Proceedings of the 2010 Delta Symposium

August 19-21

Culture Change & Continuity in the Delta Region

A scholarly conversation between researchers and members of the folk communities in the Mississippi River Delta Region

Funded by: National Park Service's Delta Initiative and the Cane River Creole National Historical Park

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A scholarly conversation between researchers and
members of the folk communities in the Mississippi River Delta Region

Edited by Pete Gregory, Shane Rasmussen, and Sheila Richmond

Introduction by Pete Gregory

Designed by James Christopher Callahan and Sheila Richmond

Transcriptions by Sheila Richmond

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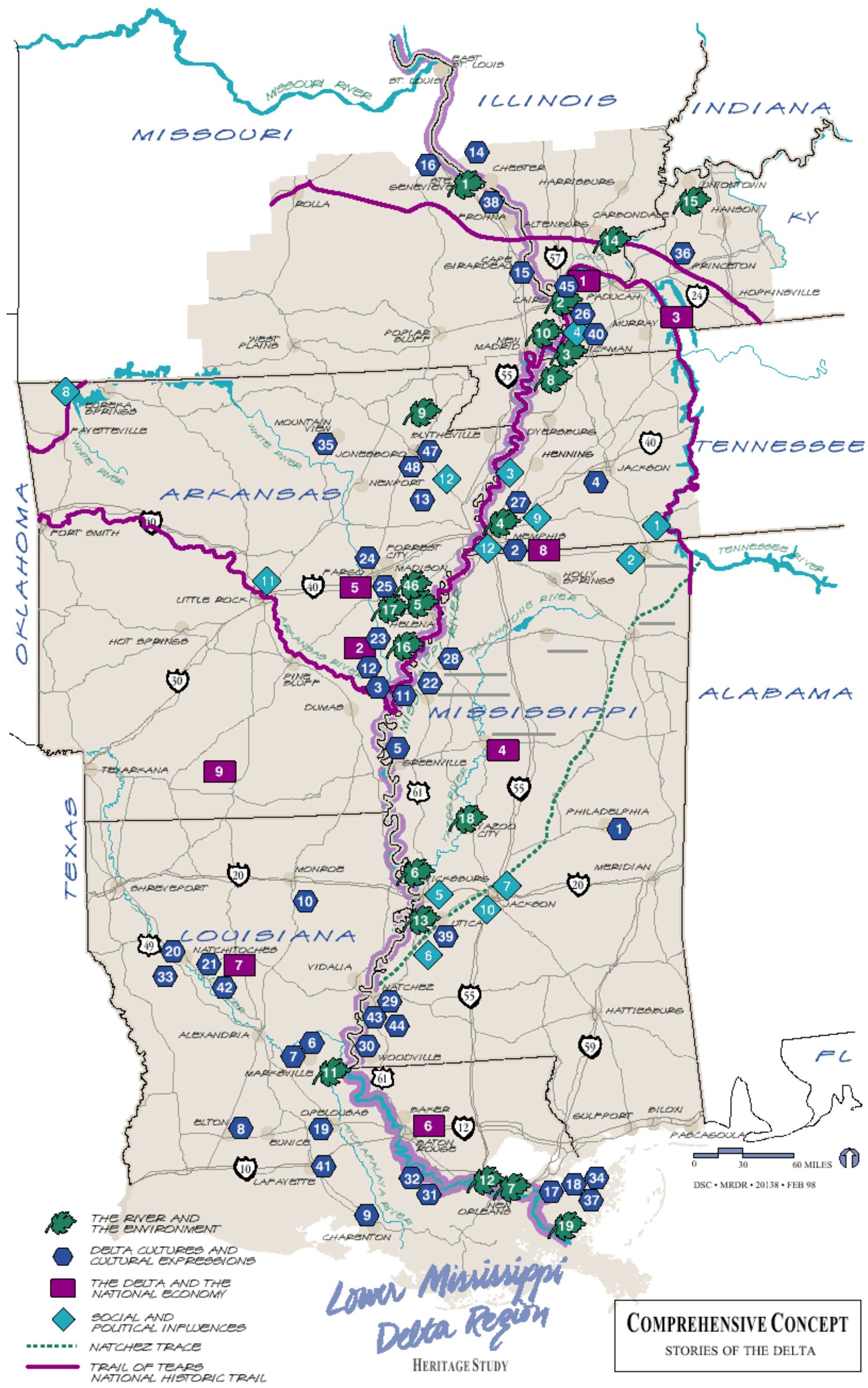

Map courtesy of National Park Service
Lower Mississippi Region Delta Initiative

Delta Symposium Introduction

Dr. Pete Gregory

In 2010 we decided to invite people from the Delta Regions to a series of conversations about the people and place. We discussed a deliberate effort to bring community people together with a minimal group of related scholars. This was intended as a sample of Delta culture, in hopes it would open other, more specific conversations. It would serve as a compass for future research, community action, and preservation efforts.

We hoped that all these folks would talk about who and what they were. It sort of worked. Panels of people: American Indians, African Americans, Creoles, Mississippi River Atchafalaya communities, and the "new" populations: East Indians, Latinos, and Chinese all came. People from the National Park Service, State Folklife program office, universities, and local communities joined in.

Funding for travel from the Delta Initiative of the National Park Service helped with peoples' ability to show up and to talk. We set no problems, no tasks, and saw our jobs as just people to introduce the panels, perhaps asking questions, perhaps not. It was informal, and the participants went in directions we often had not anticipated.

This meeting took place on the heels of two terrible hurricanes that left awful economic conditions in the states and regions, and while people were anticipating the worst from the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Some conversations went straight to those issues. What was being lost – e.g. the state supported folklife apprenticeships, the lower coastal fisheries – while others were more optimistic. The wealth accumulating from American Indian casinos is building museums, funding language programs, and opening tribal activism re-cultural heritage. Sometimes we waxed a bit nostalgic, reminiscing about different times, memories mostly. These discussions also saw flashes of anger, disappointment, and cries for help. One young man asked elders for advice on how to keep his language, Creole French, working for him because college had not helped! Others inquired about how American Indian people were trying to "re-connect" the elders and the youth. Answers sometimes were careful, people walking softly through the multi-cultural experiences of the Delta Region. Trying to say what needed saying without the anger, disappointment and frustrations stopping the conversation.

Through it all comes some flashing insights into what people did or did not know about the diversified lifestyles of the Mississippi Delta.

We have transcribed these discussions, sometimes in English, others scattered with at least three American Indian languages and Cajun French. We feel these transcriptions express better than any edited scholarship the range of emotions felt currently by the folks in the Delta, as well as give insights into the many cultural variations that people live in the Delta. Reading these conversations will leave the Delta on your mind for a good while. We invited musicians to play or dance – by informances to give musicality a chance – another mode of sharing.

It is hoped that the reader can somehow participate, albeit serendipitously, in the moment of this gathering. Welcome to the Delta!

Perspectives

The Choctaw, Jena Band of Choctaw, Chitimacha, Alabama-Coushatta and Tunica-Biloxi Communities are among the more prosperous, optimistic communities in the Delta. Casinos, or the hopes for a casino, offer them options they have not had since the European invasion. After generations of poverty and losses of land and resources, it is

heartening to see not only increased prosperity, but also each community diligently working at sovereignty and the maintenance of tradition. Art, and language particularly, have been realized and appreciated, and positive efforts made to keep these viable.

Walter Celestine pointed out that tribal people know best how to do tribal things, like ways to affiliate younger people with more traditional elders. John Paul Darden noted the Chitimacha Tribe's *Rosetta Stone* program- using modern technology to teach the harbinger of culture, language. The youngest Native American participant, Jean Luc Pierite, discussed getting the majority Americans to recognize American Indians as people, not as some abstraction or stereotype. In essence, stressing that they are alive and well, not a lot of losers trying to make a comeback.

The Creoles started off entirely in their language. A moderator, Sheila Richmond, had to stop them and ask they speak English to those not fluent in Creole or standard French. They really did not want to do that — they wanted to stress their goal of keeping Creole French, their medium for maintenance and survival. The elders knew that language and used it daily, and younger people lamented access to it. Tracey Colson pointed out that she, like her peers, came to the culture inside out since she lacked the language. The Thibodeauxs, Goldman and Teresa urged younger people to let them teach, help them learn the culture. "We'll teach." They invited people to "come to their house" and speak. Goldman, a famous Creole musician, talked about music as the vehicle for interesting and teaching the younger Creoles language and culture. He noted he was disappointed when the young musicians sang words they did not understand! Surrounded by Acadians, the older and more culturally and racially diverse Creole culture was and still is less often recognized publicly in Louisiana, and non-Creoles seemed to miss the point a lot. Creole — more than the language — was, like the American Indian cultures — making a run towards, not away from, survival. Advising one young man in the audience who explained he had difficulty with speaking French, Mrs. Theresa Thibodeaux advised him to "relax, and use the language. Don't worry, speak it to yourself. Just use it!" Creoles brought a complexity to the Delta from urban "returnees," to New Orleans urbanites, and the prairie, rural, and swamp populations in South Louisiana. Their enclaves in the Red River region (Cane River) were linked to Chicago, Dallas, and Los Angeles. They all participated in rejuvenation of family by visiting back and forth. Teaching seemed the task of the whole community, and the Delta became the repository for language and tradition, a living culture pumping hard to survive and adapt.

The Anglo-American session led to vibrant discussions of the "New South" communities like Ferriday, Louisiana. Ms. Judith Bingham brought the perspective of the white sharecroppers moving to a sawmill and railroad town. That led the cross-fertilization of black and Creole traditions — country, blues, and finally rockabilly resulted. Music is still evolving in the Delta.

Marcy Frantom brought in the music and culture of the "hill" people along the margins of the flood plains. Upland Anglo-Saxon traditions – new movements like Bluegrass music – again show viability attracting young musicians to their elders. Younger people lament the loss of the vast swamps and whole ecosystems – all wiped out in their lifetimes.

The African Americans, in some ways more diverse than their Creole cousins, could talk about some of the same topics. The youngest anthropologist, Rolonda Teal, voiced anger that some communities were "invisible." Blacks, but also Hispanics, found themselves without acknowledgment. Dr.

Joyce Jackson discussed the community of Fazendeville, displaced by part of Jean Lafitte National Park and re-organized only to be shattered by Katrina. The focus of their plantation community's Battle Ground Church seemed to hold them together. Now in the aftermath of all their troubles Dr. Jackson finds them united in efforts to survive. Blues musicians, like Hezekiah Early and "Lil' Poochie," the classic arts representatives from the Delta, commented on the changing scenes of regional life. The downturn in the economy at Natchez, Mississippi, closure of the paper mill, a Johns-Manville, and a tire plant left the Black community there in economically dire straits. The music venues changed. Hezekiah Early commented on the shift to European "gigs" and reminisced about the drum and fife parades at Anna Bottoms when he was younger. Such parading has virtually disappeared, but high school band parades enabled black style to remain. Hardrick Rivers, a high school music teacher, commented on the "coming and going" of music in the Natchitoches, Louisiana area. One sheriff had all the clubs and music heard in the 1940's and '50's virtually shut down. Recent tourism and the presence of the Cane River Heritage Area and the National Park on Cane River have helped revitalize the music. One traditional blues club in Natchitoches has survived, and weekly performances keep it lively. Bands have changed, with white musicians taking to the blues, and bands are often integrated as are the clubs. Young people, with teachers like Hardrick, are beginning to appreciate the depth and range of blues and jazz. Peoples' appreciation of music in the black and Creole communities make it a viable tool for teaching and maintaining African American traditional arts.

While Rolonda Teal's notification of need and neglect calls attention to inequities and needs, the Natchez and Natchitoches situations mark the continuing contributions to the arts, and the irony of the Old South persists. Blues is a slowly changing medium, and contrary to Zydeco and Cajun has not become a youthful expression. Still, the school experiences of Rivers are filled with hope, even a little joy. His kids love the blues.

The "New Populations," Maida Owens' term for them, were represented by people from three such populations: East Indian, Chinese, and Latino. Dr. Rasmussen's lead opened that discussion, but the panelists soon went in their own directions.

Members of the Hispanic group, Irma Rodriguez – a new Mexican resident – and Martha Cechini Walker – a Delta plantations-Bolivian plantations-Spanish-Latina – were soon comparing experiences. Irma Rodriguez brokers for a whole community of Mexican people working in the commercial gardens of Forest Hill, Louisiana, and Martha Walker, raised on two plantations, one in Tensas Parish in the Delta and the other near Cochabamba, Bolivia, works with foreign language (Spanish) speaking children and families in the Natchitoches, Louisiana area. Language, again, quickly rose to the fore. Ms. Rodriguez comments on helping her neighbors via her grocery/restaurant, turned restaurant, with all sorts of linguistic and social needs. She also noted their "Rocking the Baby" custom at Christmas and their attempts at keeping Mexican traditions alive. Her son, a recent L.S.U. graduate, and her daughter have kept their language and traditions intact while adapting to a thoroughly Americanized life. Ms. Walker's family worked at keeping her connections to Spanish language when she was brought to the Delta as a child. She married and raised her children in Valencia, Spain. Her Spanish speaking family now includes in-laws from the Canary Islands, Mexico, and Spain as well as some Bolivian connections. The stereotypical Mexican migrants fell away rapidly, and the diversity of the Spanish culture of the Delta became read-

ily apparent. Emphasis was on the family. Family, more than any other cultural element, seems to hold the Hispanic cultures together. Language, religion and the wider community all gave way to family. It likely is significant that the Hispanic panelists were women, and as likely that is reflected in a family sort of orientation. However, the roles of the Latina women as entrepreneurs, teachers, and community church leaders clearly showed what may be new roles for Hispanic women in the Delta.

The two East Indian participants – Dr. Chandan Sharma and Pinki Diwan – were, again, women. In this case both were upper middle class, well-educated, women. Both worked outside the home in education and research. They stressed their families' interest in education, strongly encouraging their children in the professions. One person enquired of these ladies if they were not of a select group of East Indians; the speaker had worked with East Indian deck hands and had a different perspective. The ladies agreed, and the conversation shifted slightly to the political values of East Indians in the U.S., not just in the Delta. The discussion between these women, like that between the two Hispanic women, reflects some new traditions, and the emphasis on family and a broad range of adaptations are enabling their traditions to survive. An interesting cross-cultural discussion about raising children pointed out that it was o.k. to have kids visit over night at East Indian or Hispanic homes, but not the reverse. They were adjusting to new positions. Even so, the parents felt stress.

The Chinese all came from one area in South Louisiana near Baton Rouge. They represented a group of young, first generation Chinese. It is import, they say, to keep together, to do traditional dances and to explain who and what they are. Their almost homesick discussion of their dance and costumes marks the beginning of a new generation coming to the Delta. Up river near Ferriday or Greenville, Mississippi, the families who run the Chinese grocery stores have produced engineers, doctors, and nurses. Some had even sailed to China as officers in the U.S. Navy! Their parents related to the experiences the Sunshine Dancers are still trying to maintain and share. Maybe their kids do not, at least not in the same ways.

We had, until circumstances intervened, hoped to have participants from the Thai and Vietnamese who are now part of the Delta. Efforts in that community have led to the survival of their Lakeside community near New Orleans. Unfortunately, none of the community leaders nor the anthropologists-folklorists who work there were able to join this symposium. Their efforts at defending their community from both ecological and developmental pressures have attracted national attention.

The Mississippi River – the ultimate source of the Delta – and its tributaries have always supported a variety of fisherfolk. With only a handful of studies available it seemed a good time to re-visit with them, along with the folklorists and anthropologists that study them. Ray Brassieur had suggested a young man from Avoyelles Parish — a boat-builder, a fisherman and a hunter — Dale Bordelon. Their experiences represented the present and the recent past. Pete Gregory, who had worked with fishing communities on the Black and lower Red Rivers in the 1960s, brought a more historic perspective. It was apparent that the communities were disappearing. Sports-fishing was replacing commercial fishing, and widespread catfish and crawfish "farming" were replacing the wild products from the rivers, lakes, and bayous. Efforts at maintenance were beginning. Seines, almost disappearing in the 1960s, were coming back to catch bait/food for crawfish, and the rise of unemployment was opening markets for gar, buffalo fish, and Drum (Gou). The younger fisherman, also a woodcarver and boat builder, farmed

more than fished. Brassieur pointed out the shifts in demographics on the lower Atchafalaya. Gregory noted the advent of vast land-clearing by corporate farms in the upper Delta and the spread of soy bean farming had virtually destroyed areas on the Black and lower Red Rivers. Herbicides and pesticides had led to a real ecological crisis, the dire health impacts affecting both fishermen and farmers. The recent folk occupations: fishing, moss-gathering, crawfish and turtle trapping, alligator hunting persist and are even making a slight renaissance. Still, the environmental situation left little to be optimistic about. The young participant was actually a revivalist, working at maintaining what he saw going away, trying to "hold on." Cajuns particularly were forced to abandon a lifestyle many regret leaving. Dance halls in towns are few, educational levels are low, and these cultural and ecological changes are even destroying some small fish market towns like Jonesville in Catahoula Parish. Of all the discussions this was the most depressing. The fact that people kept with the struggle was the only hopeful thing about it. One by-product of this symposium was a result of this session. It led to an *ad hoc* meeting at the NSU Louisiana Studies Conference in September and created a call for a wider conference to include the Katrina/Rita impacted coastal communities and to seek a wider, perhaps more activist approach to preserving this aspect of Delta heritage.

Conclusions and Hopes

The New Orleans voices were represented by Dr. Joyce Jackson, and the post-Katrina city still kept some things from happening away from the city. The timing of the funding kept National Park Service personnel limited because of expenses. The Delta Regional funds were not available to them as Federal employees. There was the problem of academics with little free time. State agencies personnel – museum caretakers, and even the state folklorist – were without any funding, so we were able, at least, to help them with travel funds.

Such gatherings stimulate others, and in this case we think were encouraging to those of us post-Katrina, struck with draconian cuts in state program budgets, wiped out by massive corporate land-clearing. Had we known the BP Oil Spill was our next misadventure we might have waited. The history of this corner of the vast Delta is but a microcosm of the whole. Yet, we still feel this little conversation encouraged us, made us want to do more, save more, and take steps to do all that together. The voices were loud and largely optimistic, and left us feeling the Delta was still a remarkable place. As you hear or read these conversations we think you will understand.

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We regret that after hard efforts Ronald Lewis, Guiyuan Wang, and Laura Westbrook did not get to attend, but we appreciate their efforts to work and preserve Delta culture.

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Introduction

Welcome

Participants:

Dr. Lisa Abney, Provost, Northwestern State University (NSU)
Laura Gates, Cane River Creole National Historical Park
Maida Owens, Louisiana Division of the Arts Folklife Program
Dr. Shane Rasmussen, Louisiana Folklife Center, NSU
Dr. Randall Webb, President, NSU

Shane Rasmussen: I want to welcome you to the 2010 Delta Symposium. I hate to break up the conversation because conversation is why we are here today. This is a wonderful activity: an example of collaboration at its best. Everyone here is a VIP. It will be a chance for all of us to talk. I want to introduce myself. I'm Dr. Shane Rasmussen with the Louisiana Folklife Center. The co-director of the symposium is Dr. Pete Gregory of Williamson Museum and NSU for the past 45 years. I'd like to introduce Dr. Randall Webb, president of NSU.

Randall Webb: Thank you. Good morning. It's such a privilege to welcome each of you to Northwestern's lovely campus and to this conference which we feel is very important and will shed a lot of light on an important region of the state, and as far as that's concerned on various cultures within this state, not to mention Mississippi. When I grew up, I grew up in Haynesville about on the Arkansas line. It was not unusual for my daddy to come in to a movie theater on a Saturday afternoon and say, "Your mother and I have decided we are going to go to Clarksdale." I don't know if any of you know what that means. That means we go get in a car, probably, at best an early 1950s Plymouth or Chrysler or something like that. We'd go through two-lane roads and cross at Hamburg [AR], Lake Village and through there, and finally to Greenville, and then up the Delta of Mississippi to Clarksdale. Our main reason for going wasn't to stay in Clarksdale, but to visit Ms. Parchmen who owned an antique shop in Lyon, Mississippi. To me that trip was always so very enjoyable because of the expanse of the Delta. Of course at that time because of the beauty the Delta, because cotton was king. In those days, cotton, as you know, was a major cash crop in this area. It is still grown, but it is not the cash crop that it was. Just as in life itself, lots of things have changed. The Delta has changed; the Red River Delta has changed, but they are regions packed with history, packed with cultural differentiations. Frankly, I'm going to hang around for a while to learn a little bit more about the Delta, the Mississippi Delta.

You'll find that at Northwestern in Natchitoches, one thing we do is strive to create effective partnerships. The university works pretty closely with the city, with the parish, with the Louisiana Creole Heritage Center here, and, of course, the folks that carry on all of our good work of our Louisiana Folklife Center. You name it among Federal agencies, we are blessed to have the National Park, the Cane River Creole National Park, the National Heritage Area. You can just keep naming groups, the organizations; today we have great representation from the Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce. We all work together effectively and cooperatively to try to do good and better things for the whole. So it is a pleasure to introduce you. If you haven't been with us before, I hope you get a glimpse of this kind of cooperative spirit. Thank you. We are just here to help.

Lisa Abney: I'll just echo what Dr. Webb

said. I'm Lisa Abney. I'm the Provost and Vice-President of Academic and Student Affairs at Northwestern. I am delighted to see this conference. Like all of our other conferences that we host at Northwestern, we think it is so important for us to have a great opportunity like this for us to exchange ideas, to share new information and research in this era of skinny budgets and budget cuts, especially funding for the humanities which has had lots of cuts. It is important that we come together and work hard and work together to host these kinds of events. We appreciate all of our sponsors and all of our folks who worked together to put this together. Pete and Shane, you guys have done amazing work. I was looking at the agenda, and I want to stay here all day today and tomorrow, too. Unfortunately, I have to sneak out and go to another meeting and give a greeting there. I just wanted to welcome you and let you know that I am so happy to have you on our campus. I'm looking forward to seeing you tonight at the reception and maybe later today at one of the sessions. Have a wonderful time while you are here, and we look forward to hopefully seeing you next year. Thank you.

Rasmussen: Thank you so much Dr. Webb and Dr. Abney. I'd like to introduce now Laura Gates with the National Park Service. I should mention that we are so in debt to these guys. Without the Park Service, this would not be happening, so thank you.

Laura Gates: Thank you, Shane. Good morning.

Bonjour (French)
He he (Biloxi)
Halitoh (Choctaw)
Ha way (Quapaw)
Waŝ tog'eé(Chitimacha)
Koo ah aht (Caddo)
Chick mah (Alabama}
Ni hao ma (Chinese/mandarin)
Buenos Dias (Spanish)

Those are only a few of the languages from the Delta. Welcome to the 2010 Delta Symposium. I'm not sure that my pronunciation was too good, so please forgive me.
Cheryl Smith: *Chokema! Chokema! Chokema!* [Good]

Gates: I tried to say "good morning" in Biloxi, Choctaw, Quapaw, Chitimacha, Caddo, Alabama, Chinese, of course you heard the French, too, and Spanish. I'm sure I've forgotten someone. Oh, "*Aloha*." [Short exchange in Hawaiian here]

Welcome to the Delta Symposium. For those of you who don't know, we do have a small group of Hawaiians in the Delta. That's why Max Turner is waving his hand out there.

I'm Laura Gates. I'm superintendent at Cane River Creole National Historical Park. The park includes two French Creole cotton plantations that are down Cane River – Oakland Plantation and the outbuildings at Magnolia Plantation. These were set aside by Congress in 1994 because of the national significance of their resources. I do have a few park brochures. If you are interested, please come down and visit. If you are from the area and haven't visited us in a while, please come back and visit. We're constantly undergoing change and progress. We'd love to have you come down there.

My national park is within the Cane River National Heritage Area which was also set aside by Congress because of its cultural landscape, because in this very small geographic region there are very distinctive features and very distinctive cultures that created the shape and the hand of human beings on the landscape. You can sense that as you drive through it, as you leave Natchitoches and head south along Cane River and back in along the river. You can see everything from arpent lines which are the old French land

divisions, that sometimes you see huge historic trees and the fence rows. You'll see the shape of Cane River itself. You'll see historic structures that don't really feel like so many other historic structures that you might see in other parks in the United States or even other parks in the southeast. These are all adapted to this local place, to the climate, to the available materials, and to the available technology. That's one of the key parts of what makes the Delta, the Delta.

Let's go back to the Delta Initiatives again that helped to fund this conference. In 1994, Congress passed legislation that provided very broad authorities for recognizing, celebrating and highlighting the cultures of the Lower Mississippi [River] Delta. The legislation, called the Lower Mississippi Delta Region Initiatives, included opportunities for programs in the seven states of the Delta. And the states are Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, also southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois and western Kentucky. So even up a little bit further north, all those other places that edge right along the Mississippi River but are geologically part of the Mississippi Delta.

The legislation provided some initial funding for preserving historic structures at historically black colleges and universities in the Delta region. It provided funding for a planning study to assess the resources of the Delta and make recommendations for tourism and interpretation. It authorized but did *not* provide funding for the development of the Native American heritage corridor and cultural center for the Delta. It authorized, but did *not* provide funding for the development of an African American heritage corridor and cultural center in the Delta. Also included were historic and pre-historic sites surveys and small historic and archaeological resource programs. Tucked away in a section of the law, too, is the authority for grants and technical assistance to further aspects of the legislation. Those grants and technical assistance aspects are supposed to highlight cultural conservation, documentation of the cultures, and resource stewardship. There has been a small amount of funding that the directors of the National Park Service have set aside annually since 1994 in furtherance of the Lower Mississippi Delta Region Initiatives. These are discretionary funds that the director of the National Park Service still continues to send to the Delta for distribution primarily to National Park Service partners for special programs like this one. Annually the National Park Service oversees about $225,000 worth of grants and technical assistance. Projects that we've funded that many of you might be familiar with include two symposia that we've had over the past couple of years on Southeastern Indian Basketry. One was on Southeastern Indian split cane basketry, and we helped fund this with a number of partners including the Forest Service, Northwestern, and Dayna and Pete probably can come up. . . .

Dayna Lee: The Regional Folklife Program, Williamson Museum, Louisiana Division of the Arts.

Gates: Thank you. I can't remember all the partners in each of these projects. What Dr. Webb had mentioned earlier – partnership is really the key. When we all join together, we can get an awful lot done.

This was the proceedings of the first Southeastern Indian Basketry Conference [Holds up book]. We also helped fund an international symposium on French Colonial Pottery. This was funded with some dollars from the National Park Service. It was hosted by the Tunica Biloxi tribe in Marksville. It was funded also, I believe, by the other partners Dayna had mentioned earlier, including the Folklife Program and others. When we joined all of these partners together, we came up with another phenomenal project. This one was held, I believe, in 2002

in Marksville. We tried to hold it in 2001, but the nation had other priorities it was dealing with at that time. We've been trying to spread this Delta money around the Delta for some time, around this area of the Delta.

Another project that we funded is one that Pete and Dayna worked on considerably for a considerably long period of time with the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma. I have a few brochures on this one too. It resulted in a permanent exhibit up at the Caddo Nation headquarters in Binger, Oklahoma, as well as this. It was bringing the elders to the places that they were connected with in Louisiana, Mississippi, and this part of the country. Dayna did. . . . It's still up on the web, isn't it?

Lee: The website is still up with the Folklife Center. They still have the Regional program up.

Gates: Again, partners not only including the Caddo Nation, Northwestern State University, Regional Folklife Program, and probably a few others at the state [level]. Didn't the state. . . ?

Lee: The Division of the Arts always funds, the Folklife Program.

Gates: Again, partnerships. Another project, we've funded a number of projects for the Creole Heritage Center here at Northwestern State University. One of the early ones was the *Creole Chronicles*. The first booklet that came out of the *Creole Chronicles* dealt with the Creole people on Cane River. There have been subsequent *Creole Chronicles* since then. We've helped to fund some of those through the Delta Initiative, some through other sources. But, again, it's partnerships. Partnerships sometimes with the usual suspects, sometimes we bring in additional suspects. Again, joining together, we get an incredible amount accomplished.

The National Park Service does look forward to continuing the Delta Initiatives program in the future. As you heard, this symposium is funded by the Delta Initiatives, and I just want everyone, while you are here, please enjoy your time, your fellowship, and the learning that we can all share among each other. If you'd like further information about how to apply for grants through the Lower Mississippi Delta Region Initiatives, and we are coming up with a funding cycle for fiscal year 2011, please see me. The National Park superintendents in the seven Delta states get together every November and go through the projects that have been submitted and try to find ones that really represent what the legislation is trying to accomplish and the best implementation of that legislation. If you are interested in any of these things, please come and see me, and I can provide you with further information. Enjoy the symposium. Let's have fun.

