, as well as a
24 videographer, and wanted to make you
25 aware of that before we begin the

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1 program. You, if you didn't get to sign
2 the attendance sheet in the back, before
3 leaving we ask that you please do. As
4 you came in, and hopefully signed in,
5 you received either a newsletter. And
6 in the center of the newsletter was a
7 comment card. Maybe you only received a
8 comment card. We would like for you to
9 fill that out and particularly Questions
10 3 through 7. If you would take time
11 during this meeting to fill it out, turn
12 it in to myself or any of the other
13 commissioners before the end of the
14 meeting, that will be greatly
15 appreciated. At this time, I am going
16 to ask Reverend Dr. Joseph Jones, Pastor
17 of Bethel A.M.E. Church, to give us the
18 invocation. Following which,
19 Commissioner Veronica Gerald will give
20 recognitions, and then Commissioner
21 Nichole Greene will give the
22 explanations of the panels, as well as
23 the general management plan.

24 **INVOCATION**

25 REVEREND DR. JONES: Thank you, Brother

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1 Daise. Let us all bow our heads for a
2 brief moment of prayer.

3 COURT REPORTER'S

4 NOTE: (REVEREND JONES PRAYS.)

5 **RECOGNITIONS**

6 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Good evening.

7 AUDIENCE: Evening.

8 COMMISSIONER GERALD: We'd like to use as
9 much of this time that we are gathered
10 together in public engagement, so we're
11 not going to take a lot of time for
12 recognitions, but I do want to take a
13 minute to introduce to you some key
14 people who are part of this endeavor.
15 And they're here tonight as part of our
16 Gullah/Geechee Heritage Corridor
17 Commission meeting that we have every
18 three months and we're coupling that
19 with the public engagements, so we want
20 to take a minute to recognize them. But
21 before we do, we do want to recognize
22 Bob Dobson, who is with the National
23 Park Service, Superintendent. And he's
24 over here to my left. And we must
25 recognize the National Park Service

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1 because they have played such a major
2 role in pulling this together and
3 working along with us. And another
4 Park, National Park Service person, and
5 I'm not wearing glasses, but Mike Allen;
6 where are you? Mike Allen, in the back,
7 is also a part of the National Park
8 Service. And Mike has a special
9 position of working with the
10 Gullah/Geechee Heritage Corridor
11 Commission as a kind of liaison between
12 the National Park Service and the
13 Commission itself. I want to introduce
14 the commissioners by state now, and
15 later on during the reception we'll
16 introduce them individually. We want to
17 ask the, first, the chairperson of the
18 Gullah Geechee Heritage Commission to
19 stand and be recognized: Dr. Emery
20 Campbell. Emery Campbell.

21 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

22 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Thank you. Emery has
23 been in the trenches working, doing this
24 work for many years. Starting out
25 bringing water to St. Helena Island, and

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1 working at the Penn Center. And now as
2 the C.E.O. of a Gullah consulting
3 company, and holds the position of
4 Director of Emeritus with the Penn
5 Center. So we have to give, pay homage
6 to Emery Campbell. Our other
7 commissioners here, the ones from
8 Florida, if you will stand. The
9 Gullah/Geechee Heritage Commission is
10 formed by commissioners from four
11 states. So we ask our Florida
12 commissioners to stand.

13 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

14 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And hopefully you'll
15 get a chance to touch bases with them,
16 and meet them at the reception. And our
17 commissioners from Georgia, would you
18 stand?

19 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

20 COMMISSIONER GERALD: I'd like our
21 commissioners from North Carolina to
22 stand.

23 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD: And last, but
25 definitely not least, our commissioners

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1 from South Carolina, and Emery, would
2 you stand again, please?

3 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

4 COMMISSIONER GERALD: These are the people
5 who have been assigned to the task of
6 pulling together the interpretation of
7 the Gullah/Geechee Heritage area, which
8 goes from about Jacksonville, North
9 Carolina to Jacksonville, Florida, so
10 it's a major work. And we want to pay
11 homage to them. So during the reception
12 we're going to introduce them
13 individually. Also, any elected
14 officials who might be here that I may
15 not know. Are any elected officials
16 here tonight; would you stand?

17 COURT REPORTER'S

18 NOTE: (Officials stand.)

19 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

20 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Are you all from
21 Georgetown, elected officials?

22 MS. WAYNE: The City of Georgetown.

23 COMMISSIONER GERALD: The City of Georgetown.
24 And that's always good that you have the
25 officials behind you. Well, without

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1 further adieu I'm going to ask Nichole
2 Green to come forward. She has the task
3 of explaining the panels and the whole
4 management plan.

5 **OVERVIEW**

6 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Thank you. Good
7 evening; how is everyone doing?

8 AUDIENCE: (Responds.)

9 COMMISSIONER GREEN: I just want to start
10 out by giving you a little bit of
11 background. And many of you had a
12 chance to come up and take a look at
13 these panels, but what I'm going to do
14 is quickly go over them; do an overview
15 and maybe after the public engagement
16 segment of our meeting tonight you'll
17 have a chance to come up and look at
18 them more closely. First of all, just a
19 little background on the Gullah/Geechee
20 Cultural Heritage Corridor: In 2005
21 Congressman Clyburn actually introduced
22 a bill into Congress that he wanted to
23 create a heritage area, a heritage
24 corridor that would recognize the
25 important contributions that those

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1 African and African-Americans know as
2 Gullah/Geechee people, the contributions
3 that those people have made to American
4 culture and American history. And
5 actually in 2006 Congress designated
6 this area, the area where these people
7 live, as Commissioner Gerald said, from
8 Jacksonville, North Carolina down to
9 Jacksonville, Florida, from the coast,
10 including the Barrier Islands, to 30
11 miles inland. They designated that area
12 of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage
13 Corridor. This work actually started in
14 2000 with the work of the National Park
15 Service. And during that time they did
16 a Special Resource Study. And as we
17 drove over here to get into the parking
18 lot, Michael Allen told me that this is
19 about the third time we've met here at
20 Bethel; it's the third time we've met at
21 Bethel A.M.E. in Georgetown. So during
22 that time, the National Park Service
23 went up and down this corridor getting
24 input from Gullah/Geechee people as to
25 what they thought should be included in

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1 this study. And this then documented
2 the national, and I would consider the
3 international significance of
4 Gullah/Geechee people, and recommended
5 that the establishment of the
6 Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage
7 Corridor. Now, there was also a
8 Commission that was established and, in
9 2007. And last year this time, last
10 May, we were adopting Bylaws and
11 electing officials, so the Commission's
12 job is to manage this corridor. And
13 what I'm going to point out to you is
14 that vision, mission and purpose of the
15 Commission. The vision is to recognize
16 and sustain the environment that
17 celebrates the legacy and continuing
18 contributions of Gullah/Geechee people
19 to our American heritage. Our mission,
20 the mission of the Gullah/Geechee
21 Cultural Corridor Commission is three-
22 fold: It's to nurture pride and
23 facilitating and understanding an
24 awareness of the significance of
25 Gullah/Geechee history and culture

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1 within the Gullah/Geechee communities.
2 To sustain and preserve land, language,
3 cultural assets within the coastal
4 communities of South Carolina, Georgia,
5 North Carolina and Florida, and to
6 educate the public on the value and
7 importance of Gullah/Geechee culture.
8 Our purpose, the purpose of the corridor
9 is also three-fold. It's to recognize
10 the important contributions made to
11 American culture and history by African-
12 Americans known as Gullah/Geechee, who
13 settled in the coastal counties of South
14 Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia and
15 Florida, to assist state and local
16 governments and public and private
17 entities in these four states, and
18 preserve Gullah/Geechee folklore, arts,
19 crafts and music. And also to assist in
20 identifying and preserving sites,
21 historical data, artifacts and objects
22 associated with Gullah/Geechee people,
23 for the benefit and education of the
24 public. And one of the most important
25 tasks that the Commission has is the

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1 development of this general management
2 plan. Now this general management plan
3 will provide a foundation to help the
4 Commission guide programs and set
5 priorities for the resources and
6 stewardship, interpretation and
7 education, and the development of
8 partnerships, and will provide the
9 development of this Cultural Corridor in
10 the next 10 to 15 years. And to
11 complete this general management plan,
12 we need input from the public. So where
13 we are right now, we're identifying
14 contacts. We're currently at this
15 level, in this step: We're reaffirming
16 vision, mission and purpose. We're
17 interpreting themes and categories. And
18 we're gathering and analyzing
19 information. We're holding these public
20 input meetings so that you can tell us
21 what you think is important in your
22 communities. And these are ways that
23 you could, you can participate and you
24 can join us at public input meetings
25 like this one. We welcome your thoughts

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1 and your ideas and your concerns. Also,
2 there's a sign-up sheet there; you,
3 please, let us know if you or your
4 family would like to be contacted for
5 oral history interviews. Also, on that,
6 in that newsletter you have this comment
7 card that we'd like for you to fill out
8 and return to us. In there are
9 questions like what are the top three
10 things of Gullah/Geechee culture that
11 you would want to protect, preserve or
12 continue? Let us know if there are any
13 historic sites and, that you would, you
14 think should be recognized. Even
15 historic sites that are no longer there,
16 but places where there was a cemetery;
17 there was a home; there was a school;
18 there was a church. Let us know where
19 those places are. And to the best of
20 your abilities, if they're not there,
21 let us know the location. Give us the
22 address so we can document that. And
23 just provide us with contact information
24 for yourselves and anyone else that you
25 think would be able to offer us

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1 information.

2 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Please keep in mind
3 those questions that were cited at the
4 end of Nichole's presentation, that you
5 have the opportunity to give, respond to
6 them when we begin our public
7 engagement. But before then, I would
8 like to introduce one of the community
9 persons whom I contacted when I began
10 coordinating the public engagement
11 meetings in and around Georgetown. I am
12 not from Georgetown; I have a commuter
13 job that has had me commuting to
14 Georgetown, going on now five years.
15 One of those individuals is Mr. Ray
16 Funnye. And Mr. Funnye is a native of
17 the Plantersville Community of
18 Georgetown, one of the outlying
19 communities. At the Georgetown, the
20 meeting for Georgetown proper, one of
21 the comments given was the importance of
22 making sure that members from those
23 outlying communities are represented.
24 And that was one of the things that
25 we're hopeful to achieve this evening.

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1 Attempts were made on, and there may be
2 others who are in the audience from
3 those communities who are put here, but
4 we do have one. And as Mr. Funnye comes
5 forward, I had asked him to speak about
6 what it was like for him growing up,
7 being a native from, one of those Gullah
8 members from the community, even wasn't
9 from Georgetown proper. And to give
10 information about an event that he has
11 started, a very important event, and
12 also to, I asked him to state what he
13 hoped would be accomplished from this
14 meeting. Please recognize him and
15 receive him

16 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

17 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Ray Funnye.

18 **GUEST SPEAKER**

19 MR. FUNNYE: Thank you, Ron. Good
20 evening.

21 AUDIENCE: Good evening.

22 COMMISSIONER DAISE: I was really honored
23 when Ron called to ask me to speak
24 tonight to this Bethel body. I was born
25 in Georgetown, but my family is from

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1 Plantersville, which is, most people
2 call it the country area. And
3 Georgetown really is a little community,
4 but we grew up in the country. And I'm
5 very proud of that. I was raised by my
6 parents, my mother and father. And I
7 have seven brothers and sisters. I
8 spent a lot of time with my grandmother
9 as a child, and I learned some of the
10 ways with the people through her. And
11 that experience really has enriched my
12 life, and I believe that this
13 Gullah/Geechee Corridor is very
14 important for us to embrace. My
15 experience as a child has been very
16 wholesome. I really had a very good
17 upbringing. My dad and mom had friends
18 of a lot of persuasion and my experience
19 with them has been always good. We had
20 a lot of friends that were white, but we
21 had some reaction with them. And so as
22 a child we had good experiences. My mom
23 was raised on the plantation. She
24 always reminds me of walking three miles
25 to school to get educated and three

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1 miles back by herself. And that was
2 really something for me to take heed to
3 because I think education's important.
4 And one of the things that we teach in
5 our community is that education is
6 certainly one of those ways in which we
7 can enrich ourselves and our community,
8 and we certainly preach that. And our
9 community is very rich with that. We,
10 particularly in our community, we try to
11 encourage each other. We also try to
12 encourage others to be educated and
13 become good citizens of this country and
14 this state. I grew up here. I went
15 away and spent some time in Georgia.
16 And I came back home about 16, 17 years
17 ago and have been very blessed to be
18 here and to be able to contribute back
19 to my community. Georgetown is growing.
20 It's dynamic. But I think with some
21 effort on our part we can make it
22 better. I think this Gullah/Geechee
23 Corridor is critical for us to have some
24 remembrance of what we have endured over
25 the years. As I look back on my

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1 grandfather, who I never met, because
2 both of my grandfathers died
3 mysteriously in drowning accidents. And
4 so today I'm, I'm fearing. I don't swim
5 because I might have, I fear I might
6 have the same experience myself. But
7 they both somehow drowned. And that was
8 something that really, after all these
9 years of not knowing them, I still fear
10 that. And so that took me back to the
11 plantation days of how they had to
12 endure those kind of experiences, you
13 know. So I look forward to working with
14 Ron and the Commission and everybody
15 else who is involved in this process to
16 try to record in some way, some fashion,
17 what we have experienced in our life. I
18 think the Gullah/Geechee experience was
19 a wonderful experience. I think it has
20 enriched my life. It has enriched my
21 family and I'm teaching my sons to be
22 mindful of that as well. Because of
23 that experience, we have done, some five
24 years ago, a Heritage Festival in
25 Plantersville. Now a lot of people say,

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1 well why do you have it in
2 Plantersville? Well, because we have a
3 lot of people there who have been there,
4 a lot of people, particularly grown
5 people, who have lived in this community
6 for some time. And we wanted to somehow
7 take advantage of those people who have
8 so much to offer. At the same time, we
9 wanted to have our youngsters be
10 involved with that experience as well.
11 So what we do at our festival, but it's
12 small, but I think it's beautiful, we
13 try to bring the cultural aspect. We
14 bring arts. We bring musics and dramas.
15 We allow people to mingle and to
16 fellowship and become friends again. I
17 think we have grown today, such that we
18 are growing so big we kind of miss that
19 whole entire experience where we don't
20 know who are neighbors are anymore. And
21 I think part of that Gullah/Geechee
22 Corridor experience is that we need to
23 know who are neighbors are; we need to
24 embrace each other. And so this
25 festival that we have is, actually it's

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1 planned for June the 26th and 27th of
2 this year. You can come. You are
3 invited to come. It's an opportunity
4 for us to bring our young and our old
5 together to have a great time in
6 celebrating our heritage. I hope that
7 this Gullah/Geechee Corridor experience
8 would help us to somehow record, in some
9 way, form, what we have done. All of
10 our struggles and all of our successes
11 we've had over the years. But we, we
12 certainly have had many successes in our
13 community. As I look around just this
14 room, and particularly, from the
15 Plantersville Community, we have people
16 from the country so to speak. You know
17 people tend to think that we are
18 backwoods and we don't have any
19 directions, but we do have good
20 upbringing, which is very important.
21 And as a result of that, we have been
22 able to be educated and somehow teach
23 what's right to our youngsters. And so
24 a good example today, the chairman of
25 Georgetown County Council happens to be

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1 Kevin Moran. He's a friend of mine.
2 He's also from Plantersville. He's an
3 attorney. But, you know, is, this whole
4 idea is that we, it's not where you came
5 from, but where are you going? What are
6 you going to contribute to this society?
7 And I think as we look around this room
8 and this community, we have a lot of
9 people who have come from the outlying
10 areas of Georgetown County who have
11 contributed to this society. And
12 therefore we have a purpose and we have
13 a meaning. And I'm so proud to be from
14 the outlying area because of that
15 history, because of that experience, I
16 can feel quite proud of my heritage. I
17 just hope that we can take advantage of
18 this opportunity, and make this program
19 successful. Thank you, Ron.

20 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

21 **PUBLIC ATTENDEES/SPEAKERS**

22 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Georgetown, it is now
23 your opportunity to give comments, to
24 cite resources, to cite buildings. It
25 might be tangible objects. It could be

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1 things that you can't touch; things that
2 no longer exist. The things that you
3 think are important to the development
4 of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage
5 Corridor Commission as it is recognized
6 in Georgetown, as well, Georgetown
7 proper, as well as those outlying
8 districts. Answer questions, your
9 responses can be, to questions like if
10 you are aware of any financial
11 partnerships. Also, if you are aware of
12 any threats to the development of this
13 national heritage area. One of the
14 things that Mr. Funnye spoke about was
15 recollections of growing up and where
16 they taught what's right. In what ways
17 can that be identified that you may have
18 some ideas? That may be something
19 that you think is important that somehow
20 represents Georgetown, the
21 Gullah/Geechee heritage of Georgetown
22 County. When you wish to express your
23 thoughts, please come forward. This is
24 a handheld mic, but because he is
25 filming it, it will be, he will better

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1 capture, document everything if you come
2 to the front. When you speak, please
3 identify your name. If you would also
4 state, if you don't mind, if you are
5 from Georgetown or if you're from one of
6 the outlying districts, let us know.
7 Who will be first? In about 10 to 15
8 years when this corridor is developed,
9 you will want to look on it, review it
10 and know that everything that you wanted
11 for it to be was at least stated at this
12 meeting. What do you want to make sure
13 that we recognize when we put this
14 corridor, when we develop it?