Rasmussen: Thank you very much. I'd like to introduce now Maida Owens from the state Louisiana Folklife Program.

Maida Owens: Laura, thank you for acknowledging the Regional Folklife Program and the Division of the Arts. In case you are not aware, there is no Regional Folklife Program any more. All three Regional Folklorists were not funded for the last two fiscal years. The state budget issues have really affected the Folklife Program profoundly. Somebody a couple of days ago said, "Well, I guess you are back to where you started." It made me realize that no, we are worse off than when I started twenty-four years ago. There are no grant programs specifically dedicated to folklife anymore. When I started, I had Folklife Project Assistance grants, Apprenticeship grants, Fellowship grants. Later I got Fieldwork grants when Projects went away, and then, of course, the Regional Folklife Program. All of those are gone. The only grant

program that remains is Stabilization, and a few folklife organizations receive this type of grant. And then there is the New Populations special initiative for immigrant groups that includes grants. The one grant program cut that makes me the saddest, and I think will have the most long-term impact, is apprenticeships. I always felt like that was the most important program that I had. Some of you may have participated in them. They were very simple: help a master pass on a tradition. Some had high impact immediately. Others, you had to wait a few years or maybe never for the impact. I can sincerely say that the apprenticeship program helped Cajun fiddling revive. It kept wooden boat building alive, and had significant impact on other traditions, too. Those are two that I feel like we had a profound impact on.

I just want to let y'all know that things are not great for the Folklife Program. The Division of the Arts is preparing for a strategic plan. As part of that, the Folklife Commission is doing a visioning. We realize that this recession is going to affect all state budgets for several years to come. This visioning process will guide the Division of the Arts and the Folklife Program for many, many, many years. The last one we did was in 1993, and the one before that was 1979. We don't often do this. There is a handout in the back. You may have received it by email. If you want to receive it by email, just let me know. We want to hear from you what you feel like public folklore should be in Louisiana on the state level. We have some really good university programs. We have some strong non-profit organizations. What should the state be doing to support folklore? Not a great message, but it's important. Thank you.

Rasmussen: In the Introduction to her groundbreaking ethnography, *Mules and Men*, folklorist Zora Neale Hurston credits her academic experience as opening her eyes to the riches in her life that before she had been unable to see due to their very familiarity. She observes that "When I pitched headforemost into the world I landed in the crib of negroism. From the earliest rocking of my cradle, I had known about the capers Brer Rabbit is apt to cut and what the Squinch Owl says from the house top. But it was fitting me like a tight chemise. I couldn't see it for wearing it. It was only when I was off in college, away from my native surroundings, that I could see myself like somebody else and stand off and look at my garment. Then I had to have the spy-glass of Anthropology to look through at that" (1). Certainly academia with its accompanying complexly beautiful palatial estates composed of theories, conceptions, and, dare we say it, a jargon that is often spoken with ease by a mere handful of experts (and understood by even fewer), has offered us much. As it offered Hurston. Academia, when properly employed, can be the means of opening new worlds to us in that we can conceive of old things in new ways, and it does this often by instilling a sense of both alterity and depth into that which we had before dismissed as unimportant. That which was familiar becomes new, strange, complex, even, in the words of Olivia in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, "most wondrous" (V.i.220). I should interject here that those kissing cousins, folklore and anthropology, are often two disciplines at the forefront in academia in raising this kind of awakened consciousness in their students of whatever age.

However, the problem with academic inquiry is that its conversations run the risk of becoming insulated, becoming lectures rather than discussions. The danger here is that academia can be much like a snake biting its tail, with professors training graduate students who become professors who then train their own graduate students who in time become professors who then teach their own graduate students, *ad infinitum*. A potential problem, especially in those Humanities that are based upon ethnography such as folklore and an-

thropology, is that we can too easily forget that we in the Academy are neither the owners nor even the progenitors of cultural and humanistic knowledge (and its own kissing cousin, wisdom). Simply put, there are times when humanists in the Academy don't ask enough questions, and all too often don't look for answers in the right places, from the right folks. Humanistic knowledge is only properly obtained through what should be a continuous series of negotiations, of going to the folks themselves, of returning, like Zora herself did, to those who know, to those who are actually living in the cultures we wish to know more about. Academia helped Zora to see that she had folklore, that she was, of course, one of the folk herself, and that she should go to collect it. But it was only by returning to her hometown of Eatonville, Florida, to "familiar ground" (1), to talk to and listen to the folks and neighbors that knew her still as "just Zora" (2), that she came to be able to tell us about "that which the soul lives by" (2). So it is with us. Only by talking with the folk, hearing them tell us their stories, play us their songs, and teach us their sense of community, as well as what things are important to the folks in those communities and why, by engaging with them in the kind of nuanced negotiation that used to be known simply as conversation before the dismissal and degradation of that word in a world overridden with texting, blogs, and virtual "communication," can the humanistic endeavors of folklorists and anthropologists be successful in helping us to truly understand the people and cultures that ethnographers study. The key is to engage, to question, and then to listen to what the folk have to teach us. And to always remember that the folk will always have far more to teach academics than vice versa.

Near the end of her career, folklorist Bess Lomax Hawes related to her colleagues in the American Folklore Society that she wished she had done more fieldwork, much more fieldwork (Hawes 67). She knew the irreplaceable understandings that can result from talking and listening to the folk. The foremost premise of this Symposium is that the folk have much to teach us, and that to engage in conversations about Delta cultures, where those cultures have been, how those cultures have changed, and where those cultures are going now, would be fruitless without their voices. And for those of us here that don't have the time or means to perform fieldwork themselves, this Symposium offers the benefit of listening to and, hopefully, taking part in conversations on culture and cultural change in the Delta region. The simple genius of this Symposium is that we've brought the folk here, to converse with us. This is the next best thing to sitting on Hezekiah Early's porch and talking with him there, but then again we wouldn't all fit onto Hezekiah's porch.

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I would like to remark in closing that this event is the brainchild and passion of Dr. Pete Gregory, whose initial vision and enduring passion for talking with the folk and for the importance of the kinds of discussions we'll be having over the next few days has been the driving impetus for this Symposium. It is my honor to turn the time over to my partner in crime and ethnology, a man that I

proudly call my teacher and mentor, Dr. Pete Gregory.

Defining the Delta

Pete Gregory: Shane has been asking me, talking about being a partner in crime, he's been asking me for three weeks, "What is the Delta?" Laura told him what the Delta was. I like Dr. Webb's definition of the Delta much better – a vast expanse of land. If you drive through the Delta region, you realize how much land there is. Like Laura says, if you listen to the Delta people, if you listen to all those languages, you realize how much diversity in people is in this amazingly complicated place both geologically and culturally. I suspect there's not another place like it in the United States, certainly, maybe not even in the world. All of these people are tied together by this giant river that runs from the mouth of the Ohio River to the Gulf. That is the Delta, geologically, the lower Mississippi Valley, some people call it. When the Delta Initiative was formed back in the 1980s, there were these big discussions about how we were going to bound it. What are the boundaries going to be? The first commission was set up. President Bill Clinton was then the governor of Arkansas. He was the first chair of that commission. They finally, after wrestling around with it for several months, decided just to take whole states or parts of whole states that were affected mainly by the Mississippi River. To make that long story short, it really starts at the mouth of the Ohio River, where half of the water in the lower Mississippi River comes from and joins the water coming in above that in St. Louis. Normally we say it starts at Cairo; it starts at St. Genevieve. Those are the towns where the river starts for us, the lower river. I don't know about folks, with all apologies to the folklorists here. Two or three of you guys I know very well. You know me very well too.

I am a Delta folk. I come out of the Delta; my roots are in the Delta. I was born in Vidalia [LA]. Vidalia sits "under the hill" at Natchez [MS] on the Louisiana side of the river. I've spent my whole life in the Delta with all of these people. Some of whom were my people; some of whom made me their people.

The Delta is a place I like to talk about. Those of you who know me know I can prattle on and on and on about the Delta. I think if you think about it as a valley, the river built it. Most of the land around here, even what we call hills, which when you get over there in the Western United States, these aren't hills at all. My students from Colorado say, "I can't even see what you guys are calling hills. The whole damn place looks flat to me." It is pretty flat. When you get out in the flood plains of the Mississippi River, it's as flat as that floor, maybe flatter in places. But if you live in the Delta, it's not flat. It's just rolls and pitches. It's wet and it's dry, and it's sandy and it's muddy. It's different. People who grow up in the Delta can see a differential elevation of about six inches. For the rest of you guys, that's pretty flat, but to us, and on a rainy day, if somebody is here from Mansura, six inches [of rain] last night made a big difference in Mansura. The land is flat, but it is not flat. The rivers created the levees, natural levees, back swamps, and oxbow lakes. It's created a world of different, little micro-environments.

All of the people who have come from the Delta, starting with the American Indians who were here when all of the rest of the people got here, everybody has adapted what they brought with them to that landscape. I think if you think about that landscape, as all these folks talk for the next couple of days, will all somehow or other be trying to deal with it, to adapt to it. We do that all in different ways. Then somehow we creolized that and put all of those different ways together. We all share certain things, things we don't even realize sometimes we

share. You can talk about the folk, but you are really talking about a whole series of cultures. The people learn traditionally from generations who came before them. The trick, I think, is that we didn't forget what people learned before us. We did not lose that ability to live in the Delta, to do things with the Delta, to have shared experiences in the Delta.

We decided we would start the day with the American Indian panel. These guys have always been in the Delta. They were the first people to come. They are the people who made the most contributions to it. Corn, beans and squash you all eat. Pirogues you all know about. There are mounds here that go back, in Louisiana, four thousand years built by people's ancestors. Poverty Point [1050 BC] was a thriving city in Northeast Louisiana. That record goes all across the Delta. Laura named pretty much the states that are affected by the Delta. We are missing some tribes. The Quapaw aren't here and the Caddo aren't here because we ran out of Delta Initiative money to get people here. I think you'll find these folks [Alabama and Coushatta folks], all Louisiana-Texas related people, are all related to this region.

SESSION I

Session 1 – American Indian Communities: Keeping On Keeping On

Moderators: Dr. Pete Gregory, Dr. Dayna Bowker Lee
Participants: Walter Celestine, John Paul Darden, Christine Norris, Jean Luc Pierite, Cheryl Smith

Pete Gregory: John Paul Darden is here. The Chitimacha nation is in place in the Delta of all Native American tribes. I can think of very few tribes in the southeast that have not been bumped around by the government, bumped around by the environment, bumped around by something. The Chitimacha Nation has always been where it is. I think if it is OK with you guys, I'd like to let John start us off and talk about whatever you want to talk about.

L-R: Laura Gates, John Paul Darden, Dr. Pete Gregory, Christine Norris, Dr. Dayna Lee, Walter Celestine, Cheryl Smith, and Jean Luc Pierite

John Darden: I'm better when I get questions.

Gregory: They'll do it to you.

Darden: I'm John Paul. I'm from the Chitimacha Tribe, and he's right, where we are. We can be traced back there, even in the community where I'm at in Charenton, can be traced back right there archaeologically in that area. Archaeologists tell us a little more than six thousand years. We've always been right there. We've got a lot of historical sites, prehistoric sites all around where we live. Our people started out there. Now if you listen to our elders, which is what has been passed down to us, is that we didn't come from anywhere else, like you say have moved in. Like my grandmother always said, "We've always been here." We've got legends that go back to our creation stories. From there you have the legends on how we got fire, the great flood, all these things that you hear, Biblical things that you hear, also. For us, we've always been in the Delta. I've never thought about calling it the Delta region. We always just called it home. The Delta region, we've always been down there. We have adapted over the years. The tribe today covers a real small area. We've shrunk. The tribe was a lot larger. The influx of the Spanish came in first. We met the Spanish, and the French came in. Over the years we had a war with the French that lasted. It almost wiped out the tribe. That was in the early 1700s. We dropped down to, I want to say, by 1900, we were down to probably only a little more than a hundred tribal members. We dropped down to that. Today we've grown back up. We've got about 1,225 tribal members. Very, very few, [full bloods] actually you'd have to get some of the elder elders to find full-blood now. My daddy was full-blood. I'm half. We go down to, we just actually have tribal members that have been hitting the 1/16th mark now. We just recently had to do some changes. We [membership] put it to a vote in

the last election because of the 1/16th to go down the lineal descent so that you could still be considered Chitimacha. We don't want the tribe to eventually die out. It could happen with the 1/16th. For some of us it would take longer. My wife is also Chitimacha. My daughter and her husband are Chitimacha also. For some of the community, it would take longer, for some of the families. Most of them marry outside the tribe. Very few marry within the tribe today.

We've adapted to the area. The area has always provided for us very well with rich nourishment, from gardening to fishing. We'd grow foods to eat. In the area where we are we have great fishing. We have saltwater, and we have freshwater right there. Less than twenty miles from us is saltwater. You can take Bayou Teche and get out to the saltwater. You can catch a cut and get out to the saltwater. Fresh water. We have fresh water all around us. It has always been a great means of feeding our people. That's why we didn't move around also. Government didn't move us, but also our people didn't have to move to survive. We had everything we needed right there. The region here is very rich. The soils are very rich to grow. The good hunting, good fishing, that's why we've stayed where we are.

I'll open up to questions. I'm better if you ask me any questions you like. I can shoot from that. If anybody has any questions about the Chitimacha, or if you are curious about anything Chitimacha.

Gregory: I must say that John Paul is one of the best Chitimacha basket makers, cane basket makers left. He is really the best cane basket maker left in the states in the southeast. His family tradition can be traced back to, I'd say, at least six thousand years. The Chitimacha have done some remarkable things recently about that. The loss of river canes — one of the problems that Dayna and I worked on for *The Work of Tribal Hands*, doing studies of Southeastern Indian cane basketry, the Chitimacha guys were always our mentors. They were always the people we went to, our go-to guys. One of the things that we realized, all of us talking about it, in that first conference we had here about cane basketry, was that the cane which once covered that whole region, giant brakes of cane, so thick that you couldn't see through them, so thick that you couldn't walk through them, canes twenty feet tall, were all going away. This wonderful art that had been handed down and handed down was in danger. I'll let John tell you what they decided to do about the cane. I think it's something you should hear. All of us know about it, but maybe some of you don't. I'm going to ask you to talk about the cane project.

Darden: The river cane we had actually worked within NRCS a few years back. They came in and we went out into the field and we harvested. We went to several of the batches I knew in the wild. We harvested some cane with the roots. We put them growing in a green house. We transplanted that on the reservation. Since then, that has taken off very well. It is growing very nice cane. We just did another planting, I guess about three months ago where we planted it. This cane is some of the typical cane for the area. Our cane grows anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five foot tall. That is what you are going to find, depending on the soil composition where it's growing. Some of the cane that we planted, I measured one of the stalks, and it's right at thirty feet tall. I just harvested for the Jazz Fest. I went ahead and I don't use out of it unless I need to, but I was in a pinch. I went ahead and the cane was ready to be harvested – the right age. You have to harvest it at the right age to utilize it for the baskets. I went ahead and harvested some when I went to Jazz Fest and peeled it. Works real great. The cane project is doing very well for us. We planted another group,

and it looks like the sprouts have taken off. It looks they are growing well too. What helps is knowing where the cane thrives best. That was one of the things when NRCS came in. There's different varieties of cane. There's a certain variety in our area that we use. They were telling us that you need to plant it here or plant it there. We finally, the people that weren't coming out with us. I showed them where the patches were because that is another thing. Families always had been secretive about their patches because the cane had gotten less plentiful. You didn't want anybody knowing where your patch was. My grandmother and them were like that. They had this patch, and they didn't want to share it with somebody else because they didn't want somebody else to go wipe out their patch when they had a good patch of cane.

Fortunately today we share with one another. There are only four of us that are currently weaving right now, so we do share the cane, where our patches are. With NRCS, they were saying, their bosses were saying, we need to plant it in an open area out here. I said, "Well, you know that open area may work for some canes, and there's hundreds of varieties of cane. It's a bamboo. That works for some of the canes, but not all." I pointed out to every patch we went to, is near water and it's in shade. It does better in shade. They said, "Maybe it's shooting up to get the sun is why you get the height and all that." Whatever the reason it is, the cane grows very well in the shade. We did plant some in the shade. We planted some on the edge where it was out a little bit from the sun, and that didn't take off very well. Where we had the shade, it all did very good. Most everything we planted took. That was good. That was us knowing our material and where it grows and stuff. It helped with that project and the same thing with the new cane that we planted. We planted it all in nice shaded areas where you've got good shade and not in water, but near water. That's what this variety likes. It was a successful project. Now we will have cane for the next generations coming up learning to do basketry.

It's like Pete said, I know we've only got four right now, but I just did a group about two months ago at the office. We called in, put out for tribal member employees at work if they wanted to come out and start peeling cane. We had a day where they came out. We gathered the cane and split and peeled a bunch of cane to see who would be interested. Of all the ones that came out, there were only a couple of them that stuck with it and wanted to know a little more. That's the way you learn to do baskets. You have to have the desire to do it because of the time it takes. Once we learn the cane, I told them next time now that you how to peel the cane, and they have to get better at peeling it before they can go to the next step. I want to bring them out to the cane patch and actually show them what they have to look for to cut the cane. It has to be mature cane. It has to be the right age. I want to try to teach them that step, too. They have to know that one to be able to get the cane. Then we'll work the steps down the road. It takes a lot of time. That's why today you have very few weavers. Today with all of the fast pace, nobody really has the time. I find I've had some nephews that had done it when they were real young, and when they hit teenagers, they didn't mess with it anymore. My daughter had tried it when she was young. She's done some little trays is all she'd ever done. A few years ago, she's thirty now, a few years ago, she tried again and she did some. The wife had helped her, and she did a few more trays. Gradually she is learning a little bit. Again, it takes some time and the commitment to do it. It was a great project we worked with NRCS. It's doing very well.

Lee: Can you talk a little bit about repatriating baskets, going to visit museums, and using that as a basis for NAGPRA?

Darden: We had also got a grant several years back to go and look at baskets. We haven't repatriated any. Baskets are hard to show. You've got to have cultural patrimony. Our baskets have been around forever. We've always made the baskets. They're willing to show them to us, but we haven't had any that. . . . We haven't gotten any back.

Lee: You haven't had any that are unique enough that you can make the case for it?

Darden: That's right.

Gregory: If you guys [audience] would like to see some, we have ours.

Darden: I have some in the car, too. In case I needed to sell some.

Gregory: The Williamson Museum has an old, old collection of Chitimacha baskets. John's been nice enough to let us keep them for a while. Hopefully we will have. . . .

Darden: Y'all are taking good care of them. That's what counts.

Gregory. Can you talk a little bit. . . . We got into a discussion. In Natchez where we had the basketry conference, we talked to the curators of the museums about how to treat baskets, how to deal with baskets. John had some really neat observations, I think, how Chitimachas take care of their baskets. It kind of conflicted with what I'm teaching you guys in the museums class. I think it's worth understanding a little differently. There are other ways of doing things even when we don't feel like we have choices. Do you remember that conversation?

Lee: The question was do you wet the baskets or not to preserve them.

Darden: I figured that's where he was leading to. Yes, I do. I've got some baskets that are probably 200 to 250 years old that have been in the family, that have been handed down generation to generation. We actually mist our baskets. If they are in a real dry area, that cane gets brittle. When you see baskets and you see them starting to crack, and you see the bottoms on some, they're getting brittle. I was actually just at a lady's house about two weeks ago that had some baskets. It was an elderly lady. She got them from her mother, and she's probably ninety, so they are very old baskets. They're over 100 years old. She had them in the kitchen. She's got them on her wall. A couple of them are with the canes just broke. They haven't been handled. The cane's just breaking off. I told her in the kitchen you've got dry air in here. You are not putting any moisture back in baskets. Although the designs are beautiful on them, you see what they are doing, and they are going to continue to do that. You have to put some moisture back into that basket or it's going to get brittle. Dry air in the kitchen is not a good place at all to have them. She likes to see them. She likes them out where you can see, and when people come in they can see them. She also was asking me how do we prepare the baskets.

I said well, if you were to take them and put them in another area, actually if you would help save them from light because they are very old. You moisten them every now and then. Just spritz some all over them where they will absorb the moisture. They are going to last longer. If I take them and start trying to repair them, I'm going to wet that basket down to do some repair work to it. I fix some baskets. I'm going to soak it in water completely so I can put cane in it. Otherwise, I'm going to try and put some cane in it, and I'll break more than I put in because it is so brittle. It does take moisture. They will get brittle, and that's where we contradict. They say no water on the baskets, but if you

don't put water on them, the cane will get dried out and brittle. You'll see that in old baskets. You've got to see the ones I've got at the house. They're very, very old. They've just been handed down in my family, one generation after the next. They're still in good shape.

Lee: Do you mist those baskets, or do you actually submerge them? You talked about repairing and submerging.

Darden: Repairing, I submerge them because I have to get them where they are good and pliable. When it dries out, even to reshape the basket. If it gets out of shape for something sitting on it, or whatever, if you submerge it, and then you take it and reshape it. Set the shape like you want it and let it dry. It will go back to its shape. Sometimes from age or from where they've been sitting or how they've been sitting, they may lose a little bit of their form. You can fix all of that, too. Those are just things that have been handed down to me. That's the way we've done it.

Lee: The basket conservationist was horrified. She was scared of submerging or even misting the baskets.

Gregory: She kept saying, "I can't do that. I can't do that."

Lee: What she said was, "*You* can't do that!"

Darden: No, I can do that. My baskets have been around a long time. Actually one of the ones we have, I've only seen a couple of them. One of the mats that are in the family has been handed down generation after generation after generation. Our family has been weaving baskets as far back as you can trace.

Lee: Before we move on, could you also talk a little bit about the language program because it's pretty unique in the Delta what y'all have done with the language.

Darden: Originally, we started the language program back in '98 with Julian Granberry. We put together some lesson books and stuff with that from a lot of the old cylinders. . . . At the Smithsonian, they wound up, they had a lot of recordings from the 1930s that Benjamin Paul, which was my grandfather's uncle. Then one of his aunts, Delphine, and actually Pauline [Paul] had done some stuff, too, with them, which are a couple more of my grandfather's aunts. What they did was the language was recorded back then. So when we started working on the language program, we were looking at rejuvenating our language. Julian had been already working on it himself. When we met him, it was just coincidence. We started working with him. We put together lesson books and language books. We started teaching with that. Recently, I guess it's right at two years now, *Rosetta Stone* had actually put out for a language grant where they'd pick a tribe. We applied for the grant, and we actually wound up winning. They chose us. They came out. Our culture department worked with them with the material that we had. We put the language material. Now we've got it all on CDs and on the computer where everybody can log in. We teach it at the school. At the school, at the computer lab, all of the students have their computer when they come into class in the computer lab. The *Rosetta Stone* is downloaded on the computer where they can go on the computer. It's also. . . . they can each learn at their own pace. For some that are learning quicker than others. . . . . It's pretty neat. I helped work with it. I'm not fluent in Chitimacha. I can speak words and say a few things. I've also got the *Rosetta Stone* program, but I have not loaded it on my computer, yet. I will be working with it eventually. It just seems lately I haven't had

the time. Earlier when she said, “Hello,” I’ve been trying to remember.

Gates: *Wash too gee*.

Darden: It’s actually “*Wash too ee-gee*.” [different emphasis] Then we say, “*Hoogoo*” with it – “It is a good morning” or “It is a good day” is what you are saying.

Gates: OK. Thank you.

Darden: For us just for greetings, if you want to say greetings, you would say, “*Ash ti i*.” That’s “*wee hee tay”* -- “How are you?” “*We gee ee shee ya”* is “I’m fine, thanks.” I know a lot of words. I can’t carry on a conversation. If you are fluent, you’d lose me. Over the years, I’ve learned a lot of the basket patterns and different things from my grandmother because she would say the patterns in Chitimacha. I learned a lot of our basket patterns in Chitimacha. That was also through when I went to different museums through that grant we got them and took pictures of baskets all over the country. Every family keeps pattern baskets that are handed down in the family like the ones we have. No family has all of the patterns. Right now, there are more than fifty patterns that I know of. When I took pictures in museums, I brought them back to my grandmother. She is deceased now, but she was alive back then. She would tell me what the pattern was and stuff on them. She would tell me what they were. Even though she didn’t have any like that, she could still tell me the patterns.

Lee: And that was one of the reasons that you were able to get that grant, isn’t that right?

Darden: Yes.

Lee: The NAGPRA grant because the pattern baskets were representative of a learning tool, a teaching mechanism.

Darden: A teaching tool for us. It’s always handed down in the family. Our patterns have always been handed down. We don’t do anything different than what our ancestors did. If that pattern is 500 years old, you’d see it on a basket or you see it today, the pattern is the same. The only thing that would be different is we do smaller baskets today. We just don’t have the time to work on the big baskets anymore. Most of our baskets, for the last a little more than a hundred years, mostly what the tribe’s been doing – just smaller versions of the baskets.

Gregory: You got a language program, Christine, at Jena for the Jena Band of Choctaw. You are just beginning to start a language program? What are you guys up to?

Christine Norris: Well let me tell you a little bit about the Jena Band of Choctaw. Thank you very much for being here this morning. We’re glad to be here. Along with myself, I’m Christine Norris, the tribal chief of the Jena Band. With me is Cheryl Smith who is presently a council member, a former chief. A lot of times we’ve always got a question, “How does a woman become a chief?” Different days, different times today. Traditionally, it was always the male in the tribe, the elder. Today we have different forms of government. We are governed by a five-member tribal council of which the tribal chief has a position. I have served on the tribal council for twenty-seven years as council member and eight years as a tribal chief. We are located in Jena, Louisiana. We have a three-parish service area, which consists of Rapides, Grant, and LaSalle Parishes. That was deemed by the Indian Health Service where we deliver services to our members. We also have various members that live in Alabama, Mississippi, Arizona, and California. The base of our population is located in

Jena, Louisiana. We're a very small tribe. Out of the four Federally recognized tribes, we have approximately 282 members. We are very small, which culture is very important to us. We are trying to maintain that. With being a small tribe, we only have a few elders left. That is such a rich tradition that these people hold to pass down to us. They are very dear. Cheryl and I are becoming today the elders of our tribe because we are such a young tribe. One of the things, she can expound a little bit about the language within our tribes because we are trying to revitalize that, bring it back. We are working with, we have worked with, the Oklahoma Choctaw, the Mississippi Choctaw. Originally our people came from the Mississippi Choctaw. With removal went to Oklahoma for some land claims. That didn't work out. This group of members walked back on their way back to Mississippi. They stayed in the area of LaSalle Parish in the Eden community. We believe because of the waterways. There was the Red River, Ouachita, the Catahoula Lake area. There was a lot of trading going on in that area, hunting and fishing. Our people there were sharecroppers. That was their main way of living. Today, we are bringing that back as we've had our community gardens, what we call our pea patch that we've had for tribal members to come in. We are revitalizing that, bringing that back to the community.

As John had talked about, we have one basket maker that makes the river cane baskets. In the 1990s, the latter part of, I think it was '97, we got a small grant from the U. S. Forestry to have a class on basket making. Rose Fisher, who is our present basket maker, I think she worked with about thirteen to fifteen of our ladies. Going through that process is quite extensive. I think we passed out many boxes of band-aids during that three-day period. Maybe there was one that really came out of the whole thing. We went through every step of the process from cutting the cane, going in those fields, washing the cane, and the whole process. It is quite extensive. Today, like I said, we only have one traditional basket maker that's left. With our traditions, we are trying to bring that back alive, with the language, with the basket making. We are looking into the pottery right now. We have a tribal member who has really touched upon that, and it's like that's her calling. She's doing quite well in trying to learn and get that experience and education from that.

Being a very small tribe, we have a lot of obstacles that we have to overcome and face. When you look at the population of the state, we're looking at documentation of almost 32,000 Indian people in Louisiana. Not all of them maybe perhaps belong to a Federal tribe, but they are state tribes. There are groups that have joined together recognizing their culture and trying to pass that on to other individuals. Louisiana does have a varied population of Indian people everywhere.

I think Cheryl would like maybe to share some of the language. She is one of our better speakers today in our generation. With so very few people left today that are fluent speakers, we're trying to bring that back and teach that to our young people.

Cheryl Smith: I talk loud. I probably don't even need that [referring to the microphone]. *Soak* Cheryl Smith, Jena Band of Choctaw. [Inaudible] Pete Gregory, Northwestern. I said my name is Cheryl Smith. I'm from the Jena Band of Choctaw. I said, "Thank you so much, Pete and Northwestern, for asking us to be a part of this panel this morning."

The Jena Band of Choctaws, not just myself because I'm a young person, even though I'm an elder. My mother, many people that have gone on have had a long relationship with Northwestern, Dayna, and Pete Gregory. When you talk about sitting on the porches, when you talk about talking to people, and you talk about these things, this is

what Pete and Dayna have done. They have been lifetime friends with the tribe. Like you say, you academic people, you come and you talk to us, and you come back. But we are the people; we are the teachers. They were the teachers, and I hate to say that. As being a young person, I thought Pete was just some old person that came from a college to aggravate momma and to ask questions. He was always around. And Dayna. I think as you're a young person, these things aren't important at that time. We're busy, we're raising our children. I know I was. My culture, the language, everything that everybody used to . . . . I tried the baskets; that wasn't my thing. I didn't like that. It's too hard to do. Thank goodness there was one person who liked it. She took it; she does it now, been doing it for quite a few years.

It is so sad that our tribe only has probably two people that are over sixty-five. We are a young, young tribe. Christine and I now are elders. We call fifty-five and older tribal elders. We're a young tribe. I hate to say this, but we are having to learn what we should have learned from our parents many, many years ago. I had the best Choctaw speaker that there was in the tribe, and did I learn? No, I didn't. John Paul, I'm like you, I know all the words, I can listen and understand what people are saying, basically, but to converse with you, I don't know all the little things that need to go in there. I speak broken language. That is my goal and my life is to be a fluent speaker before I die. Why we didn't think about these things while our mammas and daddies and uncles and grannies were living . . . . It was just taken for granted that we'd learn sooner or later. They'd be here forever, I thought. I don't know what. Now, we're seeing our young people come up. Someone has to get up and figure out what is important in their life to them. Is it the baskets? Is it the language? Is it the dancing? Is it the chinaberry?

You know momma made chinaberry necklaces. My mother was Mary Jones. I know a lot of you know her from years past. She's been very active, a very cultural, traditional person across the whole United States. She made Choctaw ribbon dresses, chinaberry necklaces. She was a fluent speaker, a full-blood. We had a great loss, when we lost mamma in the tribe.

I don't know why I didn't learn things that I should have. Why I didn't ask more questions that I should have. I see that now. So now, my thing is the language. We have applied for a couple of grants. Didn't get them. We're going to try for another one. What we do is when we have summer camps, I go and at least teach the children how to count from one to ten, teach them the animals, colors, the basic things. We do have a small in-tribe program that is not structured. It is just me and a couple more trying to teach our children. We do have plans to get some tribal dollars, apply for grants, and learn our language, because it is very important to me. That is my goal is to try to teach the young children.

Among the other things that they need to know, we have some that want to learn to dance. We have some that want to learn to drum. We are having our second powwow in September. Everybody says, "When's your powwow? When's your powwow?" Tunica has big powwows. Alabama Coushatta. Kinder Coushatta. Everybody has powwows, but we've never had one. We had our first one last year. It was very small. I think it was very successful. The rain made us come inside, but we survived. Our second one is September 18th. We'd like to invite everybody to come and participate. I know Walter's been with us. He's been a great leader, teacher. He's taught us a lot of things about powwow etiquette.

It's kind of terrible that here we are an Indian tribe having to learn these things again. Our tribe is the newest [Federally] recognized tribe in Louisiana. We are the

fourth tribe to be recognized in the state. I started to work for the tribe in 1975 when I was young. That's all I've ever done is work for the tribe in any capacity from being the janitor. Sometimes it was two people, just two of us trying to get recognition. That was, I think, the greatest accomplishment that we've ever done. It was an act of Congress to prove to the United States that we were an actual tribe. Pete was very instrumental; a lot of people were instrumental. The Mississippi Choctaws were our supporters because we were a part of the Mississippi Band of Choctaws. In the Removal system, our people didn't make it to Oklahoma. They stopped in the area of LaSalle Parish. It looked to them like Mississippi lands. They felt comfortable there. There was good land to fish, to hunt. We just stayed there. We have had anthropologists, we've had archaeologists, and we've had linguists, who have studied us. I think we have been studied to death. In all of that, it helped us with our recognition. It helped prove that we are a tribe. We have been there continuously. We have had leadership continuously. The seven criteria to get recognized are very, very hard. I really believe that we are going to be the last tribe to be recognized in the state of Louisiana. I think there won't be any more recognized tribes in Louisiana. I'm aware that there are a lot of state recognized tribes in Louisiana now. I don't even know all of them. There's so many. I can just tell you that it is a very hard thing to do is to prove that you have had continual leadership, traditions, crafts, customs. It was the greatest achievement. Jerry Jackson, who passed away last year, was a great leader. He was the tribal chief for many years. He dedicated his life as I did in trying to get recognition. The two of us worked continuously, continuously. A lot of you who have filed petitions know what it is like to try to get recognition. You get letters back of insufficient this or that. It was an act of Congress from '75 to '95 to prove that we were a Federal Indian tribe. At one point, I was even just so aggravated I just said, "I don't care if the Federal government approves us. We know we're Indian people. Why do we have to do this?"

The thing is there are so many benefits for our people. Our people have enjoyed benefits. There're health services that we can now get for our people. A lot of this is based on population. We are the smallest tribe in Louisiana with 280 members. Our benefits, we spread them out as much as we can. We don't have a casino like the other three tribes do. They have revenue that they are able to add to their Federal dollars that make them more able to provide things that we can't. We're trying to get a casino, and we're not going to stop. That's something that we think the other three tribes have that we should have the right to have also. With that you fight the governor. It's politics. It's a whole lot of things I really don't want to get into because politics is politics.

I think here today we're here to talk about us, who we are. We're native people, proud to be a member of the Jena Band of Choctaw, proud to be here with the other four Federal tribes here that are represented. I think we call each other sister tribes. We all have a lot of the same things. Our customs or traditions that are sacred to us. I think when you are around Indian people, it's like a bond. You feel it. You know that they've been through the same thing that we've been through. A little thing's changed between their customs and our customs, but still they have their crafts, we have ours. They have their language, we have ours. We are the same. We are native people.

It's been a hard life for us. Things are better now. They still need to be better. The Federal government never funds -- talk about getting cuts across the board with Folklife, we know what that means because Indian Health Service gets cut, housing, HUD gets cut, EPA programs get cut, just like the

white world. The Indian world receives these same cuts as you do. We try to survive with what we do, with what we have to our people in service and help. That's what the tribal council does. Like I say, we are a small government. We have five people. We work for our people, and that's what we do. We try to provide the best services that we can in any grants. We also look for grants. Dayna and Pete have helped us with a lot of grants.

We were thankful to them for things that they have helped us preserve, that being the language, the basketry, just lots of things – saving photographs, tapes of people who have gone now who were fluent speakers. We were able to save those, digitalize those, scan, save pictures. The Park Service has helped us with Dustin [Fuqua]. He came in and showed us how you do all these things. We have had a lot of help from Northwestern, the Folklife, Division of Arts, Ms. Owens. We have had a lot of help from different agencies through Northwestern, a lot of people.

Basically, the language is my thing, and I hope that. . . . My New Year's resolution was by the end of the year to be a fluent speaker. The year's half gone now. I don't know where it's gone. It seems like it was winter. Here it's summer. It's fixing to be fall. I have improved a little bit on my speaking, not as much as I like. We have a tribal elder, finally who is a fluent speaker, Clyde [Jackson] is not well, but he has moved closer to town. He and I. . . . He's going to be my personal tutor. I'm going to start going to his house. We are going to start talking. I have a saying that "the only wrong way to learn to speak your language is not to speak it at all." If you try, you'll get better; if you don't try, you won't ever learn. I'm trying. I may not be correct. I just want to thank you again. "*Yokoke*," Pete, Dayna, for all your help. *Tu pesa quomo so yokoke.* I'd be glad at any time to take any questions from you.

We have a long history with Northwestern. A lot of you people out there knew mother, Mary Jones, very well. I'm very proud to be her daughter. I just wish I had listened more to my mother. I wish I had asked more questions. If any of you in here are young, Elizabeth, you'd better learn everything from your mom. Jean Luc, the same thing. Y'all are young. You still have time to do all these things. I'm proud of you because I've seen you do participate. You do things that you should do. We have a young youth group that's getting involved. They want to learn how to drum. They want to learn how to dance. I do, too. I like dancing. I think that we are still young enough to bring back to our tribe the things that we've lost. Maybe before I'm old, old, you'll see us with all of our customs and traditions and languages and dancing and all that brought back to Jena Band. Pete, you'll live to see it, too. I promise.

Gregory: I hope so. Get busy.

Smith: I hope so. We're busy. We're getting very busy. We're bringing back everything that we haven't lost. It's just out there. We've got to find the right people who want to do that thing and get them in, and help them, and support them. That's what it's all about. It's us older people supporting the young people, bringing them in and finding what their niche is, and being there for them, to support them. Later, when we have the end of our discussion, I'll be glad to take any questions. Thank you.

Gregory: Walter?

Walter Celestine: OK.

Gregory: Usually I don't have to prompt Walter. Walter was talking to me at the Folk Festival this summer about a project that he's

been involved in that's a little different. The Alabama-Koasati are trying to preserve some of their traditional tribal medicine. Walter has permission to talk about the medicine. I don't. I'll let him do that. Can you tell them a little bit about that?

Celestine: We're gathering information from some of our elders about different types of plants. We actually go out and take pictures of the different plants. For me, I'm a little bit different from trying to learn my language because I didn't speak English when I was a little kid. Then all of a sudden I went to school. I didn't know what the teacher was saying. First thing I learned was "Yes" and "No," and that was it. I really didn't want to go to school. One of my people that works at the tribe, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe, she was my kindergarten bus driver. I jumped off that bus and ran away. I told my momma, "I don't want to go over there. I don't want to learn that. I want to stay home." All in my language because I didn't know white people existed.

The CCC camps had made our homes in the middle of nowhere. We didn't even have a dirt road that came to our house. Of course, we didn't have any electricity, no running water, like most of the older people have experienced. It's a luxury to have indoor toilet and everything, nowadays. Before that we didn't have any of that stuff. Luckily we had underground spring water all over our reservation, so we had plenty of water, good water to drink. Even today when we do our medicines . . . . There are certain things I can tell, but there are certain things that I can't. We use what we call *ohkullee*, *ohkullee okee* – the water from underground. We make our medicines. . . .

I have a lot of things that I have drying in my home. I want to share a story. My wife's a chemistry teacher in Houston, well, Magnolia, a little town outside of Houston. One of the teachers, her blood pressure was so high that she passed out. They took her to the hospital. Of course, I have all of these things drying in my house. Every time somebody came for help, she would always go in the bedroom. I thought she just stayed in there. I did whatever. If I could help somebody, I would say, "Yes, I can help you," and help them. Sometimes it's herbal, and sometimes it's spiritual medicine. Anyway, I was back at the reservation working at the reservation, staying in my mom's house. She called me up and said, "I did something wrong." I said, "Well, what did you do?" She's a non-Indian. She's a red-head. She said, "Well, I used some of your medicine." I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "Well, I used a medicine for high blood pressure. I made the tea." I said, "Well, how did you do it?" She said, "I always hear you take your pipe and do the prayer." She took tobacco, took the filter off, smoked the tobacco and did the prayer to the Creator. Then she boiled the tea and took it to this lady who was in the hospital and made her drink that tea. The doctors didn't know why her blood pressure all of a sudden leveled off. They told her, "You can make millions of dollars with this. What is it?" She said, "I can't tell. It's Indian medicine. If we tell, then it loses its power." That's why she was calling me. I said, "I guess it's OK. How did you know anything about it?" Apparently she must have been listening to what I tell people.

I know oral history from way back. I was very lucky to have my grandparents, both in Louisiana. I used to call it "Oper-Lousiana." I had a grandmother in Louisiana and Opera, Texas although she was from Louisiana, came over here. I had a grandmother from both Louisiana and Texas. They both knew how to do medicine. One time I was trying to make coffee for my grandmother. Of course, you have those kettles with the little spout coming out. It poured all over my front right here. You know boiling water on my chest. I was a little kid. I was

just trying to make coffee for my grandmother from Louisiana. I told her to stay with me until I got well. She made medicine and put stuff on my chest. I'm talking about burning big pink spots right here. It doesn't exist anymore because she knew how to do medicine. Those kinds of things. . . .

We have so many projects that go on. We try to get grants like everybody else. If we don't get it, we go ahead and do it. There are dedicated people in my community. Basically the tribal council decided that somebody could volunteer. There's a Historic Preservation office with a Historic Preservation Officer that we work with, but we also do language. We do traditional baskets, how to make stickball, how to speak the language, or how to do beadwork, or all these different things. We work with the kids. This summer, there were, I think, twenty kids that made baskets. These were boys and girls. I'm telling you that I was really surprised how good they were at making baskets.

We begin to realize that we are losing our language because the kids, when they go to school, they have to learn English. We talk to them all of the time in our language at home, but when they go to school, they have to learn English. They can understand us, but they started speaking English more than they did our language. We're working with that. We actually have a language for Alabama and Coushatta. We have a dictionary that we worked with Rice University's linguistic department to create. I think [Geoffrey] Kimball [linguist at Tulane University] at the Coushatta's over here. I've got most of them are my relatives here in Louisiana.

A lot of people don't know that there are two tribes – the Alabama Tribe and the Coushatta Tribe. In the books, they always used to say Coushatta means "white cane people." I said, "How in the world?" because "*Hisan hotkai*" does not sound like it in Coushatta. I was thinking that. I talked to one of those Mississippi Choctaw guys, and he was saying, "Your language, your tribe means 'cane people'." He said it in Choctaw. I said, "Oh, no wonder. Choctaws gave us our name." I didn't even know about it. It helps. It helps us learn different things from different tribes. The Chitimachas, they always told them they're UFOs. Alton is our tribal administrator now, and he's from the Chitimacha, LeBlanc. Over there they call it LeBlanc.

Darden: Call him "Dudley" next time. That's what we tell him. He grew up being Dudley. He turned into Alton after he was grown. [Reference to Dudley J. LeBlanc, the Hadacol King]

Celestine: These traditions and customs are important. We try to educate them. We have set aside moneys that were set aside from the oil royalties for any child to go to any college. We pay, if they make a 3.0 average, we pay 100% of their schooling. We've had people that have got their Masters Degrees. Some went for Doctors Degrees. We just had one graduate with a 4.0 from Pepperdine. We've had two of them graduate from Baylor. There's a young lady that's wanting to be a dentist. All her life she's wanted to be a dentist. I was trying to talk her into being a medical doctor, but she went through the premed school in Baylor. She's too stuck with the dental thing. So I guess a dentist isn't bad.

Along with that, when we teach our kids like in the summertime, when we have what they call Summer Youth Programs, we actually teach them, we want them to know their traditional history. We want them to pick a career. There's also a committee, Education Committee, which I'm on. That's how we got our A-C scholarships, our Alabama-Coushatta Scholarships. I'm the only original left. At one time we only had five people from my tribe that had at least a Bachelor's Degree. We wanted to expand. It's better

that they are educated. When I talk to these kids now, and I talk to them in my language all of the time because I don't want these kids to forget their language, I was telling them, "You need to get educated." They said, "Why do you always push me to get educated?" one of them asked me. I said, "Because when I'm old and sitting in front the senior citizens' place, after I eat lunch, and I'm on that rocking chair, you are the one that's going to be running my government. I want to make sure that you're educated enough to feed me. I'm kind of selfish in that way." They laughed. It's incredible.

Just like Cheryl was saying, she didn't know she was an elder. Well, I didn't know I was an elder till there was a little girl that ran up in front of me. She saw me go into the building, and she ran up there and opened the door for me. I said, "Thank you. Who're your parents?" She told me. I looked at her and said, "Who're your grandparents?" I had to go all the way to grandparents to find out who she was.

The community, we are always helping each other, not only just our tribal community but other tribes. We get together. We know each other. It's great to be a part of something like this where we get together, even the powwows. The powwows are basically a get together for different tribes to come and say hello to each other and have a good time. I think it is really great to have the Jena Band hold one. We were talking so much about it. My mom wants to come see the powwow this year. I'm still going to be master of ceremonies this year, so y'all come out there and visit the Jena Band. It's just up the road here. We'll enjoy ourselves.

One more thing I want to bring up before I forget. I work with the Department of Labor, an employment training program for Native Americans. I cover 121 counties – not me but my staff. I just kind of crack the whip. One hundred twenty-one counties with eight people, and the state of Texas has beaucoup of staff. They're into regions. They are always crunching data. We made twice as better in finding jobs for native people than the state did for the population of Texas, and they had more money. Unfortunately, they always cut ours. If things go bad, they want to cut the native programs first.

I had a teacher; Dr. George Langford was his name. I don't know if some of y'all know him or not. He and I used to argue all of the time about my tribal history. I knew my whole history, but when I was a young man, I didn't know the written part. He would say, "Right here it's documented. Right here. You can look at this reference. You can do this." I said, "Who wrote it?" He said, "So and so wrote it." I said, "Was he one of my people?" He said, "No." I said, "Why should I listen to that person writing this thing?" Because he was interpreting in a European idea or mind, and it wasn't our mind; it was somebody else's mind. They had different traditions and customs like we do. I said, "If they wrote it, why should I believe it?" We always kind of fought each other. Dr. Langford, even today, he and I email each other. When he writes a book or something, he always sends a copy to me so I can look it over so we can argue about it the next time we see each other. It's really great.

You have to work. You have to always think about it in a common sense way. I had a professor that wanted me to read this "Four score and seven years ago," that thing. I would go, "Four score and seven years ago, *your* forefathers." He said, "I knew you'd say that." I was always kind of radical. We've been here forever [in North America].

I always argue that in our oral history we came from the south, like in South America. We came up north and went east because east was the strongest medicine. To this day, I believe in that. I always find little articles here and there like they find some kind of toad that was in Madagascar. The only place they could find this toad was in Madagascar.

Recently they found some in South America. I said, "There. We didn't come through the ice bridge." I always clip out those articles that I find. For non-Indians, they have to find something that dates way back before the Ice Age, a village or something before they can believe it. One of these days, with all of the technology, now, I hope they find it because we are going to tell them that we came from the South. We never came through that land bridge. My grandmother was very adamant about that. Again, I know I'm talking too much.

I'm Koasati from the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe in Livingston, Texas. Both of my parents were born in Elton. I have relatives in this village, and I also have relatives in the Alabama-Quassarte in Oklahoma. There're practically three different villages that did exist that does exist now. In the southeast, except for the Chitimachas, we all kind of speak similar languages. To me, we're all brothers and sisters. We just don't want to admit. I'm Koasati. I'm proud of it. I'm Choctaw, and I'm proud of it. I'm Creek, Muskogee Creek. I'm proud of it. Somewhere in there the language changed when our villages separated. Maybe the village got too big, and they couldn't feed everybody, so they split off and went two different directions.

The language changes because even when I was working with the Rice University linguistics department, I had one of my cousins that lived up north in North Dakota, in Dickenson, North Dakota. When I went up there, I realized how much our language had changed. We were speaking slang, and he was speaking the correct Coushatta language. I could speak it because my grandparents made sure I spoke the correct grammar in our language. I could understand him, and some of my people that were with me couldn't understand what my cousin was saying because he was speaking the old language, or the correct language, more than it was with the slang. We have lost language. We chopped off a lot of the words when we speak to each other. He was speaking fluently with correct grammar. The rest of my group couldn't understand him. Language will change, but we still have to have the mother language, I call it. Those are some of the important things that we try to preserve. We do all the pictures. We have different pictures. We videotape the elders speaking the language and telling us stories or whatever. It just started spreading out. We knew that we had to preserve all our culture, and we're trying the best we can before our elders pass away. I'm still young because there're eighty-four and ninety-six year old elders that we have on our reservation. Two years from now, I'm going to be able to park in the Elders Only parking lot because I'll be fifty-five. Thank you.

Lee: What we're talking about here sounds like is cultural archiving across the board. Everybody's doing it in similar, but different ways. The Tunica-Biloxi are doing it through the music, through the songs. Jean Luc, will you talk a little bit about that? Talk about what your family is doing?

Jean Luc Pierite: First of all, Wow. Thank you guys for inviting me here. It does feel a little bit like particular academia, it feels a little bit like Plato's symposium, and I'm sort of like Aristophanes, kind of thrown in there because I'm funny, and I've got little weird stories.

Lee: You're also the youngest one.

Pierite: That's the thing. I was thinking about going into the images from our stories. We have the story about, and it kind of crops up, the sort of like scene crops up in a couple of stories. The rabbit has a hatchet. He's hacking down the reeds, and he's in there. I kind of see it like everybody in the panel is

sort of like in the thick of the reeds, whereas I'm sort of just now breaking through. It's good to have a little bit of commentary, just breaking through and seeing what is out there. Of course, I have my mom, my dad, and my grandfather who's come before us, and generations before.

To go into what Dr. Rasmussen brought up during the beginning and then through Pete as well, the shout-out to Zora was right on. I loved that. It got me to thinking about the idea of . . . . Also Vine Deloria brought up about the two worlds. Walter kind of touched on that a little bit. Where you have the scene where you don't want to go to kindergarten, but it's not to remain ignorant. There are two worlds. What it is, is that we look through these lenses, like either academia, or however we got this information. We have these lenses on right now versus if we take them off, you will always see the real world that has always been there.

When we think about learning right now, we don't think about going to the elders. We don't think about asking the parents first. The first thing we think about learning is going on the computer and "Googling." That's how a lot of people are getting their information. It has now become the same information. If you need food, what do you do? You go to Walmart because that's where the cheapest food is. That's where everybody is starting to get it. When we talk about Indian people, when we talk about the distinct communities, we talk about the survival of that. We talk about taking off the lenses, going to the elders, and learning the information sort of relating to the world that has always been there. It's not gone away or anything like that, relating it into the way that Tunica, Koasati, Choctaw, Chitimacha, and so on, even European ways of viewing the world.

What is the Delta? The Delta is a triangle. You express it that way in math. Maybe you have the Delta? The Delta is the difference. The one side of the Delta is sort of the original concept. The other side of the Delta is what's passed through. What's the difference between the two? The Delta, which is, when you're inside of that triangle, you have this unyielding force that will always be there and will never change. To pass through it is to change yourself. It's sort of like a mathematical and philosophical idea just to bounce off of people.

With the language and with the song, and what my family is doing. I think what we're doing is *the* most important thing when it comes to the preservation of the tribe. The tribe itself. . . . When we talk about two worlds, we also talk about the tribe versus the Tribe, Inc. The Tribe, Inc. is when you talk about Federally recognized tribes. It's a Federal corporation that provides for the economic development of Indian people versus the tribe, which is an entity that has always been. It either dates back to 6,000 years ago or however long the oral history goes to the creation of the world, the creation of the people, through the great floods, all that. I think that what we're doing as far as doing the songs, doing the stories, it's either according to the council it could be ten years we've been doing this. According to my family it's thirty years, fifty years, back, generations on back. What we're doing is passing a beach ball. When you're at a music concert, or wherever, you have a beach ball, just bouncing through the crowd. One person it lands on, you've got to bump it up. Through time, through the tribe's history, that's what we've done. Through my great-grandfathers, through Sesosterie Youchigant, through Volsin Chiki, and all the people have just bounced that ball and continued it, continued the tribe's preservation. That's a lot of stuff I'm throwing out because there're so many concepts that have come out.

In that, we are the teachers. We are the ones that have been here. We're here in that Delta, in that folk sense. The thing is, is that while we remain in the Delta, there's en-

croachment. There's that homogenization that I was talking about where the Internet is where you are getting your information, that stores are where you are getting your food and that sort of thing. There's that encroachment. That's what is the threat to the survival of all of our cultures is that the European mindset or the corporate mind set or whatever it is, that's what's the threat.

The thing is while we are in the Delta, we've taken it for granted that this is how we are and this is how we'll always be. That's no big deal because we won't really change. Sometimes it takes people from academia to come in and say this is not so much a burning library or anything like that, but you have to do something in order to get this down and pass that beach ball along to the next generation, whether it's passing it on to your children directly or just making sure that you talk to anthropologists, talk to any media outlet and get the information out there so that generations on, whether or not the culture continues from your generation, generations on, people are going to be traditionalists once more and go back to that information.

Goodness. Something of a ramble, isn't it? When we talk about the tribe versus Tribe, Inc, we talk about Corsieri vs. Salazar [Federal lawsuit over Indian Trust Lands rights], sort of like the attack on the tribe's sovereignty, and all that politics put together. The main defense to that is to ensure that the people remain distinct. Through the songs, through the stories, I believe that my family is on the frontline of that battle, through our tribe. There are other people. John was talking about basket making. Cheryl was talking about the language. Everybody has their part to play in cultural preservation. We all are on that frontline. We have to make sure that. . . . Tribe, Inc. is good; it provides for economic development. The real battle is to ensure that the tribe is the continuous entity. Regardless of state or Federal or anybody's authority to tell you who you are, that is what needs to continue, your own identity.

I didn't really give any dates or biographical information. If there're are any questions, of course like everybody else said.

Lee: Just let me ask you a question so that you can tell folks. What type of information is passed down in the songs? What types of information are you able to preserve in those songs?

Pierite: The type of information in the songs and in the stories. . . . First of all, when my mom started, I mean not started. . . .

Lee: Kind of formalized the process a little bit.

Pierite: When she took up, my grandfather said, "You are going to be the one. You are going to be the one that shows your children. You are going to be the one that shows the tribe, and all this will be yours." Of course, you can see that, obviously, she is overwhelmed by everything because this is her calling. What's passed on in the songs and stories, my mom said, "What of the language for everything else can enforce speaking the language? It's music, songs." It's those concepts. It's those ideas. Even though they're just vocables, they have these concepts in there because music being the universal language. It's the first thing that everybody can relate to. That's why she took up for the songs first and the language second. Through the songs and the stories, I talked about this in my tribal council. I said, "What we're doing is preserving the mores and the folkways of the tribe." What that in turn does, it influences how the government self-governs itself and how you remain a distinct community. When the Federal government comes in for whatever reason, it takes a look around at the group of people and says, "OK. Let's see. Are you guys still here? Are you guys still Indian? We can give this to you, and we can

take it away." That sort of thing. If the culture remains intact, if the culture is the thing that's influencing how you govern, then, in turn, they can't come in and say, "Oh, well, y'all are just like everybody else." That's it. That's what I mean by us being on the frontlines of the battle, making sure that the tribe, and in turn, Tribe, Inc. is preserved.

Gregory: Jean Luc, the tribe is more than recognition?

Pierite: Yes.

Gregory: I think that's a general consensus with everybody. Generally I think the whole idea of a tribe as an incorporated group is one thing, but a tribe as a culture group is sort of another thing. Those two things are very much entwined in the world these guys live in just like they are in the world we all live in. There's something bigger than the label. Maybe there's something bigger than the folk that people come to study. People have in their heads, and they want to keep in their hearts. That's a different thing. I think we'll hear that at all these panels, not just the American Indian panel. I think you will hear it from other people. The Delta is no different than any other place on the planet. I think it's the same thing we would all say, people will all say.

Jean Luc's great grandfather [Joseph Alcide Pierite, the last traditional Tunica-Biloxi chief] told me one morning, "Everybody has to be everything they are." I thought, "OK." I was the baby at that meeting. I've been thinking about that ever since. Now, I'm the elder at the table, anyway. I keep thinking about that. That's very hard to do to be everything you are and keep some essence of your identity. Being an anthropologist has made it easy for me because we go around talking to people about what they think they are. I get a chance to kind of figure out what I am. It's complex. It's very complex.

All of these people here have talked about the environment in the Delta. The cane project is directly there. Preserving the plants is directly there. Christine helped out some of us from one of the other sides of my identity save the environment a couple of years ago. Tunica-Biloxi and the Jena Band of Choctaw made an effort right after Katrina to cope with a major problem in the Delta. It's now a major problem for the Vietnamese people in New Orleans. If all the waste of Katrina had to go somewhere, where was it going to go? It was going out until a few months ago, it was going out to right on top of the Vietnamese community in Orleans Parish. Before that, it was coming to up to Catahoula, Avoyelles, up the river into central Louisiana. Maybe Christine will talk about that a little bit.