15 MR. SMALLS: Well am I focusing on
16 ---

17 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Ah, ah, ah, ah, so that
18 you can be heard. And if you stand here
19 then ---

20 MR. SMALLS: My name is Oneal
21 Smalls, and I was trying to find out
22 whether you're focusing only on
23 Georgetown County?

24 COMMISSIONER DAISE: This is the purpose of
25 this meeting, but we're developing the

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1 corridor.

2 MR. SMALLS: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER DAISE: If you have thoughts --

4 -

5 MR. SMALLS: Because in the earlier
6 discussion of the panels here, I didn't
7 hear a discussion of farming. And
8 farming, of course, played a huge role
9 in African-American history. And we
10 have developed a living farm museum in
11 Horry County, just across the line from
12 Georgetown County ---

13 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Okay.

14 MR. SMALLS: Shortly after the
15 Civil War, some of the newly freed
16 slaves from plantations in Georgetown
17 County moved into a community called
18 Freewoods, and developed a farming
19 community there. And that community
20 remained a large black farming community
21 until the Civil Rights movements, until
22 the 1970s. And so what we do there
23 today is: essentially replicate the kind
24 of farming that African-Americans did
25 after the Civil War. And really it was

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1 for the first century of freedom. For
2 the first century of freedom, farming
3 was the primary occupation of African-
4 Americans. And so we farm as they did
5 with mules and plows and hoes and rakes
6 and what have you. And I spent the day
7 in the field replanting peanuts with the
8 hoes and rakes and what have you. And
9 tomorrow we'll be laying vine tomatoes
10 and peas and what have you, just as the
11 African-Americans in that community did
12 in that area, for the first century of
13 freedom. So I want to make certain that
14 farming is recognized as part of the
15 Gullah/Geechee heritage, because it's
16 what most of us did after the Civil War,
17 after freedom, for the first century of
18 freedom.

19 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Were there any aspects
20 of farming; you said as was done by our
21 ancestors; that you want to make sure?

22 MR. SMALLS: Well as they moved into
23 that community they started with rice.
24 But, of course, rice requires a lot of
25 water. And after trying rice for a

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1 significant number of years, cotton
2 became a cash crop. And after cotton,
3 tobacco became the cash crop. But, of
4 course, they grew vegetables and other
5 crops, other items to sustain the
6 family. Most of those families were
7 self-sustained. And so we grow
8 essentially the same crops that they
9 did: sweet potatoes and corn, and
10 vegetables. We simply continued the
11 practice that developed in that
12 community after the Civil War.

13 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Thank you.

14 MR. SMALLS: And this is in a
15 community called Burgess. And it's the
16 Freewoods section of Burgess, which was
17 essentially a black farming community.

18 COMMISSIONER DAISE: How was the naming; do
19 you have the naming of this community?

20 MR. SMALLS: Yes. It was called
21 Freewoods because at the end of the
22 Civil War -- Now, of course you have to
23 keep in mind the plight we were in as a
24 people. There were 4 million people
25 freed after two-and-a-half centuries of

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1 slavery, and freed with no land, no
2 money, no formal educations, no credit;
3 no established relatives to put them up
4 for a while. Simply freed and told: You
5 are free to go. And of course they sort
6 of wandered in the wilderness of freedom
7 for a while. There was a lot of walking
8 after the emancipation, well, not
9 emancipation day, but after we were
10 liberated from those plantations. There
11 was a lot of walking. But there were
12 four, there were three white persons,
13 three white men, who sort of sympathized
14 with the plights of those newly freed
15 slaves. And those three white men made
16 small tracts of lands available to some
17 of the newly freed slaves along the
18 Waccamaw River in an area that the
19 plantation owners didn't consider
20 suitable for farming. It was
21 essentially savannah land. And so they
22 made these small tracts available to
23 some of the newly freed slaves. And the
24 newly freed slaves called it Freewoods,
25 because there was never slavery in that

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1 area. There were no plantations there
2 and there was no slavery there, and so
3 they talked about going into that Free
4 Woods, two words, and over the years the
5 two words were joined, but it became the
6 name of that community and we've
7 retained it to this day.

8 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

9 COMMISSIONER DAISE: I'm going to allow you
10 to just turn around where you are.

11 MS. KENNEDY: I would like to give
12 you some ---

13 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Name.

14 MS. KENNEDY: --- of my personal
15 experiences.

16 AUDIENCE: (Chatter.)

17 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Name, name.

18 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Give your name.

19 MS. KENNEDY: Sorry. Pardon?

20 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Name. Oh, my name.
21 Minnie Kennedy.

22 COMMISSIONER DAISE: What community are you
23 from?

24 MS. KENNEDY: I was born and grew up
25 on Hobcaw Barony, which is a plantation

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1 about 12 miles out of Georgetown, The
2 Rivers Plantation. I sort of wanted to
3 talk a little bit about the history as I
4 know it of the Geechee language. I'm
5 old enough to have been a product of the
6 beginning of that kind of language on
7 the plantation. As I was growing up
8 there was a little, the roots had their,
9 a little one-room, and that was the
10 schoolhouse for black children and, one-
11 room schoolhouse. And we spoke what we
12 are now calling Geechee language. We,
13 the white kids from the plantation got
14 on a bus and went into Georgetown every
15 morning to go to school. The black
16 children went up to fourth grade. We
17 were only allowed to go to fourth grade,
18 and after that you were a working person
19 on the plantation earning a .50-a-day
20 salary. Come home on Friday and, with
21 the \$2.50 for the whole week. So I grew
22 up in that period. We spoke what we are
23 now calling the Geechee language. Then
24 all the teachers for black children were
25 black people. They did not let you

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1 speak the Geechee language in the
2 schools, and they had no other language.
3 So if you wonder why so many young black
4 children are shy, they're shy because we
5 didn't let them speak the language they
6 knew.

7 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

8 MS. KENNEDY: And they didn't have
9 any other language. I think I only
10 spoke good English when I went to New
11 York. I was Geechee from, the whole
12 time. But anyway, that one-room
13 schoolhouse that only went to fourth
14 grade for the black children, all the
15 black children on the plantation could
16 only go to fourth grade. All the, the
17 teachers, some of them were high school
18 graduates, and they were our teachers.
19 I was one of, I was a living product of
20 what I'm telling you. And so we, and
21 other people, when they'd come to visit
22 us in the schools, people from
23 Georgetown, because when you came to
24 Hobcaw Plantation from Georgetown, it
25 was like you came from Europe.

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1 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

2 MS. KENNEDY: And, you know, the
3 black kids were shy, and they were
4 speaking what you're now calling the
5 Gullah; that was our language. And then
6 when we got to fifth grade, if you're
7 parents wanted you to go further in your
8 education, you had to come into
9 Georgetown to go to school. And that
10 was murder for the black kids who came
11 from the Roots Plantation. Because the
12 black kids in Georgetown laughed at your
13 language, even though they spoke the
14 same thing.

15 AUDIENCE: (Applause and
16 laughter.)

17 MS. KENNEDY: And so you just would,
18 you were growing up to be shy. So I was
19 determined to find out what is it about
20 the roots of people who grew up on a
21 plantation, versus the roots of children
22 who grew up in a town. And if you grew
23 up in Georgetown, your comparison to me
24 growing up on a plantation was like you
25 came from Europe, you know. It was

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1 sinful to have been growing up on the
2 plantation or whatever. So anyway, some
3 of the teachers, we were shy children
4 because everybody laughed at the way you
5 spoke. And what you're talking about
6 tonight is what we spoke. So if you are
7 proud of it now, I don't know why you
8 made us so ashamed of it.