Norris: Well, it was an issue that was very dear to us in protecting our land, when we look at the mounds that are out there, the significance to Indian people. They wanted to bring this waste disposal, bring it either by truck or by barges and dump it at this facility. They wanted to create and make this facility in that area, which was significant, the land was, to our Native American people. We fought against that and got up and spoke out. So many times that's what we do not do is speak out and protect our land and what is dear to us and explain the reason why. There was an effort. We went to meetings with the parish police jury meetings and various people at DEQ headquarters and things. To let our voices be heard and collectively, that's what made this effort so important. It made it that we were able to stop that, from them coming in. Of course, they wanted to come up where it wasn't hurting their environment. It was damaging ours, land that was dear to us, to our ancestors. Because we got together, as a collective voice and made those objections known and filed those objections

to that area being used for that, we were successful in keeping this company from coming and making a land fill in that area, something that once again shows, if we make a collective effort, if we come together as people and protect our land. It was very successful. We're very proud to have been a part of that.

Lee: Walter made a good point, too. Not only are there invasive things like trash and the changes to the land that come with use, but Walter just made a point about the invasive plants. When you're using plant medicine and invasive plants come through and they take the place sometimes of the plants that were traditionally there disappear.

Celestine: We're working with the U. S. Forestry Service and Fort Polk, believe it or not. They're working on planting plants that existed in the area and trying to take away the invasive plants that were brought in. Collectively, there are different agencies that get together, and we work with the different agencies to get the plants that existed here before the invasive plants came. We all have to kind of intertwine and see what we can do to preserve not only our traditions and customs, but also to preserve our plant life.

We also made agreements with the Federal facilities, like military facilities in case something happens in our lands, and we can't find the medicines that we need in our lands. We can go to a military facility or whatever, and if there're plants that we need, we can also get it. That was part of our NAGPRA [Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act] Memorandum of Understanding and Memorandum of Agreement, not only for NAGPRA, but also for natural resources. We have to think broadly and see what we want. I know Christine and Cheryl here, we're not scared to tell them what we want now. It used to be kind of like, "I don't know what we want." You have to kind of think and see what we need more than what we want. If we want something, we want to go after it.

Smith: We've learned the American way. We've learned to speak up now.

Lee: You've learned the white American way.

Smith: I think for too long Indians never said anything. They just stayed to themselves. We were to ourselves. I think we have been educated enough and that we've learned to survive. To keep our culture, we have to learn the white way, too.

Celestine: We have to survive in the white world. At the same time, we want to stay in our world, too. Like the two different worlds that we have, I can go back and forth. It doesn't matter. I'm aggressive enough now in the non-Indian world. I'd rather be in my world, but I know I have to survive in the non-Indian world. We also teach our kids. . . . You were talking about. . . . . They used to have books about progressive Indian and traditional Indian. Traditional Indian was poor; the progressive Indian was wealthy in a white man's term. You can do both. You can be educated, but you can also know about your traditional history. It can be parallel now. At one time we were separated, traditional, progressive. Now we can do both and still live according to what we want.

Gregory: Are there any questions? You guys have been quiet out there.

Question: Do you find that a large interest is in your community to learn about language and culture?

Norris: I think in our tribe.

Question: Are people involved, or is it be-

coming more difficult?

Norris: I think it's becoming more because today as Cheryl had stated earlier, when we were younger, we just didn't, we found too many other things to do. We didn't want to learn that when we had those elders at our disposal. Now that we are becoming in that place, and we see the significance and importance, we want to share and teach that. We're able now because we've become more diversified to offer programs to our young people that give them that opportunity to learn. When we didn't have those programs available when we were young teenagers within our tribe, so you're seeing more of educating our young children on the culture, the language, giving them the opportunities that we didn't have.

When we were doing our Federal recognition, I was even amazed to learn that in the 1930s my father was not allowed to attend public schools. It was only until the 1940s that our tribal members were allowed to attend the schools. We went to an Indian school. That's one of the things that we've lost or are losing some of the language because they were made to, as Walter said, they only spoke Choctaw, and they were made to learn the English language. They were even, the school superintendents came out into our homes and asked the parents to stop talking Choctaw to their children so they would be able to catch up in school. They were behind because of the language barriers that existed.

Today, I think we have more resources than ever before. We're able to give our young people those opportunities that we never had growing up. I think you see that there're more activities going on in learning the culture, maintaining this identity of who we are as Indian people than ever before.

Celestine: We were actually punished for speaking our language in the school that I went to. I went to the principal's office regularly.

Lee: That was for speaking your language?

Celestine: They didn't want us to speak our language at all, even to each other in school. I mean, that was it. They whipped the tar out of you. I was there. The problem is I was always hard-headed, I guess. My grandmother told me, "Whatever you do, don't speak English, or *wacina* [English language]. [Sentence in Koasati that was then repeated in English as follows] Don't speak in English to your own people."

Darden: I guess for us, what happened with us, if you look back, our grandparents, you had to ask them if you wanted to know anything. The generation today, you don't have to come ask. With wanting to teach the kids more and stuff, growing up not hearing much, and I learned a lot from my grandmother because I talked to her a lot, and I asked her a lot of questions. If I didn't ask the questions, I didn't learn anything.

Now today, we are a little different. All the stuff we have, we're pushing it on the kids at school. Within the community, we're doing things that weren't done then.

My grandparents' generation was a different generation. They were not open and not out because, in early 1900s we had a lot of bad things happen at our community. If you were Indian, you were doing different things. You couldn't even go in the store. You'd get beat if you went in a white store, just all these things. Our people did, my grandparents, my great-grandparents, they did all they could to fit into the community. That meant leaving things and not being open with some of our cultural stuff, our language, all this. You didn't speak that outside. You didn't try to go in a store that you shouldn't go there.

Actually the church in our community, right there in Charenton, the land came

from the tribe for the church. That was so that we could, and actually, we got the last seats in the house, behind everybody else. The land came from us, so that's kind of. . . . The church got the land from us to build the church. That way we also had place to bury our people. We got away from the mounds systems. I want to say early 1900s was the last mound burials that we did. Starting in the 1800s, we'd have some within the church.

They just did everything that fit into the community. By doing so, my grandmother, if I wanted to know anything, I had to ask. She didn't openly just offer to me. When you would ask, she would, vast knowledge, she would tell you. Anything you asked, she would share with you. I would spend hours and hours with her. If you didn't ask, and it was the same way with all of our elders, if you didn't ask. . . . .

The generation today where we are, you don't have to ask. We're pushing it on you. It's different for our kids today than it was when I was growing up or when my dad was growing up. There's more push to know your history and to know your language, to know your culture, the basketry, all the different things that make us who we are. I don't know if that answers you fully, but that's kind of the way we've evolved, I know, within our community.

Celestine: Some of the kids, they actually want to learn now about our stories. We have elders that we taped telling the stories, videotaped and everything. It's really hard. It's kind of hard to get those elders to speak in front of a camera. You have to face them and ask them if you could tell a story. They'll tell you the story. I was blessed because, every night, we didn't have television or anything, so they'd sit on the porch and tell you the stories. I knew the stories.

I tell my kids the stories, and they always, every time they were about to go to bed, I'd tell them our stories that came from way back. The little stories that we talk about also have a meaning that's deep inside that sometimes you don't know until you're older. Then you get it. There's a lesson within that story, and you don't get it until all of a sudden you say, "Hey wait a minute. This is what they were talking about," when you get a little bit older, a little bit wiser. We keep telling the stories over, and over, and over till. At that time, we didn't have it written down. I still don't write. A lot of people tell me to write it, but I want to tell it to them orally, over and over and over until some day they will get it.

Question: It is related to your answers. I was going to ask about how your youth programs, what do they consist of? Are you are talking about one week during the summer, after school programs, all summer long? How intensive are those?

Celestine: The youth programs are actually, they try to work at different places. I'm the director of employment and training, and they come in, and they want to learn about how we do the employment and training programs. But, at the same time, they also have, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tuesdays they learn about their traditional culture. Thursdays, you want to push them for a career. It's a parallel thing. You no longer have traditional Indians and progressive Indians. You have an Indian that has a parallel choice. They are going to learn about their culture because I don't want one of my tribal members to say, "What's your tribal history?" "I don't know." I don't want them to say that. I want them to tell them who we are, and at the same time, I want them to be aggressive in their careers. That's why we have our committees.

I'm part of the Education Committee that oversees the Education Office. I'm also vice-chairman of the committee that oversees the Historical Preservation Office. The titles

don't mean anything because at the end, you are going to do what is necessary to preserve your culture. At the same time, you want to push these kids to get an education because that's what we're going to have to do. We're going to have to educate them, and at the same time make sure that they know their history and traditions and customs.

Lee: So your youth program goes on all year?

Celestine: Actually, it goes all year, but our funding usually ends in the summer. From June to August, right before they go to school, we kind of give them two weeks of free time. Before that, there are things that they actually have to shadow somebody. Shadow our tribal chairman, or whatever. We want them to know what our government is about also. That's why we make them shadow.

It depends. One time, I had the youth go out and clean elders' yards. That was a success because the elders got to know the kids. When somebody does something for you, the elders would feed them and say, "Who are you? Whose child are you?" They would tell them. After a while even though this project is over in the summer, the elders say, "Leroy, how are you doing?" The kids would say, "Hi," to the elders because they helped them paint their house or whatever. It was the youth meeting the elders. It was great.

You have to be creative. Every summer you try to do something that kind of reflects back to your tribal government or your tribal people. You kind of go to the government and then back to the people. You kind of switch it around or learn how to make beadwork or basketry, which reminds me. My mom sent a basket for Dr. Gregory. I'm telling you the kids made the baskets. It's a little bear.

Lee: That's great.

Celestine: I mean they were very talented. I was really surprised. There's certain things that they need to learn, and we try to cram it in to them, I guess, right now. In the long run, when I think about it, the people that are tribal council members now, they're young. They remember what we talked to them about. They remember the traditions and they also went through college. Out of the seven tribal council members in our tribal government, six out of the seven have a degree. They also know their traditional histories, and they remember as a youth. I was in the youth thing, too, and I remember it.

Question: I've had a question running through my mind. John mentioned the six thousand year history of you've always been here. Just to look at the makeup of this panel, Native Americans and people of the tribe of academia, it's amazing that you can be sitting there together. You told us, Walter, how you reconcile your academic friend when he would give you information that you don't agree with because it didn't come from the people. Is there a disconnect with your young people in hearing your stories, your history and then being exposed to archaeology, anthropology, fossil evidence, other things, how do they reconcile these two worlds?

Celestine: It's just like me. Sometimes, I actually disagreed with my professor. Sometimes he would bring documents in and say, "OK. Here are my documents and here's your oral history." Sometimes I would agree with him in certain things but not agree with him in certain things. Our kids, they sometimes go into the Internet and find information about our tribal history. They'll ask. We have to be knowledgeable enough to tell them OK.

Question: Does it cause them to question tribal history?

Celestine: Oh, yeah. They do. It's good. If they question it, you want to explain to them the difference and the different mindsets. I don't agree with a lot of things, or I agree with certain things. Some things are specifically documented because it happened in this century. The ones in the pre-Columbus days, and people are try to tell me in pre-Columbus days this happened, I'm not going to believe them. You know what I'm saying?

Darden: I guess the reason you won't believe them, too, you have different versions of what really happened. If you look at what was written, kind of like what Walter said earlier, it's what was written, what they saw through their eyes. It may not actually be the way it happened or the way your people saw it or what they experienced. We've seen that in just the writings that we've seen about the tribe. There are some things that have been written where they've mistaken things that they've seen.

I mean even from the basketry. People would talk about our basketry. They always say Chitimacha baskets are woven so tight that they hold water. Actually, that's not why they hold water. There's a secret to that, but they don't know that. When they see it and they wrote it in the books, then, yes, they are beautiful baskets, fine basketry. But no matter how tight you weave that cane, the water is going to leak out. I know. I've been weaving a long time. My grandmother, she told me that. People would look at that and they would say that, but they wouldn't tell them differently. They wouldn't tell them, never told them what it really took to make the basket hold water. There are a lot of things in basketry that as basket makers we keep to ourselves.

As a people there are some things that are out there that people may assume something, and you don't correct them on it. That's something you know, and that's your knowledge, and that's passed down between you. That's only kept within your people. Some of those things that are written, you can talk to the youth if they ask, and you can tell them the actual truth. I think they'll believe you more than they are going to believe the book because we are our people. We've always been here, and we've handed it down to one another. The books do contradict some things. There may be some that are going to have those questions. I haven't really found a big issue with it. We haven't had issues with it.

Pierite: Coming from the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe, we have Tunica, Ofo, Avoyelles, Choctaw, Biloxi, all those tribes coming together. We have, say the incident where Moreau killed the chief. At that point is written that Eli Barbry said that from that point, that's when the Indians scattered. We lost our, we lost the tribe for a little bit there. We came back together. Even today, when we're dealing with the satellite communities of Houston and Chicago and what we perceive as the core community of Marksville, the disconnect is that you have these families that have existed and created their own communities outside of the Delta. When we talk to them with authority about this is the tribal history and this is the core of it, then we also begin a conversation of "What was your experience?" It's not for them to learn what it is to be Indian in the Marksville sense, but what it is for them to be Indian. What was their experience of being Indian versus our experience? How is that, how is the tribal history reconciled together through those different communities?

Question: In listening to the panel today, I see that your trying to preserve your heritage is essential. I feel it, too, and it should be. You talk about some of the Anglo world writing things that were not quite to the correctness. Do you feel that you want to educate the world to, not the things that you want to

keep secret, do you want to keep this among yourselves and your youth, or would you like to educate all of us to the true history of the Native Americans?

Celestine: I do lectures all over the United States about our tribal history because I want people to know who we are, as a native person. With this program that I work with at the Department of Labor, I get to meet all the different tribes in the fifty states, including Native Alaskans. I've seen their ceremonies and traditional customs. I was always interested in native people.

I would read books when I was a kid. I probably read every library book there was in my little high school, which at that time averaged about 500 people from kindergarten to high school. I would read these books, and then I would ask the elders of those tribes because I was on the powwow trail. I was a champion fancy war dancer, they called it. I went all over the place just like a rodeo circuit. I'd go dance everywhere. When I was there, I would ask some of these elders, and they said, "No. This is what we meant." That's why I started questioning. I'm very lucky to ask other tribes how they felt about some of those things that were written about them. That's when I started realizing that, hey, this is not our thinking, but somebody else's thinking.

I want people to know who I am. I don't mind talking to groups of people. Believe it or not, I was sixteen years old when I worked for public relations for my tribe. That's how I could talk to non-Indians without any problems. Before that, I was scared to talk to even my own people. If there was a group of people, I didn't want to talk. When I did public relations for our tourism, we used to have the tourism at the Alabama tribe, ride the little train and all that stuff. I learned to communicate with people.

I'm not trying to say it's right or wrong, but I want to question it, if I think it's wrong. There's a historian called Howard Martin who, actually, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe made him our tribal historian. He wrote a thesis about us at Sam Houston State University. I read it, and I said, "This is wrong." I was young. He said, "This means 'big grounds.' It's *bit kuh*." In my language, it meant "a place to dance." He was saying that it meant "big grounds." I said, "No, it's not. '*Bit kuh*' means it's 'a place to dance.'" He said, "No, no, no, no. It's documented right here, right here." He started showing me references. That's when I realized. Wait a minute. I know my language. It can't change that much. That's why I started questioning. In my mind, I want that proof. Dr. George Langford, he is one-quarter Choctaw, believe it or not. Sometimes he would prove it to me, and I would agree with him. You have to always look at it to see if it's true or not. You'd have to research, too.

Gregory: We probably have time for one more question. That lady has been waiting.

Question: Actually, my question relates to several of the questions that each of you have brought up. You were mentioning that young people, what they do is they go to Google first, or they have the new smart phones, and they have all of this technology. In an ideal world, they would go straight to the elders and ask those types of questions. They would be able to learn the true version and not the European version of what y'all have experienced. What kind of technologies are y'all using, and are you using any technology to reach out to children who might Google? They might say, I'm shy and I don't want to ask this person. I'll Google it later. How can you pass on that information to the kids?

Celestine: We have a lot of projects going on at one time. One of the things that we are doing now is our Head Start Department. We're actually trying to put our tribal stories

into cartoons. The little kids like to see these cartoons over, and over, and over. We wanted to do it in our language. It's a mixture of Alabama, Coushatta, non-Indians, whites, blacks, Hispanics, to our little Head Start program. They learn "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and all that in our language. They actually sing it. We're creating cartoons with our language so the little kids can see it over and over.

We have a touch screen thing where you have a tree there, and then you touch it. In one place it says, "*It to*." If you punch it to where normal, "*It tok*." We're working on a touch screen type thing through the computer system.

There's so much that we can do to keep them interested. We try to work each one a little at a time. To me, I don't have that much time, but I want to do everything I can, and hopefully somebody behind me is going to do the same thing and maybe improve it. I want to set it up and then let them improve it. We can use the technology to really set their minds. At the same time, our elders, they're not going to be there. Either I talk to them face-to-face or not. We have to kind of charm them into giving that videotape. It's not that easy.

Smith: Our Social Services Department did a one-night thing where we had elders come in and youth come in. We had supper. Of course, when you have Indians, you have to have food. If you've got food, you're going to get them there. That's true with Indians too. We had food, and we had elders come in. She had it worked out where each youth had a question. They were sitting across from each other. The youth would have their question, and they would pick out a person to ask. That elder would have to answer the question for the youth. We only did that one time. We were going to do it more.

The youth really don't even know who the elders are. They don't know what kin they are. It's something that we're working on that needs to be done. Christine and I, our generation, we knew everybody. First cousins, we knew each other. We spent the night with each other. I see this generation coming up now, they don't even know who their first cousins are. They don't know who their grandfathers were. It's like they've missed something with that generation there. It's missing.

This program went really well. The youth were shy about asking the elders things. They couldn't really believe. The elders would say, "We didn't have bathrooms back then. We had to get water from the well." They told things that these kids can't imagine ever happening. It was a real good night. I think it is something that we need to continue to do. That was really good.

We have a Project Venture group that does things. They get together once a week in the evenings at night. They eat and they do projects. I think they are going to start doing projects like mowing the yards for the old people, just things like that. It is a group of mostly teenagers.

We have summer camp once a year, just three or four days for kindergarteners through about sixteen. At that camp, they get a little bit of culture. They get healthy learning. We bring in dancers. The traditional people come in and show them how to carve, show them how to make baskets. I go in with language. We have that once a year as a summer project.

Sometimes at Christmas, we try to give some of the kids that volunteer. We'll do a little Christmas play. There are activities with the youth, but we really need more with the elders. It's something that we need to work on. We really do need to work on that.

Pierite: In terms of the technologies that we use for our effort in particular, it boils down to the brain, the mouth, and an old blue suit-

case, and just going out to as many people, tribal members and non-tribal members alike. When we talk to the people of Avoyelles and Rapides Parishes and say, “This is part of your history, too, because we have relations.” This is our shared history as a greater community.

I think when it comes down to what the European version of history, there could be an assiduous agenda saying, “We’re Christian, and these are savages, and we want to portray them as such.” Even with the best of intentions, when you’re wiggling your hand, writing down stuff, there’s stuff that. . . .

When Indians tell stories, it just kind of goes just right along together. It could be the most important bit could get lost in a ramble. Like what Walter said, it takes time for these things to sit with you. You could write down that stuff today. Five years down the road, it clicks. Now it’s already written. It was already the authority. Now, it finally dawns on me, even with my best of intentions.

The best thing is to try to, as the singers and storytellers, to try to find every outlet possible. We have our alligator shows in the Casino right now. That appeals to the youth and it appeals to non-tribal youth and tribal youth. It has them coming back. Also, we find that older people, tribal and non-tribal, they say, “Oh, yeah.” Even the fact that we’re Indian and we speak French. “Oh, yeah,” and they’ll start connecting that way. It’s showing people to celebrate. If you would say like my great-grandfather told him, “Celebrate all of who you are.” That’s the thing that’s got to click.

Gregory: We need to take a break. We’re going to let Jean Luc and his mother and sister sing a little and tell stories. We will have a little informance. I don’t think they’ll mind if you ask them questions during that session, too. Let’s take a little break. We’re a little off schedule, but we’ll get back on one.

Smith: We operate on Indian time.

Saving Songs and Stories

Tunica-Biloxi Singers: Donna Pierite, Elisabeth Pierite Mora, Jean Luc Pierite

L-R: Jean Luc Pierite, Elisabeth Pierite Mora, and Donna Pierite

The Pierite Family Singers

A thousand years ago, long before the invasion of the white man or the introduction of Africans and other people, there was music in the Delta. The Tunica and Biloxi people saw DeSoto and his men encounter the Mississippi River for the first time. It was a river the tribal people had known for at least 8,000 years.

Dance and song are synonymous in Indian culture, and religious and secular worlds blend imperceptibly into one another, held there by music.

The Pierite family, descended from two tribal lines that fuse, descended from two lines of tradition, offer insights into southeastern secular and religious music that are often hidden nor observed in more modern pow-wow venues. Non-Indian people now see the successes of the tribes in the Delta. Casinos have replaced tar-paper sharecropper cabins, and hotels now announce tribal areas to visitors. Still, the music in the minds and hearts of the Indian people are what the Pierites strive to preserve, teach and share. Welcome to the American Indian heart of Delta music.

SESSION II

Session II – The Creole Community: Continuity & Renaissance

Moderators: Dr. Deborah Clifton, Sheila Richmond
Participants: Joe Citizen, Tracey Colson, Sherman Cravins, Goldman Thibodeaux, Theresa Thibodeaux

All conversation spoken in Creole/French has been translated and identified in italics.

Pete Gregory: I'm going to let Ms. Sheila kind of be the moderator, she and Dr. Deborah Clifton. Mr. and Mrs. Goldman Thibodeaux, Tracey Colson, Sherman Cravins, Mr. Joe Citizen, that's our Creole panel for the afternoon. Afterwards, we'll have a little informance. Some of us have had the privilege of knowing and hearing these guys before. Sheila, you and Debbie want to start?

L-R: Joe Citizen, Sherman Cravins, Tracey Colson, Theresa Thibodeaux, Goldman Thibodeaux, Dr. Deborah Clifton

Sheila Richmond: I'm going to keep my remarks as much to a minimum as I possibly can because I really want all of these folks to talk about their culture and so forth. What I am going to do and try to remind everybody, if someone asks you a question from the audience, would you repeat the question before you answer it just so that we can get it on the recording devices? Dr. Gregory has introduced everybody. It would be nice if you say your name again before you start speaking. We're just going to let them go. Please, it's informal like this morning. Interrupt at any time you have a question. Let us know what you want to know about, and these folks will tell you something about their culture. Who would like to start? Mr. Joe, you're on the end. Would you like to start talking about. . . . ?

Theresa Thibodeaux: Introduce who you are, Joe.

Richmond: Introduce yourself.

Joe Citizen: *I'm Joe Citizen. I come from Opelousas. I was raised in Mallet in St. Landry Parish. I was raised there, farming. We raised cotton, corn, potatoes. My late father came from Church Point, and my mother came from Mallet. Currently, I live in the town of Opelousas since my mother and father died. Hurricane Audrey in 1957, that was some really bad weather. After that, I went to school in Opelousas. I then went to work in Baton Rouge. I joined the union AFL-CIO in 1957. That was the second time in the labor movement and worked in cement production as a laborer. I did that for ten years.*

At home we played the music called La La, Zydeco music, La La. Before that, I played the harmonica. We called that mouth

music. I started playing that in 1947. We had a little band in the Mallet area. There were just three in our band, a man who played guitar, a man who played drums, and I played the harmonica. I stopped that to begin working. Now I no longer play the harmonica. I play the music that interests the young people, Zydeco and blues music. We play Creole music, La La music from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s until the 1950s. That's when we started with Zydeco and blues music. We, Goldman Thibodeaux and the Lawtell Playboys, began in 1946, and we continue to play the same kind of music. We are the only band that plays Creole music, La La, from the old days. All the other who play music play mainly Zydeco and blues. We play only Creole music because if you can't speak Creole and you don't know what you are saying, you can't play like it's supposed to be played. We are going to play Creole music and not Zydeco. That's it.

Sherman Cravins: *I'm Sherman Cravins. I come from Mallet. I was raised in Mallet until I was a young man. I moved to Houston for twenty years. I've been back for about thirty years. I moved to Mallet; in fact, I live in Swords. For about the past thirty years, I've been trying to learn my language. We are very interested in speaking with all of you. We'll let you know what we know, where our people come from. Mr. Citizen told you about the music. The music, they say all the time, they want to pass Zydeco music and Creole music, but Zydeco music is not Creole music, at all. The music of the Creole people is La-la music, the same music they play. Mr. Goldman and Mr. Joe are the only ones today who can play that music. The music is dead. After them, it's gone. Thank you.*

Richmond: How many of you followed both conversations? A few of you. I think too many in the audience are not going to understand when you speak Creole or speak French, so if you could also. . . . It's fine that you speak your language because that gives you a sense of where they are coming from, but also if you could explain what you just said in English, that would be helpful to most everyone here.

Citizen: My name is Joseph Citizen. They call me Zydeco Joe. I was born and raised in Mallet, Louisiana, which is just about, I would say, about five miles west of Opelousas on [Hwy.] 190. I was raised in the field picking cotton, digging sweet potatoes, and raising corn. Being raised in Mallet, my daddy died in 1957, living on the farm because of Hurricane Audrey. I went to school in Lawtell, my elementary school. Then I went to high school in Opelousas. After 1957, I joined the union, Local 1177 in Baton Rouge. I was a labor man working with AFL-CIO at one time local business agent for Local 1177. I did this for fifty years and I retired from labor, the union AFL-CIO. First, when I started playing music, it was harmonica music. I played what you call harmonica which they call it a mouth organ, some people call it. I played that music back in '43, '44, '45. We had three people play in the band. We had guitar, drums, and harmonica, which I was on the harmonica. We did this for a while until about the early '50s. After that I quit because I was doing construction work. I started playing back again the scrub board, which I play with Goldman Thibodeaux and the Lawtell Playboys. We are the only ones that play French music. We feel that if you can't talk the language and you don't know what you're saying, you can't play that music. We are the only band that has been going on since 1946, this band was started. We give you three hours of French music, French La La music and talk in French and sing in French. We've been doing this every since. As people die in the band, they are being replaced with new people, but keep the same tradition of Creole music, which is the La La

music, the music of the 1920s. This is it.

Cravins: I'm Sherman Cravins. I'm from Mallet. I was actually born and raised and raised the same way Mr. Citizen was. We had a farm, born and raised on a farm. As a young man I left and went to Houston for twenty years. I've been back in the Mallet area for thirty years. It's beginning to tell my age to some degree. I came back. I wanted to be back home and get closer to my culture, re-learn my people. I've been pretty well involved in the Creole culture ever since I came back because I wanted to know more. I wanted to get to the roots of it. I'm very, very pleased with what I found. As we were discussing on the way here, today in fact. I had a discussion with a brother of mine last night. We are a Creole people, but we speak the French language, Louisiana French language. There are communities in Louisiana where there are Creole people who speak Creole because they come from a different background. We speak the Louisiana French. That's it.

Tracey Colson: I'm the renaissance part of this panel, I guess, because I'm the youngest. Ms. Theresa's really youngest.

Theresa: I wish I was.

Colson: You are. You really are. I've been involved with the Creole Heritage Center since there was no Creole Heritage Center, when the Creole Heritage Center was in my parents' living room. We had meetings at whoever was willing to cook dinner that night. I had to go because I was the baby. Everybody else was going to be there, so there was nobody to babysit. That was my introduction. I would sit down. I couldn't watch TV, and I couldn't read a book. I had to sit there and listen. I listened, and I listened, and I learned about genealogy, about family links, and family ties, and how important that was. I had all these other very interesting great people that entered my life when I was very young like Dr. Gregory, Mr. and Mrs. Thibodeaux, Mr. Sherman, that gave me a different aspect and a different look at what my culture was, not only in the way that I perceived it, but in the way other people perceived it.