9 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

10 MS. KENNEDY: Because I was growing
11 up speaking it. And the black teachers,
12 because the schools were completely
13 segregated in Georgetown and all over
14 the place, and the black teachers did
15 not let you speak what they call Gullah
16 in the classroom, and you had no other
17 language. So all the black kids shy as
18 can be. And even today, little kids
19 come to talk to me and they put their
20 head down. A little white kid comes to
21 talk to you and face is right up in your
22 face. And it's all that comes from
23 black, I think, part of our history of
24 growing up with the Gullah language,
25 which was the language. And then I

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1 began to, when I was able to, I began to
2 travel to Africa. I did; especially
3 West Africa. Because where in the heck
4 did I get the name Kennedy? It's not an
5 African name.

6 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

7 MS. KENNEDY: It isn't. And so I
8 learned from my own. I don't remember
9 teachers telling me anything about this,
10 but I learned from my own digging up
11 roots and stuff and whatever, and
12 traveling when I was able to, that
13 slaves were sold, not in family groups.
14 They were sold as individuals. So
15 husbands, if they were married slaves,
16 husband was sold away from wives, and
17 parents were sold away from children, et
18 cetera, et cetera. And our beginning
19 was tribal. You know we call it
20 neighborhood and family, et cetera, et
21 cetera, but our roots is tribal. And
22 each tribal was like a different group
23 of people; they spoke a different
24 language. So when a father was sold
25 from a family, and sold to another group

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1 or whatever, they didn't, they couldn't
2 speak to each other. So they developed
3 a language that they could talk to each
4 other. And the language they developed
5 -- Is my time up?

6 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

7 COMMISSIONER DAISE: We want to make sure
8 that in Georgetown County the language
9 is a part of, the importance of the
10 language is a part of the culture. Am I
11 correct?

12 MS. KENNEDY: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Thank you so much.

14 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

15 MS. KENNEDY: I'm very proud of the
16 Gullah language.

17 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Thank you.

18 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

19 MR. WILLIAMS: My name is Steve
20 Williams. Very briefly, my parents and
21 my foreparents are from Georgetown,
22 South Carolina, or were from Georgetown,
23 South Carolina and certainly about 95
24 percent of my relatives. I'm glad that
25 the lady that spoke before me talked

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1 about what used to be something that we
2 used to frown upon until Geechee and
3 Gullah language, and it just tells me
4 that if you live long enough, what goes
5 around comes around. What I'd like to
6 talk, or speak very briefly about is
7 what I consider hybrid. My dad was, and
8 my mother was from the town of
9 Georgetown, literally across the street.
10 And like so many other African-Americans
11 during the 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s and
12 perhaps 60s, migrated to the north for
13 better days. So I was raised, along
14 with my siblings in New York City. And
15 what I'd like to talk about is some way
16 of preserving the idioms of the Geechee/
17 Gullah language. And I say that because
18 I'm in my mid-50s and there are some
19 things that I can just faintly recall
20 about the language, the idioms, the
21 subtleties of Geechee/Gullah, that my
22 dad and my mother used freely in the
23 house. And I say hybrid because he was
24 a stickler for education. But at the
25 same time, in the house he would speak

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1 the idioms of Geechee and Gullah. And
2 there were so many of them. Many of
3 them are humorous; some of them are
4 mean-spirited, but I can't remember all
5 of them.

6 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Can you cite some of
7 them?

8 MR. WILLIAMS: I tend to remember the
9 ones that are mostly mean-spirited for
10 some reason.

11 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

12 MR. WILLIAMS: But he would say
13 things like dogonaluck (phonetically
14 spelled). And when he would argue with
15 my oldest brother, just some things that
16 I, again, it's too mean-spirited to say
17 in mixed company, but there were so
18 many, literally hundreds and thousands
19 of them. And I'm an educator as well as
20 a school administrator. The things that
21 I like so much about a great writer,
22 particularly Langston Hughes, because he
23 wrote in dialect. And a lot of this, at
24 30s, 40s and 50s, I cherish as I work
25 with kids. I was working with a group

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1 of kids the other day and we did this
2 story: "Thank You, Ma'am," by Langston
3 Hughes, one of my favorite short
4 stories. And they said Mr. Williams,
5 you're preaching. And I said, well,
6 that's just, that's just our language.
7 That's the spirit of things as we would
8 get into it. What I'd like, and I have
9 friends here in the Georgetown area who
10 tell stories in Gullah or Geechee
11 persuasion. And what I'd like is some
12 sort of way of preserving the idioms
13 that we used to speak. I went to high
14 school here briefly and the term is
15 fufty (phonetically spelled) cent. I
16 broke your behind; things like that,
17 that was new to me because my dad
18 actually frowned on that, but yet he, at
19 the same time, used it. So if there was
20 any way we could find a way to chronicle
21 or generalize a way of preserving some
22 of the idioms that may be unique to this
23 corridor, to this Georgetown area. I'm
24 sure as African-Americans a lot of it is
25 not necessarily unique to this area

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1 because Langston Hughes wrote about it
2 and he certainly is not from this area.
3 But I'm sure that there are many, many
4 subtleties of language and expression
5 and idioms that are germane and
6 particular to this particular area.

7 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Okay. Thank you.

8 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

9 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Bunny Rodrigues told me
10 of one of those expressions. I had
11 never heard of it before. And if I'm
12 correct, it was boodadonk (phonetically
13 spelled). Is that correct?

14 MS. RODRIGUES: Boodadonk.

15 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Boodadonk. Now, anyone
16 not from Georgetown, do you know what
17 boodadonk means? Not from Georgetown.
18 And I haven't even lived in Georgetown.

19 FEMALE AUDIENCE

20 MEMBER: What is it again?

21 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Boodadonk.

22 FEMALE AUDIENCE

23 MEMBER: That's the name for a
24 cutter.

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Huh-uh (negative

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1 response).

2 COMMISSIONER DAISE: No. Not according to -

3 --

4 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Toad frog.

5 COMMISSIONER DAISE: A toady frog.

6 MS. RODRIGUES: That's close enough.

7 COMMISSIONER DAISE: A toady frog.

8 AUDIENCE MEMBER: What's the word again?

9 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Boodadonk.

10 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Now which name? Toad

11 frog.

12 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Toad frog.

13 COMMISSIONER GREEN: Now in McClellanville

14 that was a Goodadonk.

15 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Goodadonk ---

16 COMMISSIONER GREEN: In McClellanville.

17 COMMISSIONER DAISE: --- in McClellanville

18 would be a toad, would be a big toad

19 frog.

20 COURT REPORTER'S

21 NOTE: (Audience chatter.)

22 COMMISSIONER DAISE: We want some of those

23 expressions.

24 MS. RODRIGUES: Boodadonk.

25 COMMISSIONER DAISE: All right. Thank you.

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1 Come forward, please.
2 COURT REPORTER'S
3 NOTE: (Audience chatter.)
4 MR. HALL: Good evening. My name
5 is Reginald Hall. I'm from Sapelo
6 Island, Georgia. Sapelo Island is one
7 of the Barrier Islands in Georgia. And
8 I thought I'd start off with the
9 definition of survival: remaining alive.
10 You think about an island of a culture
11 of people for 205 years. Right now
12 we're facing what I see going on within
13 this corridor: eradication of land,
14 eradication of culture, through memory
15 loss, mostly, and economic empowerment,
16 or the lack thereof. So when we were
17 charged with the duty of coming up here
18 per some of our descendants and elders
19 on the island or just getting out to get
20 the story known, what's going on in
21 Sapelo, well Number 1, our economic
22 development has never been anything that
23 has flourished, and I think that's
24 important for us to figure out how, not
25 only on the island where people have

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1 survived for 205 years, but through the
2 corridor, how do we increase some form
3 of economic development per Gullah/
4 Geechee. Land retention. I think land
5 retention is so important because
6 without the lands, there is no people.
7 And without the people there is no
8 culture. I think it's important that I
9 mention here, this 205-year culture and
10 the memory loss. We are just now in the
11 last couple of weeks finding out about
12 cemeteries on our island that just have
13 not been talked about for decades. I
14 found this to be an atrocity that we
15 don't know where some of our ancestors
16 lay on the island that's only 17,650
17 square mile. I'm sorry, 17,650 acres.
18 We're 11-miles long, three-and-half
19 miles wide or so. When we talk about
20 atrocity, one of the cemeteries on our
21 island is known as Behavior. But if you
22 go down our roads in the evening, at
23 sunset you can't find it half the time
24 because there's no sign. When you get
25 off on the ferry that brings you over to