I guess probably when I was twelve, thirteen years old, junior high school, and I tell this story every time because it helps people I'm talking to, to kind of understand where I'm coming from, and why I'm so passionate about what I do and the things that I say. It was first day of school, seventh or eighth grade. It was eighth grade. We went to homeroom. I was quite proud of myself because that was one of the first years when Momma and Daddy didn't walk with you into the classroom and all of that. The first thing they did was hand out these blue cards. You put your name and your address and male/female, all of this, your emergency contact information. One of the blanks said "Race." That was never discussed in my house. That was never talked about; that was never asked. It was never an issue. I really didn't even understand what that meant. I just left it blank. The teacher walked around. He picked up everybody's card. He looked at mine, and he said, "You have to put something." I said, "I don't have to put anything." He said, "No. You have to put something because I have to turn this in to the office. It goes to the school board." I'm in eighth grade. I said, "It can go to the office, and it can go to the school board, but I'm not going to fill in a blank with something that I don't understand, that I don't identify with." He stood in front of the class and announced to everybody that I didn't know who I was: "She doesn't even know what she is." That's why I tell everybody, "Don't ask me what I am because who I am is so much more interesting. It's so much more entertaining." I

went home, and I told Mom what happened. She was at school the next day in classic Janet fashion with a whole lot to say. That was when I really said, "You know what? I'm Creole." I'm not going to be forced to identify as one thing or another because what I am is a mixture of many different things and many different cultures. It's not fair for me to say that I'm this race or that race because I don't identify with race. I identify with culture. My culture is Creole.

Theresa: I'm Theresa Thibodeaux. I'm married to Goldman Thibodeaux. I'm from Mallet, between Lawtell and Eunice. I was born and raised in Mallet, went to school at St. Ann's Catholic Church. It was a Catholic school. They only taught till the eighth grade, from first to eighth. They didn't have any pre-kindergarten. We were all first grade, no primer. I was brought up on the farm. My mom was Lula Derousseau Leday. My dad was LeRoy Leday. My dad was from the Washington area. My mom was from Mallet. That's about it.

My name is Theresa Thibodeaux. I come from Mallet, Louisiana. It's west of Opelousas, a little place called Mallet. I went to school at St. Ann Catholic School at Mallet. I was right next to the church. We had a big church, St. Ann. We have two sons. One is a nurse and the other is the manager of a dealership. We have four grandchildren.

Goldman: *I'm Goldman Thibodeaux.* I'm Goldman Thibodeaux. I grew up in Mallet, Lawtell, a little bit around Lewisburg. How many people in here heard about Lewisburg with Church Point? Really my roots are around Mallet and Lawtell. I grew up in a Creole family. My momma couldn't speak English. She learned from the grandchildren. My oldest brothers and sisters would bring the children for them to go to work. They couldn't understand what she was talking in Creole. They'd talk amongst themselves. They couldn't understand each other. She learned. She paid close attention to them talking. At the age of fifty years old, probably, forty- eight, forty-nine, she could talk it pretty good. Probably it wasn't the best, but she could tell you if she was hungry or she was thirsty or whatever.

That's where I come from. I come from a Creole family. My father and mother made fields of potatoes, cotton to work in. After Theresa and I married, I worked the fields and worked construction. We have two sons.

We have two sons. We are here today in hope that we can help y'all. If y'all think there's anything that we can do to help y'all, y'all make sure to ask the questions. That's what we're here for. We appreciate all of y'all.

Theresa: Thank y'all everybody for everybody for coming.

Goldman: *Thank you to everybody who for coming*. Thanks to everybody who could come.

Deborah Clifton: *I am Debbie Clifton. My family comes from around Lake Charles. When I was a small girl, my mother fell sick. My father had to go to work. So, my grandparents raised me. That's how I learned to speak Creole. When I was about eighteen or nineteen years old, my grandmother told me that there are problems because our language and all of that was dying. There were not young people who wanted to speak Creole that cared anything for it. She said, "Why don't you work with that and try to do something, teach and school, and all of that." I did that. That's how I began working for the language. While I was doing that, I met Mr. and Mrs. Thibodeaux. I also met lots of*

the people here. I began to work for the culture at eighteen or nineteen years old. Today, I'm sixty years old. It has been a long time that I've been working for this. It gives me great pleasure. I love my culture very much, and I love the people.

My name is Debbie Clifton. My family is from the Lake Charles area. When I was a small child, my mother fell sick, and my father had to go to work. My paternal grandparents took and raised me. That was how I learned to speak the language. When I was about eighteen, nineteen years old, my grandmother said to me, "Things are getting kind of bad. Looks like the language and the culture and everything are dying out, and there's hardly any young people taking an interest in it. Maybe you should get into this because it looks like you are going to have a good educational background. You'll be able to make some contributions." I took her at her word, got involved with the language and everything, and have worked on it ever since. I got to know Mr. and Mrs. Thibodeaux when I was young and have worked with them. I got to work with all these other good people that are here. I have a lot of love for the culture and for the people. Now, I'm sixty. I've been working on this for forty some years. I wouldn't have my life any other way. Thank you.

Richmond: As you can tell by what you've heard so far, language is important for the Creole culture. Music is important for the Creole culture. What other things would you like to pass on that you'd like to see continue? We've heard a little bit about how you folks grew up. A lot of you were on the farm. How many people are farming now? That kind of thing. What would you like to see happening within your culture in the next few years, besides language? Mr. Joe?

Citizen: English or French?

Richmond: Both if you can, if you don't mind.

Citizen: I'll start with English first. I would like for our culture to continue if we could find some young people that would be interested in keeping the traditional culture, French, I should say Creole, culture going, if we could find them somewhere. We would love to have somebody come back because after we are gone, we aren't going to have anybody else to do it.

We would be happy to have people, young people, who are interested in speaking Creole and our Creole culture from a long time ago. Helping the young to continue what is going on now, something that [Inaudible] *to show people that where we've been, we don't want people to forget where we've been and what we've done* [Inaudible] *Creole.*

Colson: Just off of what Mr. Joe was saying, what he's saying is exactly true. That's what I've been speaking about and trying to get people to understand and trying to go through different avenues to where there are younger people. I think what we're trying to do as a group, I think, Mr. Joe, is to get people to not only learn about the Creole culture, but to get Creole people now to be more vocal and accepting of their Creole culture and to learn the traditional things about the culture, and not just what's cool and what's "in" right now. It was real "in" to be Cajun for a while. They had a Cajun everything. They had a Cajun toilet, and a Cajun spoon, and it was real cool to be Cajun. It's getting really cool and "in" to be Creole. What we're trying to do, and I think what we're all trying to do collectively, and a lot of people in this room, is to not only educate people about what the Creole culture is, but to urge them to carry on the traditions of the culture. What I tell a lot of people, a lot of times, it's really great to go look at books and to look at

church records and figure out what your genealogy is and to draw those lines and make those links. That's great, and it's great to figure that out. What's even more important is that you go to the people that you still have. I still have them. These are honorary grandparents. I can still go and ask questions and ask for stories. At this time, and this is what I'm urging a lot of the Gen Xers, my generation, the ones that are coming after me, is to not only go and ask the questions, but it's so easy to take out our phone, now, and record a whole conversation, video it, something so that you have it. Like Mr. Joe said, once they're gone, the language is going to be gone, this language. It's great when there're people that are teaching it, but there's also a lot of discord about what's the right dialect and all. This is it to me. This is it. This is what I identify and know as our Creole language. I'm hoping that we do get younger people involved and that people are more involved in what the traditional music is. That was the music that I remember. I'm still not on the nouveau Zydeco train. No, I'm not getting on that train.

She's fussing at me, and this is my point that you need to say it in French now. We weren't taught. My parents' generation, when they were in school, especially up here, the nuns would slap them in the back of the head or pop them on the hand with a ruler for talking in French at school. You needed to speak in English. You needed to speak in English. Once we came around. . . . I know my grandparents spoke it, great aunts, the older people. I heard it all of the time. I would say, "What does that mean?" "You don't need to know. That's so you don't know what we are talking about. Don't worry about it." We weren't taught. All of us know little bits here and there. I can listen and get the idea of what they're talking about, but we weren't taught. There is a big movement among young people now to learn the language and to understand it because once it's gone, it's gone. That's a big part of our culture. I think you should call me every day and teach me.

Theresa: You are welcome to come home and sit and listen and learn. We are trying to keep our language the Creole language alive. We've been helping students from UL. They've been coming home and sitting with us and recording. They would tell us in English what they wanted to know, and we would tell it to them in French, in Creole. We'd tell them, and they would write it down. They were recording it. We had several of them come. They sent us a report that they had passed their grade and how they were happy.

During the month of July, we had a lady from New York. She wanted to learn the Creole music stuff. She was down for three weeks. By the time she left, the end of that three weeks, she could play anything Goldman would ask her to play. She did real good. She could speak it. She was picking up. We'd talk to her in Creole. We would have her to answer what we told her. She could do all of that by the time she left. She gave us a phone call and said that her mom and dad were so proud of what we had helped her do.

Y'all want me to tell y'all that in French now?

Richmond: Ms. Theresa, you mentioned that you have two sons. Do your sons speak?

Theresa: Yeah. The oldest one, he could kind of speak a little bit. With him being a nurse, a lot of time he had to call us on the phone. He had patients he was taking care of that didn't speak English. They would only speak French Creole. He would ask us, "How to say such and such thing? I need to repeat that to them." Then he picked it up. He's doing good now. Our younger son, he'd work with the dealerships. He can defend himself much better than the older one. He

picked it up much easier. I guess by him being younger, it was easier than the older one.

We had some students from Lafayette, from UL, that came to take lessons on Creole like us. We helped them. There were a lot of things that they had to do for the lessons. We helped them, and they did very well. I had a woman from New York who came. She came for the music and the Creole language. She stayed three weeks. She wasn't at the house every day, but for the three weeks, she came two times a week. When she left, she learned everything she needed to know. We are trying to teach our grandchildren to speak Creole.

Goldman: There was this nurse from Shreveport. She was working at the Opelousas General.

Theresa: Linda. Her name was Linda.

Goldman: Her name was Linda. She said, "We spoke to Charles." That's our son. "He said y'all could help me. A lot of time I've got patients. I would ask, "Where are you hurting?" They would have to show her.

Theresa: At the arm or what?

Goldman: She said, "How do you pronounce this?" We all know in English, that's an arm. That's your arm. *Your arm.* She said, "If their leg or ankle was hurting, how would you say your knee is hurting?" *Your knee*. Ankle. *Your ankle*. She had a little recorder. She came every time she'd come, she'd stay over the week in Opelousas. Then on weekends, she'd go back home in Shreveport. Every time she'd get off, she'd pass the little recorder. She'd play it all the way back. After she did that for the fourth week, she said, "Thank you. I can do it now." If anybody in here is interested and want to learn, want to do it, y'all can. That's what we're here today to question what y'all would like to know, how you repeat, how you say it. Y'all ask us. We'd like to help y'all as much as we can, all of us.

Theresa: Anybody who'd like to get in touch with us, they look under the directory in Lawtell. We're listed in the phone book, but in the Lawtell area under Goldman's name.

Goldman: That's what we do best, help people. That's what it's all about. My daddy taught us, "Help. Help people. You cannot live by yourself. You must love people, respect people. Don't be jealous." Jealousy is a disease, a sad disease. There's no doctor and no medication to cure that. It's a disease. It is. It is a serious disease. OK, my daddy taught me one time. We were poor people. We had plenty to eat. They'd raise all their stuff, hogs, chickens, garden, and grow all that stuff. Money, they had very little money. He said, "Don't be jealous. If your little friend comes, probably his family is more able than what we are. But he got him a new bike. Tell him how pretty. Don't be jealous. The good Lord is going to make a way. You are going to get one. Jealousness, there's no doctor can cure that and no medication." He said, "Love people."

Sometimes people ask you a favor. Sometime you can't do it. It's not all the time you can, but if you can, do it. You are going to gain.

I'm going to repeat it in Creole. *If you can help someone*, if you can help somebody. Sometimes it is impossible. Sometimes you just can't. *Help him*. Help him. Don't be jealous.

Sherman over there, he's going to say, "Well, could you help me?" You see way back we had a lot of that. We had a lot of that. They'd call that *helping hand* [*coup de main*]. If people in the neighborhood had sickness or death in the family, people would

get together. I remember my daddy and them, when they'd get through working, cleaning their crop, all the people in the area and the neighbors, they'd come there and help those people, help them and work together. As today, all that is gone. I hate to say the word I'm going to say, but looks like everybody is walking with their head up . . . . I'll say it that way – dog eat dog. *Dog eat dog*. I think that we are going about it the wrong way. You won't gain; you're going to lose. If I go out of my way to help you, you probably have got car problems or a thing on the road. A lot of people say, "No, that's just a waste of time." No. You don't know. It could be me next. Nobody knows. Creole language, if we don't influence people, *encourage people*, *more people to speak French, Creole*. Influence people, encourage people. Pretty soon our grandchildren, great-grandchildren, probably some of y'all. Most of y'all in here are adults, maybe. But still, it's never too old. *If want to speak*, you want to keep alive something, you can pass it [on]. *If you learn something*, you can pass it down to your grandchildren or your great-grandchildren. That's what I think. It's very important.

Theresa: He spoke about being jealous. Jealousy. He just made a record. They put it all together, and they have a new CD that is just out. [Inaudible].

Cravins: One of the hopes that I would have for Creole culture, if we could re-, I guess, regenerate some interest in the culture as a whole to our younger people. In small pockets, small segments of the community, the culture, the food, and a lot of it. . . . The food is something that's going to thrive. That's something that's very well alive. It's going to continue to live because people enjoy our food. They're not always the best of food for your cholesterol and health, but people enjoy our foods. Our children, grandchildren, they enjoy our foods. The culture as a whole, this is going to be one area that I feel that the ones coming behind us are going to be able to be identified by, by the food. Personally, I would like to see them being able to identify by the language.

Of course, it's not too late. I was forty years old, before I, probably forty-five years old, before I held a conversation in French. My grandmother could not speak a word in English. Mom and daddy communicated strictly in French. It was not in a way to keep us from knowing what they were saying. That was their form of communication. We came out of a household with. . . . We were nine siblings; our grandmother was there for a long period of time. We had five first cousins that were there. We never had a big family. It was never a big family, large family. We were raised on the farm. We had everything we needed for food and clothing. I was the oldest son, so I guess, the others had hand-me-downs. We never knew we were a large family. We never knew we were poor because we had ample to eat. We had shoes to go to school. At that time, there were only certain months of the year you wore shoes.

I would like to, and my dream would be that we would continue to, at least, struggle to try and get this very rich culture to survive. I have a very, very deep appreciation for what the people are doing here, the people from Natchitoches and Cane River have been doing for all of these years. I go back many, many years ago with our ambassador, Terrel Delphin. The man has been a true ambassador for the language. People like this, they're irreplaceable, totally irreplaceable. We have to continue to struggle. I do feel that if there's a community, a Creole community, anywhere in the state or anywhere, we are struggling now, but we have held our own better and longer than anywhere else that I know. The community of Mallet. We can still walk out of church on any given day and

have a conversation in French. That's not something you are going to find in many communities.

I would be happy if we could pass this on to our children because we have a worry today because the young people do not know how to speak the language of French, French or Creole, whatever someone wants to call it. One thing that will live on is the food. Everyone loves our food. One thing we do is we cook very, very well. My children cannot speak the language, but they cook just like my grandmother did. We need to continue and work all we can to save and carry on our language. It is not anyone's fault, in one way, that we are losing the language. When children went to school, they couldn't speak the language. It was something that wasn't. . . . They would laugh at the children, one thing and another.

Theresa: She has a question for you, Sherman.

Richmond: Question?

Question: Tracey was talking about how they did not speak the language, partially because it just wasn't spoken in the home and then also because of the school environment [Inaudible]. In the case of the other individuals, I wonder how it is that you were able to preserve the language other than it spoken in the home? Did you have the same experiences at school? Do you think your environment, being in that farm environment, helped you to preserve it more than had you been in another environment?

Richmond: [to the panel] Please repeat the question into the microphone.

Citizen: I'll be glad to answer your question, ma'am, as much as I can. I'll start off in English first. It looks like that's what my panel [did], started talking English and then go back to French. When I came up, when I was born, I can remember back when I was three years old. My parents talked Creole. The neighborhood in Mallet, next door neighbor and further down the road, everybody would speak Creole. I didn't know how to speak English. When I started school, I started school at nine years old. The reason why I started at nine years old, you probably weren't living in those areas, I was living so far from the school. We didn't have a bus. There was a law against a black person riding a bus. We had to walk to school. You had to be big enough and strong enough that when you passed in front of the white people's houses, the dogs would run, and you could run fast enough so the dogs wouldn't catch you. You had to be about nine or ten years old. For me to go to school, I was nine when I got started. The first time when I went to school, the teacher was a lady who couldn't speak Creole. I would sit down in class and wouldn't open my mouth because I didn't know what was going on. My mother knew a little bit. Whatever was said, I would go back and repeat it to my mother. She would repeat it in English, the teacher's words. Along about in 1948, the law passed that we could have school buses. Then I had a chance to ride a bus to go to school, so I didn't have to worry about the dogs biting me and running behind me. Then I started going to my elementary school. I graduated in eighth grade. When we got to high school, away from Mallet, that was in Opelousas, which was about ten miles from my house, or fifteen because I was living back in the country. When we'd get back in school, we were quiet. We would all ride the bus, a group of us Creole children. The teachers would look at us and say we were the best students they had in class. The reason why we were so good because we didn't know what was going on too much. We would be quiet. Our daddy would tell us, "If

you don't know anything, you don't know about something, don't say anything. Just be quiet." Everybody would say, "Oh those country children, those are real good children. They sit down all day long, and they don't say anything in school." Because they really don't know exactly what's going on. I can go back and tell it to you in French if you want. From then on, that's when I learned really when I went to high school. After I finished high school, I was in pretty good shape. All the time when I was coming up, I had it very bad.

Cravins: It was my experience as a child. . . . How were we able to maintain the language I think the question was, if I remember correctly. As a child, we dealt with our grandmother that could not speak a word of English. In the home, both parents would speak French. I guess we picked up words here and there because we communicated with her. I remember very well some of the stories she told me from many, many years from her ancestors. I know she told them to me in French. There are certain times in your life you just cannot relate to the words or your feedback. You know what came to you, but you remember how you said it back. I know that we did. As far as holding a conversation as a youngster in French, I never did. I went away. I came back, and I started picking up pieces here and there. As far as being able to comprehend, I comprehended everything, everything in French. Now, I find myself also comprehending in French, I'm able to think in French. When I'm doing something, I'm going to talk to Sherman in French. This is something that happens by, it started happening by accident. Now, I promote it. I also find that I'll go up to do business with someone, a lot of times, instead of saying "thank you," I'll say, "*Merci*." It just comes out naturally. I find myself putting out a lot of French words out there in a totally English setting. I guess the more you practice it, the more it comes to you. As far as the problems that I've seen, we were fortunate. Our mother spoke English well. When we started school, we were prepared. We went to school like the American people. When I say this, I know that the other people on the panel probably can relate to this. When we were coming up, we had three nationalities of people in our community. It was us, *the Creoles*; it was the Americans that spoke English only; and the local whites which were all of the Cajun culture. That was the three. No matter who you were, no matter what the color of that person's skin was, if they came into the community, and they were English speaking person, they were *un Americain*. *Mr. Gold, is that right? Do you remember that?*

Goldman: Sure, sure.

Cravins: *That was the way it was*.

Goldman: It was common.

Cravins: That was the. . . . I have a first cousin that started school. His mother had died at childbirth. He could not speak a word in English. In fact, that same baby, I told you all about the five siblings that stayed with us for about five years. He was the sibling whose mother died at his birth. Mom and daddy went to get the baby the day after the mother's death. Someone else had put in a claim for him. Mom and daddy would have taken him home. They would have raised him with us. Like I said, we never knew we were a large family – how, I don't know. This child went through so much. He was spoiled; he was ridiculed; he was just plain miserable because he could not speak the language. I'm sure today, in fact, whenever I communicate with him, I try to communicate with him in French. I remind him of what he went through: "This is your heritage. You may have been given a hard time for it, but

that's your heritage. That's yours; no one can take it away from you. You cannot be denied this. Be proud of it."

Fortunately, being from the community that we're from, that has a lot to do with why we were able to maintain and preserve our language. I'm not a very young man any more. When I look around, there's no one coming up that hill to follow up with the language. We're in intensive care right now.

Question: *My name is Dustin Fuqua. I'm Creole from Avoyelles* [Parish]. *I work at the National Park Service.* I was raised around a lot of the older people and the culture. I feel like I've everything that they told me to do. I learned my animals in French -- [Inaudible] *rabbit*, etc. I learned my numbers. I learned my alphabet. I cook a gravy. I cook as much wild game as I can. Every time we'd go to the woods, that's my favorite thing to do. I feel like I'm caught in a place where I know a lot of words, but as I was talking to Mr. Goldman and his wife earlier, I find I hesitate when I want to talk to somebody. It's like I know roughly what I need to say, but it doesn't come out right. My question is 1) Aside from just being [Inaudible] and talking with you guys, what's another angle to use that I can go back and to make me do better with speech? Basically, what do you think? I consider myself, more or less, an intermediate or a novice. I know words, I know basically. . . . Every time I try to talk to my grandparents, I make them speak as much French as possible. I'm up here at Cane River amongst folks like Tracey and her dad's generation who are obviously on the same level as I am. I'm not saying that I'm any kind of fluent French speaker or anything, but it's very hard to [Inaudible] Cane River than it is in Avoyelles or Opelousas, etc. We're in a place where we can't talk to anybody. Once I go home, I make my grandparents speak with me if I can make out things. Does anyone have any advice or anything y'all can tell me?

Colson: You can go to their house [referring to the Goldman Thibodeaux home].

Clifton: I think a lot of people are in that situation. When you start to talk with people. . . . A lot of people have tried to learn the language, and they learned parts of it, but they don't maybe feel really comfortable or feel like they can really speak fluently. It is harder, I think, when you're not living in a community where a lot of people speak it.

One thing that I find that you might find helpful is if you can find at least one person in the area, generally it will be an older person who's willing to talk with you. Even if you can get together with them for a few minutes at a time or an hour a week, or something like that, and just talk, just informally. You'd be surprised, if you can do that regularly, you'd be surprised how much that will help you. Another thing is if you. . . . It's harder to do now because so many of the musicians, they don't sing in Creole or French anymore. If you buy some of those old-time recordings, like, I don't know if you know Marc Savoy, who lives right outside of Eunice? He has place, and he sells all these old recordings of different Cajun, Zydeco, all Louisiana French music. If you get some of those recordings and listen to them, and a lot of time they'll have the words and things written out, or they'll have the English translation, and you just follow that. If you listen to that, it really does help if you listen really regular. If you're able to pick up some of the radio programs that come on usually really early in the mornings, six, six-thirty in the morning, if you are able to pick up some of that on the radio or the TV, that's helpful.

I think a big part of it is letting people know that you really do want to practice. Let people know that you would prefer it if they try to communicate with you in the language because in that way people know, people that

speak it, know that you really are trying to learn. They'll talk with you. A lot of times, people are kind of shy. You think, "Well, I won't talk the language here because it's all an English speaking situation," or whatever. Then you meet somebody and you know that they are interested, so then you start trying to talk with each other. Also, sometimes, you've just got to talk to yourself.

Richmond: That's true.

Clifton: You've just got to go out.

Goldman: Something else. Don't feel embarrassed if you think you. . . . Feel free if you want to talk it. I don't care how many people are there. Don't let that stop you. Keep going. Really, this is what you really want. Learn this language; speak this language; don't feel embarrassed. I've got some of my relatives who grew up just like me. Like I said, my momma couldn't speak English at all until later in life with the grandchildren, but my daddy could speak both languages well. They left, and sometimes they would come here, and we are glad. For a wake somebody would come, you know, for a funeral. They don't want to hear that any more. You see, don't feel that way. I don't care how much money you've got, how much property you've got. That's not it. That's not it. A lot of them left. They were fortunate. They got a little money; they got this; they got that. It went to their head. Always remember what you want, what you want to accomplish. Just keep going. You are going to be alright. I remember one time, I guess some of y'all heard me repeat this thing over and over.

Cravins: *The rake [le râteau]*.

Goldman: *The rake*. How many people know what that is? *A rake*? Mr. Pete knows.

Theresa: That's a garden rake.

Goldman: A garden rake. We were talking. We were probably eight or nine of us, all grew up together, related. He left and went to Texas. From Texas he went to California. He came back. He was all dressed up. We were talking what we knew best, the way we grew up. We could mix it up. We'd talk a little bit in English; we'd go back to Creole, back and forth. He said, "Would y'all quit talking that junk. Talk something I can understand." We knew him; we grew up together. [Inaudible] He's jiggling around. There was a garden rake propped. [He was] walking all over, jiggling. He stepped on it. It brought him back to his roots. First thing he said, first word he said, *"You damn rake*." [*sacré râteau*] It came back. It's a big mistake. Me, Joe, Sherman, Theresa, when we go somewhere, we're not embarrassed. We love to talk it. We talk. When I come in here, I'm going to talk to. . . . This is my best language. I can talk well enough in English, but if you want to go back with me, that's where I'm from. Don't feel ashamed or embarrassed. Keep doing it.

Theresa: Even though it comes out kind of crooked, Don't pay that any mind. Just keep on.

Goldman: Just keep going. It will get better.

Theresa: Keep going, and you will get it like it's supposed to go.

Goldman: It will get better and better.

Theresa: Yep, yep. Just keep at it.

Cravins: What I would say also on this, relax. Relax. You probably know all the words. You're just not putting them together like you would like to. Just relax. By your

relaxing, it's going to work out much better for you. Also, different things happen. Whenever you get a chance, whenever you get a chance, and you can think about it, have those conversations in French to yourself. Talk to yourself in French. You can have those conversations in French with yourself. The only thing is, when you want to answer yourself, if you want to answer yourself, make sure it's in your tone of voice. Talk to yourself in French. By doing so, you'll be good to yourself, and you'll find that you can make those corrections in your own private setting.

Question: I've studied French for several years, but I don't speak Creole. I'm not familiar with the colloquialisms that might be endangered of not existing because they haven't passed down. I think you mentioned one earlier, that *"damn rake*." Do you have any more examples of phrases and colloquialisms that are unique to the Creole community? Basically, expressions that are unique to Louisiana in French?

Richmond: Tell them about St. Medard.

Goldman: St. Medard? Oh yeah, that's the forty-day rain.

Theresa: That's the forty-day rain.

Goldman: Forty-day rain. Forty-day rain. I can tell you. I can school all of y'all on forty -day rain. Forty-day rain, we were farming. I'd work out, and we'd do farming and this and that. It took all that to make a living. Forty-day or St. Medard rain, it rained forty days. Me and Sherman could be living next door. His farm could be right here; mine could be right here, that close apart. The same time every day, you could hear a big, big, big shower coming down. You could hear it. His field is going to be flooded with water, his rows, that close to mine – not a drop. How many times we broke out running, and before we got home, not a drop. We had to go back again. People next door had their crop. Grass was growing. They'd come work with us.

Theresa: They were neighbors.

Goldman: Neighbors. When their field. . . . . Mine was all worked up and clean. We'd go and return that work to them and put theirs, hoe it and put it in order. That's what they call a St. Medard, a forty-day rain.

Richmond: What was the date?

Cravins: June 8th.

Theresa: June 8th.

Goldman: June 8th.

Cravins: We have not been seeing those in a number of years.

Goldman: June 8th. *The 8th of June* [*huit de Juin*].

Cravins: We used to see those religiously every year. I remember as a child.

Theresa: But no matter where, June 8th, somewhere we'll have that rain.

Cravins: We have not been seeing it.

Goldman: One man told me, he said, he told that to my daddy. He said, "Way back, it was common." But now, we don't get it as often. He said, "All the crop, they had lost. The grass had taken all that and everything." They had house dances, so they decided, "We aren't going to make a crop. It's just as well

as we go and enjoy a dance." Every night, this is the truth. They had house dances. They were walking. They'd roll, they'd take shoes off and tied the last and put them in there. They had a big towel on the shoulder. Roll up their pants to the knee. They'd get there, and they'd dry their feet, put the shoes, and go and dance, dance every night. He said that was all they could do. They had nothing. It rained every day. This is the fool. You know the one I'm talking about, Lee Duruseau.

Richmond: So St. Medard is the saint from France. If it rains on his feast day, June 8th, then it rains forty days. That's something that he said one time, and I had no idea what he was talking about. You were asking for little things.

Question: Yes, particularly colloquialisms and phrases.

Richmond: *Helping hand?* A helping hand.

Dustin: You weren't here this morning, but Cheryl, I think you said something about language?

Richmond: The only wrong thing. Tell us what the only wrong thing is.

Cheryl Smith: What you said is exactly what I'm going through. The question you asked is exactly how I feel. I know all the words. I can understand what people are saying, but I feel uncomfortable saying the Choctaw language.

Theresa: You shouldn't. You shouldn't be.

Smith: But I've learned that the only wrong way to speak Choctaw is not to speak it at all.
Cravins: That's right.