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1 our island, there's not one sign on our
2 island that tells of our 205-year
3 culture, not one. Every sign that is
4 there, we are located as Hog, H-O-G
5 Hammock. On the bottom of some of the
6 most prestigious entities in the
7 country: University of Georgia Athens.
8 Been on our island since 19 and 53 and
9 has never had one educational open
10 house. That's horrible. When we talk
11 about lands, right now the State of
12 Georgia, I'm talking about this year, is
13 attempting to take from us 1,376.78
14 acres, right now. The value on that per
15 fair market value is estimated to 600,
16 700 million dollars. Now I'm not going
17 to start to really go into how much land
18 we've already lost through improper land
19 changes, non-clear title. 80 percent of
20 Gullah/Geechees, especially within this
21 corridor, do not leave a will still to
22 today. I think that needs to be worked
23 on for some form of education for the
24 future. How important wills or trusts
25 are. And I won't take much longer, but

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1 I believe it's important that we begin
2 to educate ourselves on this
3 actualization of what land means. Our
4 people on the island bought land five
5 years after emancipation; that's forward
6 thinking. Knowing if in fact these
7 lands stayed within the generations, as
8 I believe, I'm about 7th, 8th, 9th,
9 10th, 11th generation depending on the
10 calculations. I've heard so many things
11 about how you calculate generations. I
12 believe it's important that the lands
13 that have already been taken, and those
14 lands right now are valued at upwards of
15 6, 700 mill; we're talking about over a
16 billion dollars in fair market value
17 today that we've lost on this island.
18 And have been reduced to 196 acres.
19 Literally reduced to 70 people from up
20 into 500, because every generation has
21 to say, well, I've got to do a little
22 better than my parent and I can't do it
23 on this island. Although we have
24 tourists that are coming to this island
25 at an astronomical rate, but the state

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1 of Georgia takes most of that industry.
2 I have packets that I'll be handing out,
3 without taking up too much time. We are
4 in a full movement on the island right
5 now. Per the elders and descendants, I
6 have been blessed enough to be elected
7 under board vote to stop everything in
8 my life and take this on. We, as a
9 people, have to grow and understand that
10 once this is gone, you can't get it
11 back. There's no such thing as digging
12 up a culture. If the culture is lost,
13 it's gone. Who's going to bring it
14 back? And I have to say this out loud,
15 because we, me, myself included, have
16 not taken this younger generation to say
17 this is what it means. This is what you
18 have to understand in order to survive,
19 remaining alive. Thank you for your
20 time.

21 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

22 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Ron, if we can get some
23 lists of burial grounds that we remember
24 that maybe, that's not as obvious. We
25 can call the names out so they can be on

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1 tape.
2 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Okay. Names of burial
3 grounds?
4 AUDIENCE MEMBER: New Orleans Cemetery.
5 COMMISSIONER GERALD: New Orleans?
6 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, ma'am.
7 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Anything else?
8 Behavior?
9 MR. HALL: Yes, Behavior.
10 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Are both of those on
11 Sapelo?
12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, ma'am.
13 COMMISSIONER DAISE: On Sapelo Island. And
14 in the Georgetown?
15 MS. RODRIGUES: Myrtle Grove.
16 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Myrtle Grove.
17 MS. RODRIGUES: It's on the property of
18 International Paper Company. You go
19 straight down Hawkins Street.
20 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Okay.
21 COMMISSIONER GERALD: What about
22 Plantersville, Mr. Funnye; where are
23 you? Any burial grounds there that are
24 not labeled or named or ---
25 MR. FUNNYE: I think there are

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1 burial grounds on Chicora Plantation.
2 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Chicora Plantation.
3 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Chicora Plantation.
4 MR. SMALLS: Longwood Cemetery,
5 which is now a part of Blackmoor.
6 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Longwood Cemetery,
7 which is now a part of?
8 MR. SMALLS: Blackmoor.
9 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Okay. Yes?
10 MS. SIMMONS: The Lane's Creek area.
11 It's Jim Bro. Jim Bro.
12 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Jim Bro.
13 MS. SIMMONS: In the Lane's Creek
14 area.
15 COMMISSIONER DAISE: In the?
16 MS. SIMMONS: Lane's Creek.
17 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Lane's Creek area.
18 MS. SIMMONS: --- off of Dunbar ---
19 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Okay.
20 MS. SIMMONS: --- located on Lane's
21 Creek.
22 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Dunbar.
23 MS. SIMMONS: And another one is, we
24 call it Oakland, and the old name is Bo
25 Pickett ---

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1 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Okay.
2 MS. SIMMONS: --- Cemetery.
3 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Bo Pickett Cemetery is
4 the old name but now it's called?
5 MS. SIMMONS: Well really they can't
6 find the location, but it's in the
7 Lane's Creek. The Bo Pickett Cemetery
8 but it's in the Lane's Creek; I mean in
9 the Oakland Community.
10 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Can you spell that?
11 AUDIENCE: (Chatter.)
12 MS. SIMMONS: Bo, B-O, Bo Pickett.
13 Bo Pickett is what was told to me, and
14 Jim Bro.
15 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Thank you.
16 AUDIENCE: (Chatter.)
17 MS. McCOY: And Bethel Cemetery.
18 AUDIENCE MEMBER: City-wide.
19 MS. McCOY: Bethel Cemetery.
20 COMMISSIONER DAISE: And your name is?
21 MS. McCOY: Gladys McCoy. Living
22 in Georgetown proper.
23 AUDIENCE: (Chatter.)
24 MS. McCOY: Bethel Cemetery and
25 Bethesda Cemetery are the two ---

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1 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Are the ones that are
2 not labeled.

3 MS. WASHINGTON: I know there's a
4 cemetery that's on, in the Ricefield
5 Development and I believe that, that
6 cemetery is on what's considered private
7 property now. And I'm not quite sure
8 what the status is on that. Also, just
9 about on every plantation on Highway 17,
10 you will see and know of many, you know,
11 cemeteries on those plantations: Rose
12 Hill, Arcadia and all of the, you know,
13 plantations that used to be, you know,
14 part of our community and still are a
15 part of our community. There are
16 cemeteries on all of those, all of those
17 plantations.

18 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Your name?

19 MS. WASHINGTON: Zenobia Washington.

20 COMMISSIONER DAISE: And you have spoken,
21 but your name is?

22 MS. SIMMONS: Joyce Cox Simmons. And
23 also I forgot on the Choppee area,
24 there's a place called Dozier Cemetery.

25 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Thank you, and we're

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1 moving now. You're citing a cemetery?

2 MS. JOHNSON: Yes, I'm Sandra
3 Johnson. I live in the North Santee
4 area and there's Old Bethel, which is
5 the A.M.E. church that's been there.
6 It's no longer in use but there is a
7 cemetery there as well.

8 COMMISSIONER DAISE: And there are two of
9 them.

10 COMMISSIONER GERALD: Address?

11 MS. JOHNSON: Off Old Santee River
12 Road.

13 COMMISSIONER DAISE: On Old Santee River
14 Road. And I am passing the mic to Bunny
15 Rodrigues.

16 MS. RODRIGUES: Santee River, excuse me
17 for sitting down, a little tired
18 tonight. But I'd like to thank all the
19 Commission, commissioners for being here
20 tonight. And it's just great to be
21 here. And did I say I'm Bunny
22 Rodrigues?

23 AUDIENCE: Uh-huh (affirmative
24 response).

25 MS. RODRIGUES: Okay. Well, I'm not a

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1 commissioner but I have worked almost
2 five or six years to make this possible
3 for other people to be commissioners.
4 The Georgetown area was well
5 represented. Of course, by the time I
6 would leave here tonight, I will show
7 you on that map what's not represented
8 that well. And I'd like to thank Oneal
9 for coming here. As a matter of fact I
10 called his sister, and like Gullah folks
11 say, you know some of us are structured
12 people, and I called structure today.
13 And I told his sister that no one has
14 mentioned farm. Because I had a list,
15 and guess what? I left that one on my
16 desk. But anyway, I sort of made up
17 another one. So I had farming because
18 this was very important. The reason we
19 came here was because of the farming
20 knowledge. The other thing that I have
21 on this list that we have not mentioned,
22 this is like my fourth meeting. We have
23 to talk about education. And a lot of
24 times when we talk about education, we
25 talk about the private school. But I

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1 think we need to talk about all, locate
2 all the public schools, whether the
3 buildings are there or not. Let's talk
4 about those wonderful black teachers who
5 made me and every other black people who
6 went through those doors. And it was
7 very, very difficult. I always think
8 that it was more difficult than going to
9 a private school where everything was
10 provided. We were fortunate in
11 Georgetown to, well I was not, to have
12 gone to a school, a small school, when
13 you had to bring in wood and all these
14 other good things. I went to Howard
15 Elementary School, and we call it Old
16 Wood Howard School. And it had, and I
17 made it my business to get there every
18 day because we did not have a out, you
19 know we didn't have any indoor toilet.
20 So we had indoor toilets there and we
21 had a nice heating system. Mr.
22 Poinsetter was the, he was the janitor.
23 What do you call those things; radiator
24 and whatnot. So, you know, our schools
25 were sort of like a private school. I

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1 did not realize that until I had left
2 Georgetown. So we need to give praises
3 of all of those schools, and we have
4 many of them in Georgetown that are
5 still open. And those wonderful
6 teachers and those gene teachers who
7 taught, teaches how to teach, you know.
8 We need to talk about those things. And
9 then, as far as education is concerned,
10 you need to have seminars so that these
11 young mothers and some of these old
12 mothers to know what the Gullah culture
13 is all about. I have seen so many
14 information, misinformation about Gullah
15 people from Gullah people; you know it's
16 enough to make you swing your head. So
17 we need to get that straightened out,
18 you know, and make everybody want to
19 call everything Gullah. And then when I
20 look up on that chart and somebody says
21 Myrtle Beach, and I hope some of these
22 commissioners will tell us why they had
23 to put Myrtle Beach up there, because
24 Myrtle Beach has nothing to do, it never
25 had anything to do with the Gullah

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1 culture. Now I want to tell you:
2 Georgetown County was either 90 or 95
3 percent black. We exported either a
4 third or two-thirds of the rice. So the
5 epicenter of the Gullah culture was in
6 Georgetown County. Geographically, it
7 could be down in the Beaufort area. But
8 we were the epicenter of the rice
9 culture. And then on tomorrow in my
10 tour, you know I would give you that
11 information. But I know they don't have
12 that much time, and I was trying to give
13 everybody else time because somebody
14 said Bunny gone run, run, run her mouth.

15 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

16 MS. RODRIGUES: That's all right, too.

17 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

18 MS. RODRIGUES: But we feel a little
19 hurt, because we don't have a person
20 from Georgetown. You know all of us are
21 one. I don't care whether you live in
22 North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia
23 or Florida, all of us are
24 Gullah/Geechee. And then I see things
25 about these are experts in the Gullah

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1 culture. And then another person wrote
2 in the paper, you know I read everything
3 in the newspaper, and they said, but you
4 can't believe everything in the
5 newspaper, they said that they have five
6 experts coming out of the Beaufort area.
7 Ain't I Gullah? You, too. And I know
8 just as much about that Gullah thing as
9 anybody else. So we have to straighten
10 that out. I don't like when they did
11 that. Whoever got the Commission, you
12 divide and conquered, and we are one. I
13 have a statue and it says I was made one
14 people. Out of the one, many people.
15 And we are, all of us are one whether we
16 are from North Carolina or to Georgia,
17 all of us are Gullah/Geechee, and we are
18 experts on our culture. Now, the other
19 thing that I have, let me see, you know
20 I don't have my glasses on. We need to
21 talk about all of the things around
22 Georgetown, you know. We have this
23 water, but many people call them creek
24 boys. They weren't no creek boys.
25 They're men out there getting oysters

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1 and clams. And I know what Ray talked
2 about his grandfathers, you know. And
3 they wonder why people got drowned the
4 other day, and one of us. You know our
5 ancestors believe that the water brought
6 us here and the water will take us away.
7 Because my mamma caught me trying to
8 swim in, I call it the big ditch, but I
9 didn't know until I got grown it was a
10 canal. And I got a good whipping and I
11 ain't never been back in that water
12 trying to learn how to swim.

13 COMMISSIONER DAISE: What was the name of
14 that canal?

15 MS. RODRIGUES: Um ---

16 MR. WRAGG: That ain't been no
17 canal.

18 MS. RODRIGUES: Yes, it was. It was,
19 yeah; that's why it went out to the
20 Sampit River.

21 MR. WRAGG: Where?

22 MS. RODRIGUES: In Georgetown, yeah,
23 that comes right at the end of your
24 street; that was a canal. That's why it
25 was so big.

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1 MR. WRAGG: You mean that big
2 ditch?
3 MS. RODRIGUES: That big ditch.
4 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)
5 MS. RODRIGUES: Because see, in
6 Georgetown everybody thought it was a
7 big ditch; it was a canal. And then we
8 want to talk about, you know, and I'll
9 show you tomorrow, you know where the
10 fishermen lived and whatnot. We
11 controlled all of the waterways and then
12 Mr. Williams, we have his private
13 license. And you know one thing: You
14 throwing around that you been born over
15 there. So was I, at 428 Broad Street.
16 Right, Lilly?
17 MS. LILLY: 424, yes.
18 MS. RODRIGUES: 424, yeah, 428. Big
19 Mamma's house was 428. So I'm all over
20 Georgetown. I'm from this side to that
21 side. My daddy people from, off of the
22 Pawleys Island; my mother's people was
23 off of the Maxwell Plantation. By the
24 way, I do have my great, great
25 grandfather's carpenter's bench. He was

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1 a carpenter on the plantation. I got an
2 opportunity. And I could tell you any
3 story about Grandma Williams. She was
4 the only enslaved African that I
5 remember. And we have her pestle, okay.
6 So in Georgetown we have a lot of
7 things, and these are Gullah things,
8 too. And, this is the last thing I want
9 to talk about. We need to talk about
10 things that children did and we played.
11 We brought one Gullah doll with us.

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Grass.

13 MS. RODRIGUES: That doll was a grass
14 doll. I do have a Dan Doll I've had
15 about 30 years, and it's made, the Dan
16 Doll was from the Dan Tribe of Liberia.
17 And it's made from the fawn of a palm
18 tree. It has tree braids on it and when
19 we came here we could not find that type
20 of material. So we decided, my
21 ancestors were very resourceful. They
22 pulled up the grass and shaked
23 (phonetically spelled) out the dirt, and
24 rinsed it out in the ditch.

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: And plat their hair.

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1 MS. RODRIGUES: And plat their hair
2 like this lady said. Okay. And I
3 would braid. You see these are things,
4 everybody make everything. There's
5 another lady around her, she's selling,
6 you know what she's selling? Rice
7 heating pad. Now you know good and well
8 we had, if we had rice we didn't put it
9 in no bag to heat the bag.

10 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

11 MS. RODRIGUES: We eat it. You know.
12 So we need to do, we need to have that
13 type of workshop so people can tell.
14 But, yes, it's done by a Gullah artist
15 or whatnot, but it isn't something that
16 we made. And everything we try to do, I
17 try to connect it with the mother
18 country. And I'm going to yield to
19 somebody else, but you know I could talk
20 to y'all all night. (Chuckling.) And
21 thank you very much for listening.

22 AUDIENCE: (Chatter and applause.)

23 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Do you mind? Thank
24 you.

25 MS. WASHINGTON: My name is Zenobia

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1 Washington and one of the things that I
2 wanted to really stress and talk about
3 is: When I was listening to the
4 gentleman from Freewoods Farms, I
5 started thinking about the economics of
6 this whole Gullah/Geechee thing, and I
7 think it's important that if we want for
8 the young people to stay involved and to
9 stay connected, they have to kind of
10 figure out a way that they can make it
11 work for them on a lot of levels,
12 including financially. So the first
13 thing that I thought about was: I wonder
14 if they could grow indigo at Freewoods
15 Farms. I don't know whether the soil
16 is, you know, conducive to that or not.
17 Well, and I'm wondering if I could go
18 buy some indigo and dye cloth and have
19 those types of things for sale so that
20 people can come in and have it, you
21 know, authentic indigo from Georgetown.
22 I'm wondering if we can. I remember a
23 long time ago before Benna Venna
24 plantation was sold I went there to just
25 look at it, and realized that the rice

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1 fields at Benna Venna were uncorrupted.
2 They were, you could have, if you had
3 the manpower and you had the money, you
4 could have started rice production there
5 immediately because there wasn't any
6 corruption to the rice beds. And so I'm
7 wondering if there are really places
8 like that where you can actually
9 purchase rice or grow rice. I'm
10 wondering how to bring things that are
11 Gullah/Geechee to market. I'm wondering
12 how to bring people to the stuff that we
13 do in a respectful way, so that we don't
14 see products in the airport that say
15 Gullah/Geechee instant peach cobbler,
16 and Gullah/Geechee instant bread pudding
17 and all those types of things. It's
18 because ---

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Unintelligible.)