Smith: Even if I'm wrong, I'm learning. You're right. You learn to be comfortable. I'm learning to stand up in front of crowds and say what little I know. It may not be proper. It's broken, but at least I'm trying. You're right. I am going to visit this older Choctaw elder. Just me and him talking an hour a day, I'm going to learn those little bitty [Inaudible] The things that I don't know and put my sentences together.

Goldman: And the few words you know, you keep repeating them, just like if you want to study for a song or whatever.

Smith: You're right. I'll keep talking to myself.

Goldman: Repeat them. They'll get better and better.

Smith: I've been asked to say things at a memorial. I have been asked to say things at a council meeting. I've been asked to say things at weddings. I just go in there, and I know what I'm saying when I say, [Inaudible] I'm talking about the Great Spirit. It's not right, probably, but from my heart, I know I'm saying a few things that I want to say. It's just broken up. It's not right, but after a while, Dusty, you'll get comfortable with it. It will roll, and it will flow. Just keep on because that's what I'm doing.

Theresa: When I was coming up, my mom and dad never spoke to us in Creole. They'd speak it between them. Then I would go to my grandmother's house. She could speak Creole and English. Me and her would talk. That was the only grandmother I had. Since I was the second oldest granddaughter, I was the oldest granddaughter that was close to her. We lived close. Every day, I had to go. People didn't have telephones or nothing. They were up in age. They had the fence.

She'd put a white rag on that fence. I know when I'd see that rag on that fence, I needed to go check on her. So that's how I'd go.

Smith: I wanted to ask, you on the end especially. In Jena, we have a celebration called Howdy Neighbor Day every year. We usually bring in entertainment. This year I wasn't there when they picked. They picked Wayne Toups. They said he's the Zydeco, I don't know. I've never heard Wayne Toups.

Citizen: They call him Zydeco-Cajun.

Theresa: ZydeCajun. It's a Cajun dance.

Richmond: He's good at what he does. He does not do what they do, but he's still good at what he does. Can you hold that for one second because we had a question? They'll show you what they do.

Smith: I'd love to see what you do.

Citizen: That's not La La, and that's not Creole. That's Zydeco-Cajun.

Theresa: He has some CDs.

Cravins: The lady in the back has been having a question for some time.

Question: This is for anybody on the panel. I just teach certification. I heard ___ say that they have issues speaking French. I know there are tools and resources for us to learn French. Could someone explain how did Creole language come about? Did it come about because of the French language, or is it intertwined with the French language? Does that make sense?

Cravins: What we speak, the language that we speak. . . The term Creole is used very, very frequent in our language. The language that we speak, we speak the Louisiana French. We speak the Louisiana French. If we leave Mallet, for example, Mallet, Eunice, Opelousas, Church Point, or Evangeline Parish, St. Landry, Evangeline Parish, I would say with the exception of the southeast St. Landry Parish. Southeast St. Landry Parish going into . . . .

Citizen: Arnaudville.

Cravins: Going south. They speak Creole. They speak Creole. It's a different dialect. Why they speak Creole? Because they come from. . . . The Creole language that's spoken in the part of Louisiana that I know of comes from the Dominican, comes from Haiti. We do not, that's not our language. Our language is the Louisiana French language. I communicate very extensively with my Cajun neighbors. We have absolute, total French conversations. We speak the identical language. The identical language. If we move, if we move into the area that I was telling you about, then we'll find a difference. It goes, *"I go and I come"* [*couri veni*].

Colson: You are talking about the Slidell area?

Cravins: They may very well. I'm not familiar with the Slidell area. Now, if we go into Evangeline Parish, you have a more refined French. I have some friends that grew up in Evangeline Parish. They have some words, they throw me for a loop. They use them very, very fluently. I understand in Avoyelles Parish, I think it is a little bit more refined. Yes, sir?

Comment: I'm from Avoyelles Parish, and it's the same French y'all speak. They've got different term, like we call a store a *store*. [*magasin*] Y'all call that a *store [boutique]*?

Richmond: *Store* [*boutique*].

Cravins: *Store*. [*boutique*]

Comment: Differences, but the same.

Cravins: The same language. That's right. Now, I believe around in Evangeline Parish, Gold, they refer to a lot of the stores as *a store [magasin]*

Goldman: *Store* [*magasin*].

Comment: Some people call that a barn.

Cravins: We call a *barn* [*magazsn*], a barn, for us. Whether it's the Creole or Anglo, it's still that very same, we use the very, very same terminology.

Comment: Words differ and others [Inaudible].

Cravins: That is absolutely correct.

Comment: You can still have the same thing.

Cravins: That's right. Yeah.

Comment: I understand now. It's kind of like Spanish. You have Latinos that tend, some of the words slide together. Like even Japanese, Chinese, there are many [Inaudible] and dialects.

Cravins: It's kind of like a regional thing. When our ancestors were, those areas, people weren't travelled that well. They had a tendency to live in those communities, and probably married in this community or the neighboring community. It was pretty well, those cultures were pretty well isolated. Someone else may have some other input on that. This is the way I read it.

Comment: Old [Inaudible] told me, in the old days, you married some girl in walking distance. There was no transportation to go further.

Cravins: That's exactly right.

Comment: [Inaudible] the neighborhood.

Cravins: If you walked too late at night, maybe the *foxfire* [*feu foulet*] would get you.

Goldman: People would spend more time together. Life was much simpler than what it is today. People, I'm talking about where I grew up, I'm not going to condemn anybody else. People would, life was so simple, they'd come in the morning and spend the whole day. In a wagon or a buggy, walking, horseback. The afternoon, they'd leave. Now, looks like everything changed.

I realize things can't continue, which I'm happy. Now, the question that we need to address for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren is to keep this alive, where we're from, how it was, and let them know all [about] where we're from. If we don't do that, they'll never know the life of the day, which I'm happy for them.

Talk to your children and grandchildren Creole. Talk to them. Don't be afraid; don't be ashamed. One day they are going to thank you for that. A lot of people say. . . . *Talk Creole to you children.* Talk French, Creole, whatever you want to call it, to your children, great-grandchildren. One day, you'll be happy. I'm an old man. I talk to mine. I talk to young people all the time Creole, French, whatever they want to talk. I prefer better talking to them in Creole and French, whatever they want because that way, to me, I'm doing something for my dad, momma, grandpa, grandma, they are dead and gone years ago. We need to work on this and talk to your children. You've got two sons, two fine young sons. Creole.

Theresa: Repeat what you said in French.

Goldman: Talk to them as much as you can, what you know in Creole. Repeat that to them. *Speak Creole, what you know, to your two small sons*. They are going to keep going. They are going to meet somebody else, their little friend. They are going to pass it to somebody else. That's what it's all about. If you kids can pick up on just a few words, *some words, to your children, they are going to meet other children at school. They are going to speak their few words, the others will pick them up. It will continue. It will continue. But if you don't speak to your children in Creole, how will they know when they are around other kids, when they come to his house, or are at school all together, he doesn't know words to say anything? He will stay at the same point. He will never learn more than he knows.*

Smith: After I learn Choctaw, I'm going to come see you to start to learn Cajun – Creole!

Goldman: There's something about Creole and Cajun. You see, Cajun and Creole, no matter how you look at it, it comes to the same thing. I had one time thought they were first cousins. It's closer than first cousins. You take Cajun music. Let's say you are going to play a waltz. You're going to play the "Love Bridge Waltz." You are going to play the "Eunice Two-Step" the way he plays it. A Creole will come; he's going to play it the same way. He's going to repeat the same words.

The only difference in Creole and Cajun music, Cajuns play their music a little bit faster. Creole plays a little slower, but it's got a little touch, a little touch of bluesy. In the Creole, a little touch of bluesy. How I learned that [was] from my old relatives, the Carrieres – Bébé Carriere and all of them. I say, "How do y'all know that?" Way back at the house dances, they had a Cajun band that was playing. Next a Creole band. They said they were outside, but they knew the difference. I asked how you could tell the difference. Creole music has got a little touch, not a heavy thing, a little, little touch of bluesy.

Theresa: Now put that in Creole.

Goldman: *Cajun music and Creole music, the only difference there is, Cajun music, they play a little faster. Creole music is a little slower, and you can tell it has a little grain of blues in it. The other is Cajun.*

Clifton: *For example, like Iry LeJeune. You know him?*

Goldman: *Iry and Amedee Ardoin*.

Clifton: *Iry, he doesn't have a little bit of blues. Iry LeJeune, he doesn't have a little bit of blues*.

Goldman: *Amedee Ardoin was a good musician, very good musician. He died young. When he began to play the accordion, he first played the violin. He told his father.* He told his daddy he had started on the fiddle. Then he wanted the accordion. *He went to the accordion*. He said, "I. . . . "

Theresa: That was Iry that said that. Not Amedee.

Goldman*: Iry. He said that to his father. He said, "If I could take up. . . ."* He said,"You've got a fiddle." "*You've got a fiddle." He said, "Yes, but I'd like to play the accordion. I'd like to read music. I would like to be* [Inaudible]." *He said, "I'll buy an accordion." Iry. Iry was almost* [Inaudible]. *He was born like that. He said, "If I take it up, and if I learn to play, there would one musician that I would like to play my music as close as I can."* I want to play my music

as close. They had a [Inaudible] after Iry lost his life. A one-hour program on KSLO in Opelousas. You remember that? I'll never forget. *He said, "If I can . . . . "* "If I can learn, I want to play my music as close as I can to that musician." He said, "Who are you talking about?" He said, "Amedee Ardoin." [He] feels his music with Amedee. He did it. The only thing, he was a Cajun. You could feel it was a little different. Amedee had that little touch of bluesy. He was the closest of the players to Amedee Ardoin. I talked to a young musician a while back. He said he had problems to understand about Iry LeJeune and Amedee. He was learning the accordion, *the accordion*. He said it came to him, that little touch of bluesy, what the Creole's got, [compared] to the Cajun.

Richmond: OK. You had a question?

Question: What I was going to ask was just about the same thing. There are people here who aren't exposed everyday or outside this region to Creole French. I think the music reveals so much about the moral compass, just the way of life as well as the phraseology. I think you guys have done a lot about this. Can you tell what other recordings, things that go back to and listen to and hear like Amedee would have an original Creole recording? What other ones can they go to to hear La La music?

Richmond: Beside Mr. Joe and beside Mr. Goldman, who else can they listen to of the old musicians that really played Creole music and sing in Creole? Who else could they listen to?

Colson: What songs? What songs Mr. Goldman? The songs that everybody sings? That all those young people try to sing, and they don't know what they're saying?

Comment: I just mean something for people who don't speak French to pick up the phraseology as well as the different way of life.

Theresa: When they sing what they say.

Goldman: A lot of them, just like Joe said, how can you call yourself a Creole musician or a Cajun musician if you are going to play the song, and you don't know what the words are mean? You might sing the word, but you don't have any idea of what you're saying. Somebody can come up to the bandstand and say, "What those word you repeat? What's that word?" He doesn't know what he said. You've got to . . . . You'd better be a Cajun, or you've got to be a Creole. What are some of them, they can't even sing. What are they going to, "*Hey you"* [*Et toi*]. What does that mean? He doesn't know the meaning himself. If somebody comes up and say, "Well look. You just played that song. You just played your. . . . What do those words mean?" He doesn't even know what he was saying. He can't repeat those words. He doesn't know himself, so how can he call himself a Cajun musician or a Creole musician. He can't. No.

Theresa: No. Everybody don't leave because they will play y'all some music in a little bit. Y'all understand, it's not the full band. They are only three members of the band.

Goldman: Yeah. You see that guy sitting on the end over there? He ain't got much to say. Y'all will find out what he's all about in a little while. This lady right here, we've been playing together. A lot of people say, "Well, you're the boss, you're the owner." No. I say, "We work together on this thing." How many times do y'all hear me repeating this? I say, "I'm not this, and I'm not that." With some band members, "Oh, he's the king of the hill." You rule everything. He controls

people who work for him. That's why they don't stay together. If we make a mistake, we keep going. I some of them break up, they want to fight, or they don't play together any more. OK. We get up there. Everybody pull his load, do his share. This is what it's all about. That's the best way.

Cravins: Mr. Gold? You know I was thinking about something when you were talking about music. There's one, one young entertainer that, and I believe he has his band named, I think it appropriate, Geno Delafose. Geno Delafose calls his band Geno Delafose and the French Rocking Boogie. Right.

[Words of agreement]

Cravins: It makes sense. He is the closest thing that I know of, of any of those younger people that are playing music with some French flavor. He speaks the language, and he can sing the music. The Zydeco music that you are hearing, this is just something that something, that somebody [Inaudible]. It has nothing, nothing to do with the Creole heritage whatsoever. I'm going to warn you, they're not saying anything about the Creole heritage because they know nothing about it.

Colson: It's all in English, too.

Cravins: It's all in English. Usually, what they're doing, they're shouting something. I don't get offended by the Zydeco music because I feel that it's their music and do whatever the heck you want to do with it. That's your thing. Now, don't look at me and say, "Hey, that's your music." No, it's not. I know who I am. I'm not going to walk on your territory. Don't walk on mine. This is theirs; this is mine. I'm a firm believer, in order to know where you're going, you'd better know where you came from. Geno Delafose is the person that I know, and I think he has it properly named. He does his music in French.

Richmond: How many of you are ready to hear some of that music? Are we ready? We'll take a quick break, and they'll get set up. We'll be ready. I want to thank all of you for being here, and I want to thank all of you here on the panel.

Goldman & Theresa: Thank y'all for coming, and thank y'all for having us.

Creole La La Music

Goldman Thibodeaux and Joe Citizen

L-R: Joe Citizen, Goldman Thibodeaux, and Courtney Fuller

Creole Music in the Delta

The Creole music, La La music, echoed from house dances to church dances to the dance halls at the cross-roads corners. French vocals covered waltzes, ballads, and even lullabies to the babies. Bands were formed in families, in neighborhoods and, by the 1930s at least, had begun to gain recognition and travel. Cajuns next door, in southwest Louisiana, and Creoles joined forces at dances, and the music there, like the language, came to fit well together. In other areas Cajun dominated, but on the plantations, Creole music and language absorbed a more "bluesy" tone from the African Americans. Sometimes the syncopation came from *couri vini*, the deep Creole dialect. Eventually, these sounds "creolize" into the Zydeco, the Creole sound most popular with the younger folks today – its circum-Caribbean "drive" marking it clearly as something apart.

Goldman Thibodeaux and Joe Citizen are recognized all across Creole communities in Louisiana as the best, most traditional, La La musicians. The *frotoir* and the accordion cover nearly all the Creole sound. With Courtney Fuller on guitar, this informance covered the music and answered questions about continuity and change in the Creole portions of the Delta Region.

SESSION III

Session III – Blues Along the River: Natchez to Ninth Ward

Moderators: Dr. Pete Gregory, Dr. Joyce Jackson
Participants: Curtis Desselles, Hezekiah Early, Hardrick Rivers, Rolonda Teal, Robert Watson

L-R: Dr. Joyce Jackson, Rolonda Teal, Dr. Pete Gregory, Hezekiah Early, Robert Watson, Hardrick Rivers, and Curtis Deselles.

Dr. Pete Gregory: I organized this symposium, Dr. Rasmussen and I, on the way back from Hezekiah Early's house in Natchez, Mississippi. We had a long conversation over there with Hezekiah about changes in the blues scene around Natchez and Ferriday, and down in the Delta. On the way home, I began to think, this is true of a lot of people in the Delta. Yesterday we had a panel on American Indian cultures in the Delta and one on Creole culture in the Delta. Today, we're going to do something very similar and start with an African American panel. This afternoon, we'll do an Anglo-Cajun, basically what I call "swamp and hill folks," panel to talk about the edges of the Delta and the back country. Like I told some of you yesterday, the river ties all these people together, both historically and culturally and all the interchanges between these people, I think you began to see yesterday. This is a very complicated place.

I thought we'd start this panel since we're all here. Dr. Joyce Jackson from LSU-Baton Rouge, Ms. Rolonda Teal who's a private contractor/ethnologist, Hezekiah Early and my friend Poochie, bluesmen from Natchez, amongst other things. Hezekiah is also, he's also a model builder. He's a carpenter. Hardrick Rivers who's our home boy, he's from here with us. He's also a musician. Many of you know Hardrick. He's also a teacher, teaches in public school. Curtis Desselles way down on the end, he works at NCPTT, the National Center [for Preservation Technology and Training]. He's been working on a project with the Breda Town Cemetery Association for about three years. Together with the Cemetery Association, he's working on a book on the history of the Breda Town Cemetery here in town. I'm going to let him tell you about how that project developed and what they're doing with their community. I thought we might start off with Dr. Jackson because she's from further south. We'll just kind of work our way up the river and then jump to the Sabine with Ro. Rolonda's right on the edge of the Delta here. I'm pushing it, but I think she fits, the community fits. Dr. Jackson, would you like to start?

Dr. Joyce Jackson: Good morning. I would like to thank Pete for inviting me up. It's been a while since I've been up to North Louisiana. [Inaudible] Thank you very much for inviting me on this occasion of the Delta Symposium. I want to just share with you briefly some of the work I've been doing in New Orleans in the Lower Ninth Ward. This work was started before Katrina. We'll look at communities, and Louisiana is really noted for very strong communities, people just kind of staying around, not leaving, and staying

sometimes in the same places for various generations – four, five or six generations. This is one community that I wanted to bring to your attention today. It's called the Fazendeville Community. Actually, it started in St. Bernard Parish in 1867. This community was sort of populated by people coming in after Americans, coming off the plantations on the River Road. It was started, well they built the church in about 1867. Unfortunately, the community was moved in 1964 because the Park Service wanted to expand the Park. This community was built on the land where they fought the Battle of New Orleans. It was there for almost a hundred years. Because of various reasons, and not just because of the expansion of the Park, they razed the houses and moved the community. Actually, the community moved themselves into, basically, Lower Ninth Ward right across a line, the parish line, from St. Bernard to Orleans Parish.

I'm going to tell you just a bit about them, and then I'm going to go into just for a few minutes, a wider look at the Ninth Ward now, post-Katrina and its cultural traditions, musical traditions that are there, and what has changed about them, what has happened to them.

The cultural network is more likely to determine whether these people will stay in the Ninth Ward post-Katrina. It is determined by, I see it as, their connection with the culture and the community, of course with neighbors, with their family, with the community, but also very strongly connected with cultures and folk traditions in that community. If they have not been connected, then maybe they will stay, but they have problems in their diaspora community. If they don't have the camaraderie, I've talked to a lot of people who were having problems in these diaspora communities where they've moved to because they don't have these traditions there. That was not things that you did one or two times a year, but it was part of their life connections, part of their livelihood. Some of them were really having problems. [Inaudible] It may take some of them years to get back. Some of them are trying to come back

I have some figures on this. Four hundred fifty-five moved or grew up in Orleans Parish prior to, prior to Katrina. Afterwards, it's about 360, so about two/thirds have moved back.

Looking at this community again, the Fazendeville Community. This is to show you where it was located in St. Bernard Parish. This is the river on the right side at the bottom, the Mississippi River. This is the Chalmette Monument. This is the Chalmette Monument right here. The Mississippi River. This area here was the Fazendeville community. Over here is the military cemetery, the National Cemetery. Further to your right at the top is going into the Kaiser plant. This was a pecan grove right here. This is the Miller's House, a historic home. This photograph was taken in the early sixties before the homes were razed.

My research portion was how [Inaudible] the problem area were affected, in turn the problems with rebuilding of the Fazendeville community after Katrina. The community was resilient in 1964, '65, they were really fighting. It wasn't an easy move out of the area. They fought and brought in attorneys, but they were fighting the Federal government. Then you have the coastal erosion [Inaudible] and modern day trauma. [Inaudible] factors that were affecting their return.

There were several data collection phases. The first phase I collected interviews from the elders in the late sixties. The oldest was ninety-two. The oldest person I collected interviews from, she was ninety-two years old. That was the first phase.

In the second phase, I did the middle-age children of the elders. After Katrina, of course, I had to find out where everybody

was and how they were faring post-Katrina.

The third phase was collecting displaced residents issues from down around Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Los Angeles, Houston, Mobile – the cities where they were.

As you can see, before Katrina, this is the area where they moved into the Lower Ninth Ward. The Chalmette area, this is the Chalmette area. This is the Fazendeville community right here. That yellow spot is a historic site. The green spot, you can see where people moved. Some are on the other side of the St. Bernard highway. Most of them crossed over to Orleans Parish. Each little green spot is a house that I collected information from. The red spot is the Battleground Baptist Church sort of like the core of the community. The church actually moved first in 1964. Most of the people moved then, two or three or four miles, in a radius around the church. You see they sort of just followed the church to the Ninth Ward. You some others [Inaudible] out there, but of them are right there in the Ninth Ward. Looking at this community now, we find that the first thing, I call it declarations of [Inaudible] which is what the Federal government called it. The first thing they razed the homes in 1964.

Right in 1965 when many of them moved into the Ninth Ward, following the church, that's when Hurricane Betsy came. There were huge floods. Some of them were out of their homes, but only for about four to six months. Of course, forty years later, Hurricane Katrina happened. Of course, you know what happened in 2005, some of the people were out of their homes, and some of them are still not back. What is happening to that community now is that they are trying to rebuild the church. It's not the people that are living in Baton Rouge, Lafayette. Some of them have bought homes in Baton Rouge and Lafayette and other areas. Maybe about twelve moved back to the Lower Ninth Ward, and they are trying to get the church rebuilt. They figure, if they rebuild it, they will come. I'm kind of watching that now to see what's happened to the rebuilding of the church and see how the people are still coming back. Some are really commuting from Lafayette and various places that are close around. They are having their church services in another church that is offering them their space until they get their church built. It's interesting to follow the path of all of this as it evolves.

Now looking at the traditions, because I think, again, that's definitely the reasons why people are coming back. Some of my students ask me, "Why do they want to go back to the Ninth Ward and all this devastation? It just happened two years later, a year later." I said, "You know, it's all about community and traditions." Family too, of course. It's interesting to see the students and how they changed after they go down and actually work in the area. Toward the end of the semester, they will call me and say, "Oh, now, I see. After I've talked to them and interviewed them." The people, after they work in the museum down there, after they work in the school, with the community center, or some of the organizing and the activist in the area. So they understand why the residents want to come back.

Now looking at some of the traditions, let's look at that for a moment, and then I will close. I see the main catalyst of community renewal are the following:

Let's talk about commonalities. It takes a village, schools and businesses. One of the commonalities would be the neighborhood. It's the families, traditions. traditionality is Music, Dance, and Feathers I call it because that is what the museum is called in the Ninth Ward. I looked at musical families, of music dance, and second line clubs, the Feathers, Mardi Gras Indians. These are some of the three main traditions that are there. Of course, we all know the various bands, brass bands, etc., that are in the Ninth Ward. You

find that these are the most prominent traditions that are there.

Looking at musical families, you have [Inaudible] families Kermit Ruffin, which you've probably heard of, one of the most popular R&B musicians there. He was raised in the Ninth Ward. Ray Langford, Barbery Singers, founder of the Highland Brass Band. It goes on and on and on. Fats Domino, he's a resident of the Ninth Ward. Although he became famous, he never left. His house is sitting right there and got mud like everybody else. Right on [Inaudible] Street in the Lower Ninth Ward, never left the community with Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the whole bit. He's not there right now because his health has failed. He's living across the river. Then of course we have various Mardi Gras Indian tribes out there. Some of them are back; some of them are not. Some of them won't be able to come back because they don't have anywhere to go if they come back. With them you have sort of an identity problem, too. I've talked to, interviewed some that are in Houston, Austin, and this one guy is member of the tribe Golden [Inaudible]. He's still the chief of his tribe, but he says there is very little [Inaudible] because he's not there with them when they're making their suits. They'll come over from Houston for a weekend, so he might come too. He's working two jobs in Houston to take care of his wife. It's very difficult to keep his tradition going. It gives him his self-identity. He said, "I don't know who I am if I'm not working with the Indians." He was important; he's been in it since he was six years old. It's like all he knows outside of his going to work and back or working with his family. His tradition is the rest of his life. He's trying to keep it going. He's trying to keep it going as much as he can. He'll call me every now and then to let me know what's going on: "We did this. Some of the gang came over." This other guy in Austin is actually teaching the tradition to people in the community center in Austin, Texas. He said, "This is what I do to kind of keep it going and letting other people know what I do. I look kind of strange walking around with Mardi Gras, [Inaudible] crazy man or what." He's trying to teach people in the community what it is he does and why it is so important to him. So he has his little following in the community that come to the community center. He has his little workshop on beading and stuff.

I had another person that I worked with [Inaudible] bead. She evacuated to Atlanta. She said she would sit on the porch and work on her suit. She said, "If I don't get back to New Orleans, those people in Atlanta are going to see me walking down this street on Mardi Gras day. That's all I know. I've been doing it for over fifty years." She did make it back. She's even given her children Indian names. That's how serious she is about the tradition. That's Ms. Rita Jones, and she's been a queen; she's been doing it for over fifty years. You see how important these traditions are and why the people are really wanting to come back. I have just a few quotes I want to say now in close.

Henry Butler is an R&B performer. Some of y'all may have heard of him. He was first evacuated to Monroe. Now he is in Colorado. He's living in Colorado. He said, "There are some things that have to happen that will allow the music to help rebuild the city. The city, as good as music has been over the last century, doesn't treat its musicians well. Better distribution of the money is necessary. Some of the musicians are not going to go back. There are cities giving a big push to entice New Orleans musicians to stay, like Austin that have good economics and don't mind sharing some of the benefits to people who are contributing to the spirit of the city. [Inaudible] We may actually wind up there." He was talking about Austin and how Austin really embraces Louisiana musicians.

Another thing that is actually happen-

ing, I was just discussing with Pete, is that a lot, right after Katrina, a lot of the musicians were invited to Europe. I called Charmaine Neville and Irma Thomas to try to give them booked on a program in Baton Rouge. We were doing a music conference at LSU, Louisiana [Inaudible] Conference. I was trying to get them to come and speak at the conference. When I called Irma, she said, "New York airport heading to London." When I called Charmaine, she was still in New Orleans, but the next day she was heading to Italy. They were moving out. Many European countries are really embracing them. If they knew, they could probably get a whole lot more people. They were really travelling quite a bit to European countries. I really saw a lot of that happening with musicians. I had talked to [Inaudible]. I finally got her to come and be on a symposium. She was actually in Europe when Katrina happened. She was able to give her story trying to get back home to see about her family when she couldn't get through to them and everything. She said that since then, I kind of keep up with her, she's been going back and forth on a regular basis to Europe, saying people are really embracing New Orleans musicians.

A lot of them have returned. The musicians union had about 800 members prior to Katrina. It's back now. They've still got about 200 to 300 somewhere in there. They have not come back home. They're still trying to get there. In spite of the diaspora many people have been able to come back to New Orleans to visit and for performances a stuff, that connection to the city. Many of them are still living outside of the city. Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Houston, are evolving as a result of the immigration of musicians from the hurricane impacted communities.

I want give a little quote from Willie T., Willie T. Perkinson got this quote, really this guy at the *Louisiana Weekly* newspaper, which is a black newspaper in New Orleans. Every other week, or at least once a month, on the front page a musician has passed. With these passings, Willie T was a composer, R&B, really famous jazz musician. He fears that, "a re-built New Orleans come in for gentrification. That undermines the cultures of authenticity. You can erect a lot real pretty ground, cultural museum, and everything, and maybe that area is cleaning up. Not a lot of people who were the posts of the community will come back." Basically, he was referring to the public housing that has been razed. Since Katrina, a lot of the public housing has been torn down. He was saying that a lot of this came up in the areas where the public housing buildings were.

On a lighter side to tell you a couple of things that are really happening is Musicians Village in New Orleans in the Lower Ninth Ward, it's in the Upper Ninth Ward. They are homes that they have built for musicians. They don't just give it to them. They have to pay for them, but they tailored a program where they will sort of help them to manage their money and get low interest, small loans, and get them into a home. They also are building a community center there, the Ellis Marsalis Community Center. They are going to give lessons, music lessons to kids like after school and have some bands there. This program still for music though, trying to keep it going. That's one thing. This is done by Harry Connick and Branford Marsalis. This is the village consisting of seventy single family homes. It's not just musicians. Other artists are beginning to get into those homes.