20 MS. WASHINGTON: No, you know, it's
21 because it was like a free for all on
22 the term Gullah/Geechee that you see and
23 hear people using it any kind of way,
24 because there's no structure to it. And
25 so from an economic standpoint there's,

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1 if we don't have any control over it
2 then other people will take control over
3 it and say and do whatever they want to
4 do with it. I remember having a serious
5 conversation with a friend of mine from
6 Indiana, who said I went into the, you
7 know, airport and I bought all this
8 Gullah cuisine. And it's in this bag,
9 and all you have to do is add water, and
10 you stick it on the stove and you cook
11 it. And I said, there is no such thing
12 as instant Gullah food; that does not
13 exist.

14 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

15 MS. WASHINGTON: And so he looked at me
16 and said what you mad at me for?

17 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

18 MS. WASHINGTON: I should be mad at you,
19 because if you know what Gullah food
20 should look like and taste like, then
21 why don't you do something about it?
22 And then you take me to the marketplace
23 to where it needs to be taken because
24 I'm going to buy it. Because I was in
25 South Carolina and I want something that

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1 says that I was here to give to my
2 friends and to my family. And so if you
3 don't do it, then someone else is going
4 to do it. I think that one of the
5 things that Ms. Rodrigues was talking
6 about was interesting, in that I do
7 think that there needs to be authentic
8 Gullah artwork. So there are authentic
9 Gullah baskets, and there are authentic
10 Gullah dolls. And there are authentic
11 Gullah crafts. But, like she also said,
12 one of the things she also said one of
13 the reasons why we are still here as
14 people is because of ingenuity. It's
15 because of innovation. It's because we
16 learn how to survive and to progress,
17 and so things will look different. So
18 as a 42-year old Gullah artist, my art
19 reflects my relationship to the, to the
20 culture. And my daughter's artwork as a
21 photographer, who is 14-years old, is a
22 reflection of her being raised by a
23 Gullah mother and a Gullah grandmother,
24 and a Gullah great grandmother. So we
25 would hope to see the art progress and

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1 to change, or to always have those
2 original and authentic art pieces that
3 keep us grounded to the past. But you
4 want it to go ---

5 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sorry.

6 MS. WASHINGTON: But you want it to
7 continue to go forward and you want it
8 to grow. And the realism of keeping a
9 culture alive is to make sure that your
10 young people stay involved with it. And
11 one of the things that we need to do is
12 to make sure it can sustain them, as
13 well as them sustaining it, and we can't
14 not talk about finances and how to make
15 money doing that. So, thank you.

16 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

17 COMMISSIONER DAISE: About 15 more minutes.
18 We want to have feedback. Yes. And
19 state your name, please.

20 MR. RODRIGUES: I'm Mr. Bunny
21 Rodrigues.

22 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

23 MR. RODRIGUES: My name is Andrew
24 Rodrigues, but the thing that I'm more
25 concerned with is the interpretation of

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1 the Gullah culture. I've gone to places
2 that were supposed to be Gullah places,
3 operated by Gullah people, and I read
4 information that is clearly erroneous,
5 and particularly in relationship to the
6 rice culture. They have us believing
7 that some fellow named Dr. Woodward got
8 the rice, grew it in 1683 to 1685. And
9 the gentleman was dead by 1685, and
10 there was no mention of the cultivation
11 of rice from 1673 to 1689. How he could
12 have possibly done it? And when rice
13 was as important as it was, they sure
14 wouldn't have waited until 1699 to send
15 a sample of that rice, that he
16 supposedly grew, to England to be
17 evaluated. These are the kinds of
18 things that I'm afraid are going to be
19 perpetuated, especially on these
20 plantations where they read from a
21 script that this is what happened. And
22 then you ask them a question and they
23 get an attitude. Or, when we're talking
24 about indigo, they have us believing
25 that Harry -- That, not Harry Grover,

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1 God, no. But Eliza Lucas Pinckney
2 single-handedly introduced that into the
3 culture. Yes, she developed a plan but
4 she couldn't process it into indigo.
5 Her great, great granddaughter clearly
6 points that out; that it was an expert
7 Negro dye maker that her daddy sent from
8 Antigua who taught them how to process
9 indigo. But these are the kind of
10 things that we're not told when we go to
11 these plantations or these other
12 interpretive things. So I think it is a
13 big part of the Commission's
14 responsibility to make sure that these
15 people who are going to be spreading the
16 word about Gullah aren't doing what my
17 chemistry professor at South Carolina
18 State said when I raised my hand and
19 didn't know the answer. She said, "Boy,
20 sit down because we got enough ignorance
21 in here, and we don't need you spreading
22 anymore." But what's happening is that
23 these people are spreading ignorance.
24 Please, please, I beg of you, to do the
25 best that you can to eliminate that

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1 problem.

2 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

3 COMMISSIONER DAISE: And who's next? Go
4 ahead.

5 MR. ROBERTS: Thank you. My name is
6 Michael Roberts and I'm from Coastal
7 Carolina University. I'm not going to
8 speak for a long time. I think what you
9 all have to say is a lot more important
10 than what I have to say. But I did want
11 to mention that Coastal Carolina
12 University is very interested in using
13 its resources to help develop this
14 project. We have a number of
15 initiatives at various places up and
16 down the coast working on both
17 scientific and sociological studies.
18 And we're particularly interested in
19 using a facility we have in Litchfield,
20 and using that as a center that can
21 perhaps be used to act as a center and
22 gather information. And gather accurate
23 information and then to use to get the
24 word out about this Cultural Heritage
25 Corridor to the world at large. We're

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1 hiring faculty in the area of
2 anthropology and archeology. And again
3 the important thing is: We want to be
4 able to hear from you and collaborate
5 with you to make sure that we do get the
6 word out, the accurate word out about
7 the importance of this culture in this
8 part of the state. Thank you very much.

9 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

10 MS. McCOY: Evening, Gladys McCoy.
11 I'm piggybacking on what Rodrigues said
12 about who writes history. There is a
13 saying: He who conquers writes the
14 history. So we know what has happened
15 when it comes to my history. My focus
16 and interest in this Gullah/Geechee
17 Corridor is the history of the music. I
18 am a musician and music tells a story of
19 a people. So that is an area that I
20 would be interested in, and I am
21 interested in focusing on doing this
22 study.

23 AUDEIENCE: (Applause.)

24 MAYOR PIERCE: Good evening, everyone.
25 I have been very enlightened by all the

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1 speakers highlighting the aspects of our
2 culture and our heritage that they would
3 like to see included in the corridor.

4 COMMISSIONER DAISE: State your name.

5 MAYOR PIERCE: My name is Mayor Retha
6 Pierce of Atlantic Beach, South
7 Carolina. And everything that I've
8 heard has really excited me. And I'm
9 very excited about the whole idea of the
10 corridor, you know, Georgia, North
11 Carolina, South Carolina and down the
12 line. And I would like to say, follow-
13 up on all the things that I have heard
14 that are definitely deserving to be
15 noted on this corridor. That the fact
16 about Myrtle Beach being on that map up
17 there, I think that would be an insult
18 to have Myrtle Beach up there instead of
19 Atlantic Beach, Georgetown, they say,
20 because they're just going to ---

21 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

22 MAYOR PIERCE: --- cash in, cash in
23 on our culture. You'll see shark teeth
24 with Gullah/Geechee on them and they'll
25 be selling them three for \$10, you know.

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1 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

2 MAYOR PIERCE: We don't need that. We
3 need Atlantic Beach up there, so don't
4 forget us. And don't forget Georgetown
5 and the segments of the coast that
6 really need to be sites, heritage sites.
7 I'm excited about it. I heard the music
8 needs to be included in it, just
9 everything. And just being a former
10 educator as well, 30 years in 1998 or
11 over 30 years I had put in before I
12 retired. It really hurt me. I
13 literally cried when I went into a
14 history teacher's room after I had
15 become assistant principal to observe
16 that teacher, and to know the kind of
17 history that's in the books, and that
18 our history's not there. It wasn't
19 there. And then I thought this is why
20 our children are lost. They're
21 disconnected. That's another reason I'm
22 real excited about this heritage
23 corridor. And I want to see our culture
24 and heritage go down in history like
25 it's supposed to be. The children were

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1 being taught out of books that did not
2 really include our history. And when I
3 was in class, of course, I was an
4 English teacher. But I just knew the
5 history books were telling a story, and
6 our kids became disconnected and they're
7 trying to be somebody they're not.
8 They're trying to fashion themselves
9 after ideals that are not out there
10 because they don't have this heritage,
11 this cultural heritage information.
12 They're not rooted and grounded in the
13 knowledge of our Gullah/Geechee
14 background. So I'm real excited about
15 the whole ordeal and I really enjoyed
16 all the things that I heard tonight.
17 And please don't forget: Put Atlantic
18 Beach up there, not Myrtle Beach.