The other thing I have to mention is that House of Dance and Feathers Museum, that's where I got my title from. It's run by Ronald Lewis. He was supposed to be here today, but he had some health problems. He couldn't come. That museum is very, very important to the Lower Ninth Ward. It was destroyed in Katrina. Some architects from another university, I think it was the University of Arkansas, helped them to rebuild. This

architect brought the students in. They'd spend weeks there and helped to rebuild the museum. The museum is an archive. It had all sorts of artifacts from second line parade paraphernalia, Mardi Gras Indian suits and patches and articles. He has prior to Katrina a whole series of newspapers and articles way back from the fifties, sixties. Anything that is culturally important to the Ninth Ward, he has newspaper articles in there. One thing my students have help them to cap off things and say who has donated things. It was a very, very important organization there. He was kind of like a one-man show. He's the director, the curator, the installer, everything. It is very, very important for that community to have that museum there. People really support it. You have buses coming through, these tour busses. He doesn't seem to mind. Tour busses contract to come to your place. He doesn't do any of that. He's really an independent person. He wants to be his own person. He doesn't go along with some of these other propositions that they're getting in the Ninth Ward.

To share that with you, I have a few pictures here – brass bands, second line clubs, Mardi Gras Indians. This is the Battleground Baptist Church, on Flood Street. This is right before Katrina. That was actually taken in 2005 right before Katrina. They are trying to get it back up now. That is the core of the enclave of Fazendeville. What I said about it is the people from that village, they call it a village, is sort of what happened with a lot of new communities in the Ninth Ward. That's why I kind of use it as my core since I was working there before Katrina, working with this community. Now after Katrina, I look at the broader Ninth Ward culture. I'm just going to end. Maybe we'll hold questions at the end of the session? I'm not sure?

Gregory: We've done it both ways. How do you guys feel about questions now or at the end? Maybe we can wait until the end. Now that we are on music a little bit, I may shift over to Hezekiah. Hezekiah and I had this conversation about changing blues scenes in Natchez, Mississippi. I'd like to ask him a question about that. How does that affect getting young people interested in blues?

Hezekiah Early: Young people. . . . The festivals, the festivals help a whole lot because that is mostly the only time they hear the blues is during that blues festival. The regular time, they don't hear too much blues. You listen to the radio, every now and then, they may have a little blues show, but they don't play very much blues. You might have one DJ come on, and he might have an hour of blues. We have a couple of guys in Natchez that bring it on pretty good. The rest of them don't play the blues. The young people have just gotten away from the blues. When all this other music came out, they just didn't hear the blues much. Therefore, that's pretty much all they know. During the time of the festivals, they go to the festivals, and they hear the blues. There are just a few around Natchez interested in the blues – not a whole lot. The ones that get off into music, they don't really come into the blues. They are into the other music.

I had been thinking about trying to get one of the old field bands back together. When I was coming up, they used to have picnics out in pastures. Had a bass, two or three snares, fifes, somebody blowing the fifes. That's when I came into learning how to drum. I learned on the old field drum. In later years after that, I learned how to play harmonica. Two older guys picked me up, and they would have me crashing with them at night, sitting up until 11:00 or 12:00 at night. We were the only farm. That started going pretty good. From that they started to take me out to little parties and things with them. They would ask my mother and my father to let me go with them. They were going to take care of me, which they did. I had

gotten away from the drums. Eventually, all we had right then were two guitars and the harmonica. We eventually came up with an old set of drums. With me knowing how to play drums, I got on the drums and let the harmonica alone. That went good for a good many years. I got off into, wasn't making much money so I decided I would organize my own band and try to make a little more money, which I did. That went on for a good many years.

Muhammed Ali came into Natchez to make a film. The name of that film was *Freedom Road*. They had gone through 2-300 people trying to find somebody to blow harmonica. Finally the news got around to me, and I said, "Why hadn't they found me?" He said, "They're looking for somebody. We didn't know you were still in town." They got me; they sent me over to Mr. Eastman Music Company in Vidalia for him to check me out. I went over there. He gave me a new one out of the showcase. I played one number. He said, "Man, you are the man we've been looking for." They wrote me up there. That Friday night we had to record that stuff. That Saturday, we went where Ali was to shoot the film. All we had to do was just sit back and motion like we were playing. They already had it recorded. Muhammed Ali told me, he asked me how long had I been playing harmonica. I said, "Well, I learned how to play harmonica when I was a kid coming up, but I don't play harmonica anymore." He said, "Hezekiah, you are too good. You shouldn't lay the harmonica aside. Try to figure out a way to play the harmonica and the drums."

That's when I went to taping the harmonica to the mike. I would set it in front of me, and I would play the drums and blow the harmonica, too. I kept practicing with that and kept practicing with that until it just become natural. I just got to the place where when I wasn't playing both of them, it seemed to me it would look like I would be just half doing the job, until today. This has been about, I don't know what year, back in the late seventies when this happened. Ever since then, until now, I've been blowing harmonica, playing drums, all at the same time.

Whenever we get around younger people that know much about blues, they would be wondering, "How do you play drums and blow harmonica all at the same. . . . How can you concentrate on it all the time?" I said, "I just like what I'm doing. I like to play the blues, and I like the harmonica, and I like drums. I just stayed with it. That's what you've got to do if you want to be a musician and make anything out of it. You've got to get with it and stay with it." We have a lot of youngsters. . . . They start out and get pretty good. The next thing you know, they just get away from it. Stay out.

Right now I just wonder if we will be able to keep the blues alive. I think by having the festivals, and festivals are getting pretty rare now. By them hearing the blues. . . . Two Saturday nights ago, he and I, me and Lil' Poochie, my son got us to come to Clinton, right outside of Jackson, to play at a surprise birthday party for his wife. We got in there that Saturday night. They said, "We're going to have a DJ. Y'all just play a few numbers every once in a while. Y'all quit and sit back and relax. We played first. Things were going so good; they didn't want to hear the DJ. We quit and let the DJ come in. We stayed off, I guess, about an hour. Everybody would say, "We want the band. Let the band come back and play." They really enjoyed that. Ever since then, they've been calling, saying how the folks enjoyed the blues. They hadn't heard blues for so many. . . . They hadn't heard blues like that for a long time. They really enjoyed that – the little children and all. They really enjoyed it. As a matter of fact, they are talking about getting us back. Some of the other people, some of his friends, want to give parties and want us back to play again.

Gregory: Are those parties like the house dances?

Early: Well, yeah, they're like the house dances.

Gregory: Do they still do house dances?

Early: Every once in a while. Not very many. Not very many. Every once in a while, they might have a house dance.

Gregory: Tell us a little bit more about that fife and drum music.

Early: About the fife and drum? They used to have picnics in the pastures under the pecan trees. I was a little kid. My mother would take us on a Saturday evening. They would start before night. She would take us out there on the picnic. That was pretty much, most of the music they had then. It was old field bands and the guitars. They didn't have guitars at the picnics. They would have the old field bands – the bass, the fifes, two snare drums maybe. Sometimes they would have three snares. That was good music. I mean it was good music back during that time.

Gregory: Did they march with the drums?

Early: There came a time when the society would turn out, and they would march, play marching music, like "When the Saints Go Marching In," "Glory Hallelujah," things of that nature, anything they could march on.

Gregory: Yeah. But they did march?

Early: They did march.

Gregory: I'm too young to remember that. In fact, when Hezekiah told me that, I had no knowledge of fife and drum bands anywhere except up about Clarksdale way up in the north end of the Delta where there is still a drum and fife band.

Early: Yeah. He's got CDs. As a matter of fact, we played in Clarksdale at the blues festival, I got a chance to hear him, meet him. I want to try to get it going back home, but I hadn't been able to do it because all of the ones I knew that could do it have passed on. I'm about the only one I know that was around during that time. All the rest, the old drummers and fife players have passed on. I can play fife and drums. I play all, the whole three instruments. I can train somebody. If I can get, I thought about getting some of these school bands, the school bands, the guys that play in the band, in the school band. . . . If I could get a couple of them and train them up, you know . . . . The only thing is if they would do it and kind of stay with it. Like I say, a lot of times, you get somebody and you train them up, and next thing you know, they've gone. It really would be good if I could get it going again. My father, he was a fife player. He used to tell us about how he used to play fife. I went in the woods and got me a cane, cut me a cane and made me a fife. That's how I learned how to blow.

Question: Was that a flute?

Gregory: A fife.

Early: A fife. About that long. Get a cane, and you can get rid of the joint. Leave the joint and the end. Then you take a sixteen penny nail and heat it until it turns red, and you have got to know where to place your holes and bore your holes. Fix it where you can blow it. I know how to blow fifes, play the drums too. I've got to get, I would have to get people. What I would need about three because somebody would have to play the bass, and somebody would have to play the . .

. . . You'd really need three snares, but you could get by with two snares. They had Christmas parades and things in Natchez, the floats, and that would be the ideal thing to have in that parade. It's kind of hard. I hadn't been able to . . . .   I hadn't really tried too hard. I did talk to a couple of older guys that knew how to do it, but they are not able anymore. The rest of them have passed on.

Comment: In Clarksdale they have a school for kids, a blues school, in that old train station right across from [Inaudible] Marcy and I had a bike at [Inaudible] been to the blues thing there. We went and watched those kids. Those kids were just having a blast. They were teaching them real blues. They had a real good instructor, one of the guys that played over at the crossroads all the time. They were having a blast, playing the blues. One girl [Inaudible].

Early: It would be a good thing if I could get that back on the road, but I don't know if I'm going to have any luck. I think I'm going to get back to it and try to get something going soon. I will be time for Christmas parade. I already have a tandem trailer, truck and everything. All I would need is somebody to do it. If I could get a couple of these school guys to come in and train them what to play, it would be good.

Gregory: Susan?

Question: Could you make a lot of those fifes for demonstration purposes? Like to have at festivals?

Early: Can I make them? Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Comment: It would be great. You could sell them.

Early: Right.

Gregory: It might get some people interested.

Early: I might be able to. I hope I can. It would be a great thing if I could.

Comment: What kind of cane do you use?

Early: It's just a cane about your thumb, just about the size of your thumb. It's not very big.

Gregory: It's what we were calling river cane. It's what they make the baskets out of. It's a native cane. It's not the big bamboos.

Early: No, not the big one. You can buy them out in stores. I never bought one, I always made my own. I never bought one.

Gregory: Hardrick, did you ever hear about anybody doing fife and drum over here?

Hardrick Rivers: No. I haven't. I'm kind of fascinated with that.

Early: You're not aware of the old field bands?

Rivers: No. I'm a lot younger than you guys.

Early: Yeah. It's been I would say late fifties, around mid-fifties, all of that went out, back during the fifties, early fifties. Before then, it was. . . . . I was born in '34, 10/7/34. I got a chance to hear a lot of it.

Gregory: Hardrick and I were just babies.

Early: Right, just babies. Yeah, I go way back then.

Gregory: Hardrick, you were talking at the folk festival about some of the things you

were doing with the kids here, the younger kids that you're teaching. Can you tell us about that?

Rivers: I teach in Red River Parish at Coushatta. We're a very small school. We were just talking about it yesterday. We have a total of about 650 students with the junior high and the high school. We have about sixty participating students in the music program this year. That's higher than fifty percent of the national average, I guess. By me being a performing musician, I think that helps to recruit a lot of the students. I've got a couple of students this year that I'm working with that I'm teaching jazz to. You can't really teach jazz without touching on some blues. This is my first time getting to have individual students I can work with in a couple of my class programs. I help build them in a stronger, in another area other than just your classical, what you've got to learn, basically. We explore some other styles of music and enlighten them on that. It's a lot of fun.

The program started out really, really small, five or six years ago. This is my sixth year of teaching there. When we started this program out, we only had twelve students. Before this ended, we got about fifty. We got a few more students in the dance line, the flag line, and that to make up the big number. I had a rehearsal yesterday, and I think I had about forty-five students. Seven or eight were absent. We're looking at about fifty. In order to prepare our students to compete on an All State level or National level we sometime have to break our classes down to smaller groups. In the last five years, I think we've gotten about four scholarships, three here at Northwestern and one to Grambling. We're just building the spirit in the students in our area, basically what we're doing, just building the morale and the spirit in the students.

This past BGA Sugar Bowl, we were able to take our students to New Orleans to participate in the Sugar Bowl. We were invited to that. For this community to be the size it is, we were able to take twenty-four students to the Sugar Bowl. Two thousand students from across the nation, fifteen cities, that was a big thing for our little small community to take on, quite overwhelming for the students as well as a lot of the chaperones. I'm always excited about going to New Orleans. I've lived there; I've worked there, played music there for thirty years. To take the students and show them around, there still were places I couldn't show them, but anyway. That's something they will share with their grand-children and their grandchildren's children. It was an overwhelming experience. We are just trying to broaden their horizons by exposing them to things that they would never have encountered, being from a small community. That's close enough?

Gregory: There was a little different history of blues places around here that Hardrick ran through with us over at the Festival. I think it's pretty interesting to folks how it has changed here. You remember what you did?

Rivers: Over thirty years, I've watched the music scene in Natchitoches Parish over the North Louisiana region, especially here in Natchitoches. I've watched it dry completely up, and I've watched it starting to come back again. Right now, here in Natchitoches, we have more live music, and we have played at more venues than we've had in the last thirty years. Mr. Early was just talking about when he was a kid, that's back in the forties. I don't know anything about the forties or some of the fifties.

When I grew up here, we had clubs everywhere, on every highway that came into this city or that left out of this city. There was a club someplace that people would go to. I've visited, actually lived in, Texarkana, Texas for a minute. I got a chance to witness those clubs out in the pastures. In East

Texas, they had a lot of clubs that on Sundays and Saturday evenings, you'd go to this, they called it the pasture. You'd have to know how to get there. You'd drive out there, and there'd be a club sitting out in a pasture, cows out there, people having a great time, cooking and dancing, blues band, two-, three-, four-piece bands playing. I got a chance to see that picture of the pasture.

Here we just had barrooms and I call them juke joints, places where people just hung out. I don't remember exactly the year, probably thirty years ago, boy time flies. We had a sheriff we elected. Two of his campaign promises were to create a Neighborhood Watch Program here in Natchitoches where people; I think we still have the signs in all the neighborhoods – the Neighborhood Watch Program. People really got concerned with what was going on with the neighbors. It took care of some of them, people who were violating other people in the community. People started paying attention to their neighbors' property and things of this nature.

The other thing in that sheriff's platform was to get rid of all of the clubs that were on the side of the highways. It was successful in closing every club in Natchitoches Parish that was not in the city limits. His method for doing that would be to put deputies on either side of the club. As the people would leave, pull them over and give them a drug test and whatever. People couldn't afford a DWI every time they wanted to go have a beer, so people stopped going. He was successful at doing that, whereas in the city itself, there was an ordinance passed. I don't know when it was in place, but somebody decided that there would be no amplified music in the city of Natchitoches after 10:00 pm at night. If you played any music that was amplified, you had to quit playing by 10:00. People generally don't go out until 9:00 or 10:00 at night, so that shut all that music down. It's amazing how the powers to be can make things happen when there doesn't seem to be a way.

All of a sudden, we started coming up with these festivals here. Now then, Christmas Festival has been going on for seventy-one, seventy-two years, something like that. That's been around and established. The R&B Festival and other little festivals allowed the local musicians to play at night again. Then we were able to start putting music in some of the venues again. There's one place I play, we play until 11:00 on Friday night. There's another place I play; we play until midnight on a Friday night. There's another place that I play every Thursday night that we play until midnight. We have amplified music in Natchitoches again that's past 10:00 pm. Now, there are still places that have private functions such as wedding receptions and things. The law in the Historic District of Natchitoches, you still can't play amplified music past 10:00 pm. That's OK because we now have music all over town. That's some changes that I've witnessed in the last thirty, thirty-five years.

I've been playing over at Roque's Blues Hall. It's over in east Natchitoches. I started a blues jam over there. May of 2011 will be fifteen years. We do it on the last Friday night of the month, every month. It's been successful. There was a journalist here. I haven't seen him in years, but I still hear his name from time to time. His name is Junior Doughty. He did a lot of research. One of the things that Junior Doughty created was what he called the Delta Blues circuit, no he called it Junior Doughty's Juke Box. That's what he called it. It was his research of Delta blues clubs. He went up and down the Delta (Mississippi) and compared clubs, blues clubs, to that scene in Louisiana. Some of the stuff that he wrote got out. I guess through internet or whatever method it got out. He got CNN's attention. CNN came to Natchitoches to do a story on Junior Doughty's research on Delta blues clubs. One of the places that they came was to Roque's Blues Hall. We set up a

scenario there just like we were playing for our regular blues jam. We played for them and interviewed with them. That was in May or June of 2000 or '99. That January they aired that thing, that Delta blues thing. At that point, the music scene changed at Roque's. Once that was aired, we started getting people from everywhere I won't say everywhere because that's a big word, but from several countries. I met people from South Africa and Austria, northern England and places. They wanted to come to the United States. They wanted to go to New Orleans. They wanted to go and see what Beale Street in Memphis was, and they wanted to come to Natchitoches to Roque's Blues Hall. I found that kind of intriguing.

The music scene changed again because the blues got established once again in Natchitoches. At the time when I decided to do that, we had three-piece jazz bands. We had variety dance bands. We had a couple of other, but we didn't have any blues in this town. I talked to Roque's. I had been playing over there over the years. He has the perfect blues atmosphere – hardwood floors that you can't wear heels on because your heels might go through. Regulation pool tables. Can you imagine trying to play? The capacity of the place is only seventy-five people. We've had the fire marshal in there when we've had 150, so we're OK. Just to watch the changes. There's a band in Shreveport, that's pretty well known. They call themselves The Bluebirds. They do a really good job on trying to duplicate the blues. They play it really, really hard and do a good job with it. When Pete asked the question, "What is it we can do for inspiring young people into the blues?" my answer would be just to play the blues. If you project that, somebody will listen to it and somebody will want to duplicate what you're doing if it's good stuff. That's just like somebody making a walking stick. You don't find any kids that would be interested in that unless they saw somebody doing it. Then they would want to say, "I can hew a walking [stick]. I think that's kind of the way the tradition might be passed on. I don't know if I can do this, but . . . . When the Folk Festival was here this year and I met Poochie and Hezekiah for the first time, I'd seen them, but I hadn't walked up and shook their hand. I was in the studio at that time working on a CD, a blues CD. I am going to say we finished it this week. I'm hoping to have it at Roques's next week. That's my goal. I'm thinking that if everything goes well with that, then we'll have, should have a pretty large audience. I have to say this. In our Afro-American culture, we probably have less of our children wanting to learn the blues. In other cultures, in Japan, China, and a lot of Anglo-Saxons, they do want to know the blues – the children. They are studying it various ways. When you travel around the world, you see. I know some guys from Japan that if you passed outside the building and didn't go in, you would think that this was some John Lee Hookers and Big Joe Turner. You would think that these guys were. . . . You just stuck you head in the door and you saw these faces of, you'd think it was animated. When you look and see. . . . Remember the Japanese movies where the sound would come out before the mouth would move? Other cultures are really promoting it. We've just got to figure out a way to get our Afro-American culture to start promoting it or to not let it die.

I was listening to Dr. Jackson talking about the tradition of the New Orleans Indians and what it means to them. My brother-in-law is a New Orleans Indian. He's Golden Eagle. One of the most fascinating things for him to do is go to New Orleans for Mardi Gras and go hang out with Bo Dollis, Boudreaux and the gang. For twenty-five years, he sewed a suit every year. He'd sew, sew, sew, sew, sew. I've learned what the tradition of the New Orleans, and the children

have learned the tradition. I mean, it's embedded in them. Parents teach. They see it. They feel it. We've just got to do the same thing with the blues. We've got to figure out some kind of way to make the connection with our children and grandchildren. I think in the seventies when disco music became real popular. . . . I mentioned when DJs replaced bands. All that really happened. Then Rap became popular. I always said when people said Rap was going to take over, I said, "No. It's going to find its place. It's going to find its place." Let's face it. Pop Tarts didn't replace grits. It had to find its place because when Pop Tarts came out, it was all about Pop Tarts. If you wanted a good bowl of grits, there was no substitute for grits. That's the same thing with this. Rap and Hip Hop, I think at this point, have found their place. Now that it has its place, it's time for the cycle to continue evolving and blues to rise again. I feel that way, and I guess that's why I pursue it and push it.

Jackson: I wanted to comment on that, too, because I've heard some blues musicians say that hip hop is the young man's blues. They are really singing about some of the same issues that the Delta bluesmen were singing about forty or fifty years ago.

Rivers: I agree. I can agree with that because they are getting. . . . It's a message that they are trying to get out. Blues is a message, so I can see that hip hop is a young man's blues. I can see that.

Question: I think more [Inaudible] hip hop artists now more than see the challenge, interest and [Inaudible] applied music. Some of them are actually introducing young people to the blues, and to [Inaudible] music more general. You have like groups, they introduce young people to everything from grunge to reggae to soul to the blues. You have other hip hop artists that are well known. [Inaudible] for example. He said [Inaudible] strictly live album and it's going to mostly be the blues. This is getting a lot of young people interested that have never been interested before. It's actually coming through a [Inaudible] hip hop. In New Orleans, hip hop has interesting fusions. You can see it in Acadiana, too, when you have the brass hop. It's traditional New Orleans brass music, but the people rap hip hop. People rap over the traditional brass music. The same thing is happening with Zydeco. I think that they're not always so distinct musical genres as people think.

Jackson: I agree. I really see Tabby Thomas now playing with his son. They're playing the old blues like Tabby's blues, but they're also playing his son's blues, and they're mixing it up, too.

Rivers: Incorporating both styles into it.

Jackson: Right. Exactly.

Gregory: That kind of happened with . . . . They were talking about Geno Delafose yesterday. Geno started out with his dad. When he was ten years old, he was up here playing frottoir, rubboard, with his dad. When his dad passed away, Geno probably is the best known Creole Zydeco musician in the state. He passed it right on in the family, the family tradition for the music.

Rivers: What is the guy's name, that Hadley Castille?

Gregory: Hadley Castille, with his granddaughter.

Rivers: With his granddaughter.

Gregory: He does Cajun music.

Rivers: They came up here for several years and played Cajun music. I've watched that little girl grow from a tiny. . . . She became quite a spokesperson, too. She does all the talking for him now. That's one way . . . . That's another thing. In Afro-American culture from my eyesight, I've noticed that we don't generally pass the piece down to our descendants as I find in other cultures. Businesses, if we own a business, some way or the other, our children don't get involved in that. If we have a skill, looks like our children don't get involved in that. I don't know what it is about our culture, but it seems to me that our children choose not to replicate what the family has already built. I see in other cultures, you already know what you destiny is because this is what's already started. That's through my eyes. I don't know, maybe I'm just not looking at it right. I noticed that.

Gregory: Shift gears a little bit. Let Rolonda tell us about the folks on the Sabine River. Then I'm going to let Curtis talk about the graveyard. Can we do that? Good luck, Ro.

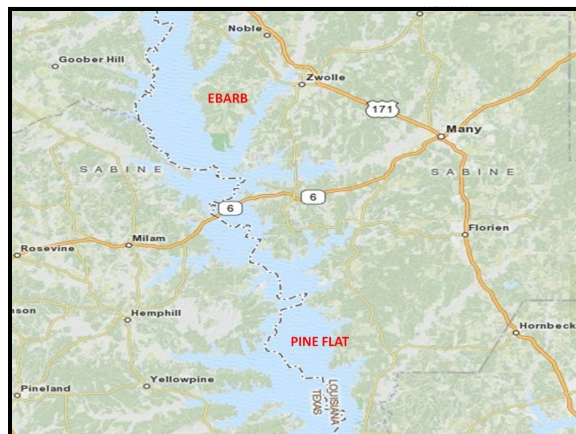
I'm going to let Poochie and Hezekiah do their informance. Give Poochie a chance to sing, unless you want to sing while Ro is setting up. I didn't mean to skip you there.

Rolonda Teal: It's funny, but when Dr. Joyce Jackson was up here talking, [Inaudible] got together on certain issues or something. As I was listening to you, I was saying, "Wait a minute. We're talking about the same stuff, only in a different [Inaudible]."

I'm going to talk about former residents of the Sabine River. I got this title, "The Old Folks Grieved Themselves to Death," from an elder who I was interviewing that had been displaced from her home as part of the building project for the Toledo Dam. I felt the title kind of summed up the general attitude that some of the elders had.

I want to first provide an overview of some history on the Sabine River. Of course during pre-history, the river was part of the Caddo Indian homelands. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, it was part of the Spanish territory. During the Civil War both Union and Confederate soldiers made use of the Sabine to transport men and equipment. At the height of the steamboat trade in Louisiana, several vessels transported sugar, cotton, passengers, and household items to state residents by navigating the waters of the Sabine River. Then roughly from the period 1961-1969 we have the Toledo Bend Dam Project.

I'm going to use a Sabine Parish 12th grade lesson plan to help explain the ideology behind the Toledo Bend Dam Project. According to the lesson plan, "The Toledo Bend project was constructed by the Sabine River Authority of Louisiana and the Sabine River Authority of Texas, primarily for the purposes of water supply, hydroelectric power generation and recreation." By the time the dam was completed it represented the largest man-made body of water in the South. For me, that statement is significant because it implies that a whole lot of land was taken in order to create such massive water space. The communities I want to focus on today in terms of how they were affected by the Sabine and Texas River Authorities are Ebarb and Pine Flat.



Pine Flat

The Ebarb community is known as the home of many Spanish and Native American descendents. While conducting an oral history in the community, Mr. Kenneth Garcie recounted a story passed on to him from his mother which took place during the Civil War. The story illustrates the role that the Ebarb community had in acting as a hide-away for People of Color who did not want to participate in the war efforts.

> They didn't want any part of it and they didn't feel a part of it because they were part Indian and Spanish. So they would go hide in the river bottom and their families would take them food.
>
> The river bottom and the timber being what it was at the time. It was virgin timber in there and the big cypress trees were huge. They could live in these trees, inside a big hollowed out cypress tree. The families would take them food from time to time so they would stay out of the way of the pa-trols.
>
> There were a lot of Indians here be-fore the war but they were taken off to the war to fight and the black slaves were in the mix. They were hiding. The Indians were hiding, the Spanish Indians were hiding and it was a lot of them that didn't want to fight.
>
> Kenneth Garcie,
> Choctaw-Apache 2009

Spanish, Indians, and African descen-dants all gathered together in this place along the Sabine River bottoms to hide out in cy-press trees in hopes of escaping war. In the process of living there what started out per-haps as temporary accommodations wound up being more permanent. The area really did represent a safe place. It was away from mainstream society. If you lived in the river bottoms of the Sabine River, you lived on the fringes of society.

There were several community groups in the bottoms that were similar to Ebarb in many cultural aspects, yet they were also dis-tinct by the surnames associated with those communities. For example, there were

1. The "Cross the Creek Branch" who lived northwest of Zwolle towards Noble and Converse. Community Surnames: Manshack, Malmay, Procell, Paddie.

2. The "River Bottom People" who inhabited the bottomlands. Community Surnames: Rivers, Ezernacks, Bisons, Malmay, Procell, Sepulvado

3. The "Creek Bottom People" who were identified as racially mixed with Indian and European ancestry.

Another community affected by the Toledo Bend Dam Project, Pine Flat, was lo-cated about 25 miles south of Ebarb. Mrs. Alma Cross stated that while growing up in Pine Flat she, "didn't know what black and white was. We were all just family down there. We ate at the same table, slept in the same beds, and sometimes ate out of the same plate" (Alma Cross 2009).

Just like you had in the Ebarb area, in Pine Flat there were distinct communities and surnames associated with them. For example there were the Bar Lake and Richard Neck Communities whose surnames included: Ga-saway, Grace, Neck, Cross, Sweet, Stalls-worth, Fobbs, and Hines. Although the Pine Flat region held mostly African American residents, other cultural groups also lived among them.

Mrs. Cross described her own ances-try to illustrate the diversity of the bottom land residents. She stated that her Grand-

mother Lula Fobbs had Blackfoot, Choctaw, and Irish ancestry. Mrs. Cross is a light-skinned woman who self identifies as African American, but who could pass for another ethnicity.

The tendency it seems when talking about history along the Sabine River, is to discuss it in terms of separation of the races. We research Indian, Spanish, African, Mexican, and Creole history, yet what I'm finding from the oral histories is that it wasn't a distinct separation of people since many of the Sabine River bottom people were at minimal bi-ethnic and were living as a community more so than as distinct cultural groups. These were people who it appears depended on one another for social and economic support without much regard to ethnic affiliation.