19 AUDIENCE: (Laughter and
20 applause.)

21 MAYOR PIERCE: Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Five more minutes. You
23 interested?

24 MS. SIMMONS: Yes, I was trying to
25 give everybody the opportunity because I

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1 was hoping to close out; thank you very
2 much. Anyway, there are five people in
3 the audience that are familiar with me
4 and know me. I grew up in the Dunbar
5 community, which has a very rich, rich,
6 rich history. As a little girl, as you
7 can see I'm not, you know about it, you
8 can see I'm light skinned. But anyway,
9 I was that kind of girl that never grew
10 up from not asking questions as little
11 children ask why. So when something was
12 presented to me or if I heard something,
13 then I would try to talk slow, but yet
14 fast, because I know you may have a
15 little problem understanding me because
16 I never tried to get rid of my
17 Gullah/Geechee English speaking sort of
18 speak. My family tried to be proper.
19 Me, I just try to be Joyce, and that's
20 the best way I know how to be. But
21 anyway, my childhood growing up of being
22 light skinned in our community, which is
23 more dark than my color, but it didn't
24 start with me. It started in my
25 father's siblings, which was eight of

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1 them. My grandmother had married to her
2 husband, John Cox, who's mother was a
3 white woman, Maggie Duncan. And as
4 those children was growing up, the way
5 of getting around was of course in the
6 back of a wagon. So they drew a lot of
7 attention. Now when those children grew
8 up and got married and had us, again,
9 another more darker complexion community
10 and we being the lighter one, we got a
11 lot of attention. And as a result of
12 that, me growing up as a little girl and
13 going around in the neighborhood to the
14 older people, they would always point at
15 me and say you must be John Cox grand.
16 And for that reason, lead me to the
17 question of why every time someone will
18 identify me with this man. A man I
19 never knew. I didn't even know this was
20 my grandfather or anything because I had
21 never seen him. And as a result of
22 that, 20 years, and I'm trying to make
23 everything really short, 20 years prior
24 to the 10 years as I was writing on this
25 book, and my mouth is very dry for some

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1 crazy reason. I always had an interest
2 in how I looked the way I looked. I
3 always had an interest in that because
4 it was always asking me or telling me
5 that I must be this person. And as a
6 matter of doing the research, I found
7 out how I got my complexion so I could
8 identify with that. But along with
9 knowing that, I learned so many other
10 things about my grandfather and other
11 people in the community. And growing up
12 as a little girl, one thing that I did
13 hear from my grand -- Anyway, my
14 grandmother was 19 years old when she
15 met my grandfather, which was 56. And
16 he had eight children with her. And
17 then at the time he died, because he
18 left a baby boy about 6-months old. And
19 then later my grandmother got married to
20 a older man. And that's the grandfather
21 that I knew and thought that was my
22 grandfather. His name was Sam Watson.
23 So my father would always send us over
24 to the house to, you know, do things for
25 them because that's just the way you

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1 used to do back then. And he would
2 tell, he told me one day, he says, he
3 was trying to tell me something but I
4 couldn't understand. He said, "Gal, go
5 fetch 'em." And I'm trying to figure
6 out what in the God Heaven this man is
7 trying to tell me he want me to do. And
8 he said, "Gal, go fetch 'em." And so
9 just like you talk about the
10 Gullah/Geechee language, it's things
11 like that I did not understand. But
12 what he was trying to tell me: go to get
13 something. But I did not understand the
14 language. So even today, if we was to
15 bring our language back to we never
16 really lost it. We have to come to a
17 dictionary or a definition with it. So
18 we can understand what it is somebody
19 was saying. When I start doing the book
20 and talking to a lot of older people, I
21 hear some of y'all say that we have lost
22 our history. But I am privileged and I
23 am blessed to say we didn't lost at all.

24 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Not at all.

25 MS. SIMMONS: The reason I'm saying

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1 that, and I say blessed and gifted, I
2 was able to talk to thousands of people
3 within the last 10 years since I was
4 doing this book. And I had the
5 privilege of meeting some people that
6 was 100, 112, and just over the hundred
7 mark. And then I got a chance to meet
8 Ms. Darlena Shubert, which was a lady
9 that lived 120, in the Georgetown
10 community. But along with talking to
11 these people, they tell me things that
12 happened on the plantation. And one
13 person told me something that I would
14 never forget, but I also know that it
15 was not always really mean, cruel
16 plantation owner. But she told me when
17 I went to interview her, she says that
18 on the plantation that her parents grew
19 up on, the Massa (phonetically spelled)
20 would not allow them to address the
21 Almighty God when they prayed. They had
22 to call out their Massa (phonetically
23 spelled) name. And I thought to myself,
24 what man would put themselves in the
25 position ahead of the Almighty God that

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1 these people that you think you own
2 address you instead of the Almighty God,
3 to whom they should be praying to? And
4 know that some of the things that I'm
5 mentioning now that I was, what I was
6 told to, I was told during my interview
7 that will be in my book and other stuff.
8 And, no, I'm not out here trying to
9 promote my book, but I'm just letting
10 you know that all of this is not lost.
11 I'm trying to put it out, but God have
12 mercy, it is very difficult because I'm
13 trying to do it correctly.

14 AUDIENCE: (Chatter.)

15 MS. SIMMONS: There's a lot, like I
16 said, there's a lot of people waiting on
17 my work.

18 MR. WRAGG: That's right.

19 MS. SIMMONS: But I have to go, but
20 there's one thing I must say. I have no
21 typing skill, and so everything was like
22 I had to beg somebody to do the typing,
23 but I'm good at doing the writing and
24 all that stuff like that. But I want it
25 recorded correctly. If I interview your

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1 grandmamma or your great granddaddy,
2 they told me, like one man said to me:
3 Honey, there ain't been nobody with the
4 beat ground back here. Okay, those kind
5 of, I want to put it the way they tell
6 it to me. I don't want to address it in
7 my way. I want to tell the story the
8 way they said it to me, so you can
9 appreciate the things I heard, too. So
10 the only thing I'm asking from y'all is:
11 Really just keep praying for me and the
12 book will be coming out soon.

13 AUDIENCE: (Laughter.)

14 MS. SIMMONS: And like I say, it's
15 10 years in writing, 10 years in
16 writing; that's how long I was writing.
17 And 20 years prior to that; that's about
18 30 years of just trying ---

19 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

20 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: 30 years.

21 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Thank you. Thank you
22 so much. We are, the reception
23 following and we're coming to a close,
24 is the, provided by the South Carolina
25 African-American Heritage Commission, so

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1 we are going to close out. And we are
2 going to allow you to go and get
3 refreshments, after which time we are
4 going to make some recognitions. But we
5 would like someone, if someone could
6 offer a prayer before we begin to eat.
7 Anyone want to raise your hand, please
8 do so. I am not going to be a hog, and
9 before I eat, my, I realize my blood
10 sugar is, level is low. So if anyone
11 can do so, please come forward.

12 MR. RODRIGUES: Ron, can you, there's
13 somebody here that I think we need to
14 recognize, and that's Cynthia Forshee,
15 who is responsible for putting together
16 and doing the research and whatnot for
17 the Gullah Resource Book. I think we
18 need to give her the credit, and at
19 least give her a hand.

20 AUDIENCE: (Applause.)

21 COMMISSIONER DAISE: Thank you so much,
22 Cynthia Forshee.

23 COMMISSIONER ALLEN: Let's all stand as we
24 prepare to be dismissed, but also to
25 move to our time of refreshing.

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CLOSING PRAYER

COMMISSIONER ALLEN: (Prays.)

(The meeting concluded at 8:35 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, Melissa M. Decker, Notary Public in and for the State of South Carolina, do hereby certify that the foregoing proceeding was recorded by me by open tape and Stenomask, reduced to typewriting and proofed under my direct supervision, and the foregoing consecutively numbered pages are a complete and accurate record of the proceeding given at said time;

That the undersigned is neither of kin nor in anywise associated with any of the parties to said cause of action, nor any counsel thereto, and that I am not interested in the event(s) thereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and seal this the 18th day of August, 2009.

Melissa M. Decker
Court Reporter
Notary Public in and for
The State of South Carolina
My Commission Expires: 1-23-14

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