So when the Toledo Bend Dam Project came in these people were removed and I'm not just talking about Ebarb and Pine Flat. Each removal of course meant the physical loss of a home and it also created a loss of cultural traditions. For example, the Macedonian United Methodist Church was associated with the Pine Flat or Richard Neck communities. The congregation dated back to 1841 and it's likely they were meeting out in the woods in a brush arbor. Here is a community of people who date to slavery times but soon after Toledo Bend Dam was in place, the church broke up and split to form two separate ones. Over a hundred years of history and solidarity was destroyed with the building of the dam. Some members of the original congregation were moved a little further north and into a subdivision currently known as the Yellow Pine community.

The River Authorities allowed congregants from Macedonia Church to build a new church on three acres of land which was purchased for one dollar. The cemetery, once located in Pine Flats, was relocated behind the new church. Each removed grave is marked with a square concrete slab and none contain information as to the identity of the interred. At the entrance of the cemetery is a marker dedicated by the River Authorities in remembrance of those whose bodies were not discovered during the relocation process and thus would have been submerged by the new river boundaries. In the end, over a hundred graves were relocated.

Macedonia

I'm going to preface this next slide because some people are going to have a problem with the wording, but I'm using it to make a point. When the numerous residents were removed they lost their homes, part of their culture, everything they had known was no longer what it used to be. Not only did they have to deal with all of that stuff that had happened to them, then they also had to also deal with how outsiders viewed them.

This was one comment made by a former Zwolle resident:

> We called them Black Mexicans. They moved into the Zwolle and Ebarb area after Toledo Bend was put in. They were black and ugly and dirty. We didn't know what they were. People we ain't never seen before, and they all came out of the river bottoms. They started coming into Zwolle right after they put in the dam.

Wow, what a statement. It says a couple of things. First of all, nobody wanted to be black nor did they want to be Mexican due to the racism associated with those designations. At one time, folks didn't want to be referred to as Indian either for the same reasons. Not because they didn't want to identify with their own culture, but because to be a part of either one of those groups was viewed negatively by folks outside the community. Yet I believe that it was exactly those cultures and combination of those cultures that really brought everybody together in the river bottoms. They for the most part represented people that nobody else wanted to be part of. It's as though they gathered together in solidarity and in order to survive. By the time the River Authorities were getting ready to put in the dam, these people typically were referred to as lake or river trash simply because they were typically poor and multi-ethnic.

While it is understood that the authorities in this project can never go back and undo what's already been done, I think that there are certain responsibilities that state and local officials have to the descendants of those various communities. It seems however that the authorities feel justified in their actions and explained their position through these words: "**No towns** or extensive improvements lay within the reservoir area, although there were some **rural dwellings, stores, churches, and cemeteries in the area**."

The bolded areas are mine. What constitutes a town? There were homes, churches, schools, stores, and cemeteries in this reservoir area. Yes, there was some compensation given to the former residents such as providing housing in other places and a percentage of money given toward approximate property value. However, there are some things that can not be compensated for such as loss of traditional lands and the culture associated with that.

What I'd like to see done at this point is more research that documents the outcome of those displaced community members. Where did they go? What economic hardships, if any, did they experience? What customs/activities have been altered or lost as a direct result of the relocation? These are but a few examples of the types of research questions that need answering. I would like to see an exhibit, signage, website, or kiosk located somewhere in the affected parishes that acknowledge this historic altercation of the Sabine River bottoms and its effects on the people who called them home. After all, it would seem difficult to talk about the Toledo Bend Dam Project and all the recreational activities afforded by it and not talk about the people that have been displaced. It would be like talking about plantations without talking about the slaves.

Just as state and local officials should share in the responsibility of documenting and acknowledging those nonexistent communities, so too does the former community members themselves and some of them have. Some members of the river bottoms that belong to the Choctaw Apache group have an annual powwow and a cultural center located in the Zwolle, Louisiana area. This group is beginning to gain more visibility in terms of tourism opportunities. In the same town is held the annual Zwolle Tamale Festival, which is meant to honor Spanish culture in the region, although the tradition of tamales is Mexican. In recent years some residents from the Ebarb community have gained some economic revenue through gas drilling leases. These leases only appear to be happening in the upper-mid portions of Sabine Parish. For those displaced residents that were further south on the river like in the Pine Flat area, economic benefits from the river are virtually nonexistent.

What the former community of Pine Flat has decided to do to commemorate that period in their collective history was to begin

forming a non-profit group that would primarily be dedicated to hosting Pine Flat Community Reunions, the first of which was held in August of 2009. The reunion reportedly had people come in from everywhere that used to live down in those regions that are now underwater.

I wanted to be able to help get the story out about those relocated cultural groups and because this session is entitled "Blues Along the River" I thought that I would compose a blues tune that I felt echoed the sentiments of the former residents with whom I spoke. Almost every blues song I've heard is talking about something that has gone wrong or doesn't feel right. Blues songs give, for example, a voice to a group of people or individuals who feel somehow disenfranchised or oppressed. They have nowhere else to go with their frustrations and so they make a blues song based on their feelings. After sitting and talking with some of those people from the Sabine River bottoms and really trying to get the gist of what they were upset about, I created the "Toledo Bend Dam Blues." The song lyrics are mine and they seem at least in my mind to describe exactly what the people were feeling.

Toledo Bend Dam Blues

I once lived on the banks of the Sabine River
Where the Cypress tress grew high as the sky
Sometimes we fished from the front porch
and on the back porch we'd hang our clothes out to dry

Then came the river authority people,
They told us we had to leave.
Gave us a few coins for our property and moved us to a house in the hills

They flooded the church, the graveyard, and the school
Then told us how great our lives would be
But all I have is an empty house cause I left my home at the bottom of the Sabine.

I've got the Toledo Bend Dam Blues. Oh Lord why didn't they just let us be.
I've got the Toledo Bend Dam Blues cause living there was the only life for me.

Bibilography

"History of Toledo Bend Dam" *Sabine Parish School System*. 22 Mar. 2011. 31 Mar. 2011. http://www.sabine.k12.la.us/fhs/history%20of%20Toledo.htm

"Macedonia United Methodist Church" *The Historical Register of the Louisiana Conference of The United Methodist Church*. 31 Mar. 2011. http://www.iscuo.org/lc_macedonia.htm.

"Toledo Bend Dam Project", *Toledo Bend.com*. 7 Sep. 2010. www.Toledobend.com.

Interviews below taken from the "Myths and Legends Project" sponsored by the parishes of: Allen, Beauregard, Sabine, DeSoto, and Vernon.
Kenneth Garcie, Choctaw-Apache 2009
Mary Rivers, Zwolle Resident, 2009
Alma Cross, former Pine Flat resident 2009
Mary Belton Lloyd, 2010

Gregory: Curtis, you've got a hard act to follow, but you've got a graveyard.

Curtis Desselles: I'll do my best.

Gregory: Curtis has got something, again, very similar, I think.

Desselles: Today, we're talking about music which is the universal form of communication. I'm going to forego the PowerPoint and talk strictly with the spoken word. I have a

poster to help a little bit.

The story starts not only what the poster says in 2007 with my thesis from Breda Town, but it starts a long time ago. I'll tell you the rest of the story.

In 1838, a young man named J. P. Breda, John Phillip Breda, a white physician, came from Baltimore. He had just graduated from Baltimore Medical School. He was looking forward to making his mark in America. He came down to Natchitoches. There was a Dr. Skinner that said, "You can practice with me." He came down. He established a practice. He started building up a plantation. I call this "Breda Town Project: From Plantation to Community." You'll see why I call it that. He started amassing a whole amount of land, a strip going from the Historic District all the way to Grand Ecore. It was Breda Town. His last name was Breda. He was of French descent. He was from the Netherlands originally. They started this community.

It was just a regular plantation, but there was something unique about this plantation. He had one of the slave brothers. On the schedule, he had twenty-six slaves. The unique part about this was that he didn't plant cotton or corn or anything like that. He grew grapes and peach orchards. Made peach brandy to sell and made, at the time it says in some of the documents it was pretty good wine. He imported the grapes and the peaches from different parts of Europe and the grapes especially from England. He started this, and eventually he married a local woman, and they started their family, of course. They had about eleven children. As the time goes on, about the 1850s, 1860s when the Civil War was brewing, General Banks burned down his vineyards and peach orchards. That year he was selling over 400 gallons of peach brandy. People of Natchitoches were doing pretty good.

That's how the story starts, but the real story of the courage of the African American community that developed from this plantation really started in 1903. In 1892, Dr. Breda died. He had a succession. The kids decided that they would not enforce the succession until at least 1903 when their mother died. [Inaudible] In 1903 the mother died; 1902 actually, she dies. In 1903, a group of people, now listen to the term of the name of this group – The People's Union Association. A group of African Americans that consisted of four people from the AME church, four people from the Baptist Church, and four people from no church at all. Twelve people like the twelve apostles.

They got this group together, pooled their little. . . . They didn't have much money at the time. They lived in this bottom land called Breda Town, right off Texas Street. They pooled together and the price that was quoted to them for the cemetery, that is here today, was $150.00. That was a lot of money in 1903. A $150.00. The deal was they would pay $50.00 down and $100.00 in the next three months. They did. Somehow, they got the money and paid the whole thing off. Now, they own Breda Town Cemetery.

What does this have to do with the cemetery today? At that time, the cemetery association that took care of the cemetery was called People's Union Association, which later was called in 1940 the Breda Town Cemetery Association, which it is today.

In 2003, I found these beautiful records at the courthouse. I went to the Natchitoches Courthouse, and of course, I couldn't find anything. I looked and looked and finally after disgust, I looked up. On top of a cabinet, I saw this book that was laying there. There it was. The only thing that had anything about the sale of that land in 1903. Luck always came to me then. Fortune came to me.

One of the local ministers Reverend Gant came and brought us a datebook where

they kept all of their grave inventory, their sales, their local business every day, and gave us this thing. It was amazing. I copied and scanned this book. I found such great information that told a story of these courageous people. Not only did they manage the cemetery, but they helped people during the time – lean times. They gave them work. They would pay them a few cents to collect debts that were in arrears or clean the cemetery or fix this and that. This was a beautiful story.

A little later, in 2007, here comes Dr. Gregory and I. We're looking to see what can I use for my thesis. He said, "I've got something for you. Chris Paige, Breda Town Community Cemetery Association, and a bunch of workers in that area, want to document the cemetery, Breda Town Cemetery." I said, "This is great. I'll do it." We got together. We didn't know how much it was going to be. We're still working on it even though my thesis is finished and I'm in the process of writing the book. We go to all their meetings. We're considered, me and Dr. Gregory. we are considered part of the community. We do everything but vote. Pretty soon, we might do that.

Gregory: No.

Desselles: No. We started the project in 2007. We recorded the first grave. Guess what the first grave's name was. Charles. It was the first grave on the area by Raphael and Spring Street. We started recording We ended up with 837 graves that had something on them. You could see the marker, or they had a name on it. About 30% of them were unmarked. They had no name on them at all. There were many more [Inaudible].

We started this community work. We wanted to get the community involved in all of this. We had cleaning days, cemetery cleaning days. The community started really getting excited about it. We had a good showing several times. The MAHR class, which is the Masters in Heritage Resources program that we had that I was in, they all helped. We had students from all. . . . Everybody participated. The cemetery got. . . . You should take. . . You should see from beginning to today. It's a big world of difference. The cemetery was clean. The trees were cut; the branches. The city of Natchitoches helped us by sending prisoners or some of the staff from the city to pick up the dead trees and limbs and trash that was picked up from there. It evolved.

I got my thesis completed. We had many, many great cleaning days. It's so exciting to write a book after the thesis was completed about the area. Cane River National Heritage Area was gracious enough to give me a grant to publish this book. As you see on the poster, it tells a little bit about it. I'm going to go from the beginning, from plantation to the community and all things in between. We had a [Inaudible]. The Forest Service gave us some GPR. They came and did it for us. The Ground Penetrating Radar found graves. We still haven't gotten any of the results yet, but hopefully. . . . There are plenty of graves there. There are more than 837 graves for sure. We found not only just the graves and physical markers there. We found a lot of African American burial practices that existed at the time.

Talk about diversity. People would not think that an African American cemetery in Natchitoches would be that diverse. There were Creoles buried there. They were Russian Creoles. How about that? The Kochinskys. Russian Creoles. There were Wong and Hongo families – Chinese – that were buried in the cemetery. That is also a possibility that there is a Tuskegee Airman that's buried there. Also, the representation of this community in the military is staggering. We have Air Force, Marines, all the wars covered, Navy, Army, all the wars are covered. The African American community really took part in the American Dream at the time

even though all of the turmoil and things that were happening during the early parts of our 20th century.

It's a great project. We worked hard. Now we are going to have a book on it. Last couple of meetings ago, we had a scanning day. This was great. We had put out the word in the community so they could give us all the old pictures so we could have some pictures in the book. We had a good showing. I scanned sixty-six pictures. Not only did it bring pictures, they brought these little funeral home brochures. They had the picture of the person and all the information, who survived who. A wealth of information was found. The book with be, hopefully, finished by the first part of the year. This is a great project. I'm just glad to be part of it. I got a thesis out of it, and I donated all the proceeds from the book to the Breda Town Cemetery Association. I'm happy to do that.

I leave you with a few words about community service. NSU was really helpful and all the students were helpful, and the Park Service, a whole bunch of other places, the Cane River National Heritage Area, to donate a lot of time. Students helped. I'll leave you with the words of Albert Pine. What one does for himself dies upon his death. What one does for others lives on.

Gregory: Are there questions? Yes, ma'am?

Question: When you were learning [Inaudible] what were musicians [Inaudible] when you were a kid?

Early: When I was a kid? Robert Fitzgerald, Sr. and Johnny Fitzgerald, Jr. Those were who started taking me around.

Question: Around Natchez?

Early: Around Natchez. They were the ones that would come to the house and get me and ask my mother and father about taking me to their home. We would sit up at night and practice. That's how it all got started.

Before they started taking me to their homes, my father, like I said, we were raised on a farm. We didn't get to go to town very much, maybe twice a year, maybe. We were living about thirteen miles out north of Natchez at Perkins. My father would go to town on a Saturday and my uncle. He would work around a grocery store and bag groceries for them all day on a Saturday. When he'd get ready to leave, the store owner would give him a harmonica to bring [to] me and my brother – two harmonicas. At that time harmonicas weren't over, I imagine, twenty-five, thirty cents, something like that. My father would bring them home. We'd have a lot of racket around the house with them. Momma would run us out of the house, "Get out of here."

I had an uncle. My auntie's husband, he could really play a harmonica. He would come over some time and set up that night. My father would like to hear him play. I started to try to play what I'd hear him play. He never taught me nothing. I just learned how to play what I'd hear him play, which was not much but the "Freight Train Blues" is what he called it and a couple of different numbers he had.

I learned that good, but I wanted to get better than that. I wanted to really play harmonica. I heard about Papa Lightfoot. Papa George is what we used to call him. Papa George was his real name, but we called him Papa Lightfoot. He had a snowball wagon. He would be up and down the streets in town. He'd pull it himself and set up on the corner and make snowballs. Now, he was a harmonica player. I never heard nobody before and since to beat him playing harmonica. He was good. He was real cross-eyed. You couldn't tell which way he was looking. I would hear about Papa George. They would have him in concerts and different

things all around. I wanted to hear Papa George. Eventually, my father carried me to town one Saturday. I was favored to meet Papa George on the corner selling snowballs. People would come by, and they would give him a dime, fifteen cents, and he would give them a couple of numbers. That's what I wanted to do. I wanted to play what I'd hear him play.

Time rolled on. There was a lady that lived up about a quarter of a mile up the street from us. She gave a party, a fish fry. She got Papa George to come down and play. I was small. I wasn't allowed out anywhere. My brother had a bicycle. He had got pretty big size then. He was kind of like [Inaudible]. I couldn't go. I got on that bicycle – stole off, went up there. I didn't go in; I just hung up on the outside there for about twenty or thirty minutes and listened to Papa George playing that harmonica. I said, "That's what I want."

I started practicing what I heard him play. That's what got me to where I am today, listening at Papa George. Nobody ever trained me. All this came from scratch The drums, nobody trained me how to do drums. I just listened to other people, went back home, got me a bucket, [Inaudible] and went to playing what I hear them play.

On the guitar, my daddy would bring . . . . Sometimes the store owner would give them cheese, some cheese, give them the whole box. It would be about a half pound of cheese in there or maybe two pounds of cheese left in there. He would, "Just take the whole thing home, Wilson." He would bring the cheese boxes home. I got around there and turned one into a guitar. We had what you call a draw knife. I had to hew that thing out and got me a piece of oak, a piece of oak wood, and made the neck and everything. Made a guitar, that's what I did, made a guitar. At the time, I didn't have the money to buy the keys. I had pegs. Every so often, if I tightened that string like it was supposed to be, then I would drive that peg down to keep it there. That's the way I made that first guitar. Messed around and learned how to play some notes; learned how to play guitar. I never did stay with the guitar enough to get really good, but I could play. I could play guitar. [Inaudible] play guitar, too.

Gregory: Watch out, Poochie.

Early: I kept that guitar over years. When I got married and left home, that's when it got away. I don't know what happened to it.

Gregory: What did you use for strings on that guitar?

Early: I got some strings from Fitzgerald, my old strings. He had some old strings, and I got some of those old strings to play some on. At first I had fish line, but I went away from fish line and got the old strings from Fitzgerald. At first I started off with fish line. That was my first guitar. I can still play guitar a little bit. Now I'm kind of rusty because I don't fool with guitar. I don't even have one at home.

Robert [Lil' Poochie] Watson: You [Inaudible] handful of mine.

Early: No, no. I can't mess with you. I can't mess with you.

Jackson: Mr. Early, did you ever play in the piney woods of Mississippi with the lumber camp circuit?

Early: What about now?

Jackson: Did you ever play in the lumber camps in the piney woods?

Early: No, I never did.

Jackson: You didn't.

Early: Never did that.

Jackson: OK.

Early: That's the way I first got started on playing music. I never was trained to play music; I just picked it up on my own. Old man Robert Fitzgerald, Sr. and Johnny Fitzgerald, Jr. were the ones that came to the house to start taking me around, practicing with me and tuning in with me, taking me out to little parties and things like that. It just grew. We got good, got real good. Everybody wanted us to play. At that time, there were only two other big bands in Natchez. There were three of us, but there were two big, seven-piece bands. They would travel. They didn't play around the honkytonks too much around there. We had all of that, out in the country. Like he just said, there was a lot of clubs. . .

Rivers: Some places. . . .

Early: . . juke joints out in the country during that time. But all of that stuff faded away because the older ones that owned all those clubs, they passed away. Some of them didn't have children to take it on. It just went down. Time rolled on. Most all those places are gone. We have a few clubs uptown, but they don't do very much because when the boat opened up under the hill, everybody started going to the boat. If you go to the boat, all you've got to do is just sit there and play a few dollars in the slot machine, and they're going to bring you all you want to drink. If you got to a club, you've got to buy your drink. That keeps juke joints down.

Question: Did you play at Haney's?

Gregory: She said, "Did you play at Haney's?"

Early: Haney's. Oh, yeah. I was Haney's house band for about six years, I would say. What happened there, it something like what he said. We had a sheriff that got elected there in Natchez. He closed things down because they would play too loud music. He was tight on that. We started playing over on the Louisiana side. Haney heard about us. He called me. He hired us for his house band. We'd play every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. This went on like, I'd say, about six years. That was bringing all the people out of Natchez to Louisiana. On a Friday night, Saturday night, you couldn't walk in Haney's. He never closed his doors. He stayed open twenty-four hours. We played there. Whenever he wanted to bring in a big band on us, he would always bring them in on a Sunday night. We'd be off that Sunday night, and he would give us a free pass to come in and see the big-time musicians. He would always give us whatever we wanted to eat and drink. He had a restaurant in there, too. We played for Haney about, I'd say about, six years.

What happened, things kind of opened up. They were losing so much money out of Natchez, they kind of opened Natchez back up. We still were playing for Haney, but they would get us whenever they could. Haney's burned down.

When Haney's burned down, there was a man by the name of Grady Coleman. He moved into Natchez from Laurel Hill and opened up Crossed Keys in Natchez. He hired us. I played fifteen years, every Friday, Saturday. Not on Sunday. We had a different place down on 61 South, Florema [Inaudible] .We played for him on Sunday nights. This went on around fifteen years. The building got in bad shape for Big Grady Coleman. He had to move out of there. The owner wouldn't remodel the place or anything. He went out. He had a stroke, and he

passed away.

During that time, we weren't doing very much. Every once in a while, we'd get a play to play for the Garden Club, these ante-bellum homes. They would call on us to play. That went along for, I'd say, a year or so. They had an annual ball on an Easter Saturday night. I had made up some cards. I had me some cards made up, printed up. This particular Saturday night, they had 2500 people at this annual ball from all everywhere – Jackson, Monroe, Alexandria, down the coast, all around. They attend that pilgrimage Garden Club ball. I had cards everywhere. People just got my card.

After that night, we started getting calls to Monroe, Jackson, Biloxi, Hattiesburg, all the surrounding areas. We were getting calls. We were getting bookings. We just got away from the night clubs. We didn't fool with the night clubs. We just played for the pilgrimage Garden Club and private parties and things of that nature, reunions and stuff like that. That's when we came in contact with, recorded that record. We were playing out at the Natchez Mall for a boat show on a Friday night. Someone came through and heard us playing. They listened. They listened to the band, and they were very interested in it. The next thing I know, I was getting a call about doing a recording. That's when we come together about the recording.

Gregory. Yeah. That's a Northwestern Folklife recording that the Folklife Center here put out. It's called *Hezekiah and the House-rockers*. It was the seventies?

Early: That was in '82.

Gregory: '82. We still have some of those by the way. I think Shane probably could tell you where they are. They're for sale. There they are. Sharon's got one. Sheila's got one back there.

Question: [Inaudible]

Early: That's what got us the marker they put out at the museum in Ferriday.

Gregory: Got any other questions?

Question: I have a lot of questions, but this one is for Dr. Jackson. When you were talking about the initial resettlement in the sixties, you didn't really touch upon the pressures of the time, integration or the [Inaudible] of the political landscape in St. Bernard Parish with the Perez or the [Inaudible]. More [Inaudible] in New Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes. I'm wondering. Did the sort of overall vehement racism that existed in St. Bernard lean toward more settlements that [Inaudible]?

Jackson: Yes it did. I just didn't take time to bring up all of that because I was trying to focus on the cultural aspect. Yes, that was one of the main reasons why they were moved. I knew what was going on during that time, but I wanted to hear it from the residents, so I was asking the questions, some pointed questions to find out about these things. Some of the elders began to tell me about the fact that they were agitating, and they had gone to the courthouse. They had a meeting in that Battleground Baptist Church in St. Bernard Parish. They went to the courthouse to get their rights to vote. Then it was de-segregation time in the sixties – '63, '64. They really felt, and some of the elders told me this, that the whites wanted them out of that area so their kids would not be going to school with the kids in Fazendeville.

They were really independent. It was an independent settlement. They had their own grocery store. They had, of course, the church. They had the dance hall; they had the juke joint. They had the benevolent society halls. All this was in that little strip of

land that you saw on the image there. They really . . . they were self-sufficient, basically. Some of them did work in the farms around. Some worked on the dock; some worked at the railroad camp. For the most part, they had their own gardens and everything. They were pretty self-sufficient.

When they began to agitate and to organize in the church, that's when they got the word. They said that they'd been hearing that it might happen, but they really got the word in the sixties that they had to move. They fought it. A. P. Tureaud was one of their attorneys that fought it. Trying to fight Federal government and didn't have the wherewithal to do it. They just couldn't do it.

I was listening at you talking about how much they were compensated for the land. Some of the homes were Creole cottages, shotgun houses and stuff. They may have cost during that time maybe twenty, thirty, thirty-five thousand. I think the largest settlement was like $15,000. That compensation was not really to get another house built in the Ninth Ward. For the most part, they joined together and helped each other to build homes in the Ninth Ward. That's why they moved right into the Ninth Ward because they possibly could afford that land. They were homeowners. They weren't renting these homes. They were landowners. They wanted to be landowners again. That's why they just moved right across the line to the lower Ninth Ward.

Yeah, the political situation was one of the main reasons why they moved – not just because the National Historical Park wanted to expand the park. They were right in the middle of government land, but it was their land.

Question: You talked about [Inaudible] generally and the destruction of public housing. FEMA was a really good example [Inaudible] .. Home was not touched by the water. Beautiful copper flashing, ironwork, architecturally it's solid and beautiful housing being destroyed. That's necessary [Inaudible] .. Do you consider something like [Inaudible] to Fazendeville location? Look at Musicians Village, we know a lot about both. In a sense I see a regulated space. I would build another public housing that I think is beautiful, but it came right on top of Storyville.

Jackson: Right.

Question: Here you have a space where it's the birthplace of jazz, and right on top of it you have regulated space. In some ways I feel like Musicians Village the threshold to get in is very difficult for many, many musicians I know. A lot of artists that have only school teachers or have these certificates to have some other form of income, and they don't want to get into their. Many of street musicians and others [Inaudible]. Once again, it's sort of a regulated space. Do you think that there is something like this?

Jackson: Do I think there's a kind of a gentler case of. . . .

Question: Gentrification that's going on there.

Jackson: Well, yeah, it is. I think getting it from the residents' perspective, it's like, "Well, I wanted to come home. So it's either this or I stay in Montana." What can you say? Heck, I look at the houses, too. Look at the lower Ninth Ward. Look at the houses that Brad Pitt's putting up. What can you say – totally, yeah, it's like a. . . . I had a name that I called it, something like "back to the future for the Ninth Ward." The architects were trying to put a spin on the shotgun houses and the Creole cottages, but it didn't work. If you have a choice of taking this or staying where

you are, two or three thousand miles away. . . . What can you say? Who am I to be the judge of how they're feeling about this? They've definitely expressed themselves. To get in a home back in New Orleans, what can you say? Yeah, it is a form of gentrification.

Gregory: We're way behind.

Teal: Way behind.

Gregory: We're way behind schedule, so we need to let Hezekiah and Poochie do their set up. There are refreshments back there. I think we forgot to take a break. We can do that, and we'll come back and let them play a while. Then we'll break for lunch late if that's OK. I'll start these other guys this afternoon.

Listening and Learning: The Blues

Hezekiah Early and Robert “Lil’ Poochie” Watson

L-R: Robert “Lil’ Poochie” Watson and Hezekiah Early

Blues and the Delta “Roots”

Hezekiah Early and Lil’ Poochie (Robert Watson) represent one of the oldest lines of culture in the Delta Region. Rooted in Africa, surviving slavery, the aftermath of the Civil War and the New “industrialized” South with Civil Rights struggles, Blues musicians continue to echo the change and continuity as well or better than any other people in the Delta.

This informance is based on the experiences of two blues players who have grown up in the tradition, seen it move from Natchez, Mississippi to Paris, France, to Germany and Italy. The “honky tonks” and “joints” of the Blues experience are diminished. The money and the jobs come and go, but the blues scene persists.

The Blues story of this symposium is that traditions live, and the young people listen, even hope to play. From amplifiers and television to CDs and tweeting, the mournful to joyful words of the Blues carry on.

SESSION IV

Session IV – People from the Hills, Rivers, & Swamps

Moderators: Dr. Shane Rasmussen, Dr. Susan Roach

Participants: Judith Bingham, Dale Bordelon, Dr. Ray Brassieur, Marcy Frantom, Dr. Pete Gregory

L-R: Dr. Pete Gregory, Dale Bordelon, Dr. Ray Brassieur, Dr. Shane Rasmussen, Judith Bingham, Dr. Susan Roach, Marcy Frantom, and Max Turner

Shane Rasmussen: Howdy. We're hoping to have more people wander in as we get going. I'm Shane Rasmussen, and this is the fourth session of the Delta 2010 Symposium. This is the session "People from the Hills, Rivers, & Swamps." I wanted to just start out by asking each of you if you could sum up, in a sense, when you think of the Delta, if you can think of one image. It doesn't have to be the iconic imagery, just the image that comes to mind. Before doing so, if you could just briefly introduce yourself. Tell us what that image is and maybe why it's important to you. I'd like to start with Dr. Gregory in doing so. We'll also mention that when we get done with that, we'll just sort of go from there and, hopefully, we'll have a conversation. I want to ask the folks in the audience to please feel free with your questions. We're a small enough group that I think this could be a conversation. We don't have to save those for the end. I'm going to not give an image because I'm not from the Delta. I'm from Oregon. We'll just skip me. Dr. Gregory?

Pete Gregory: You want me to start?

Rasmussen: Yeah.

Gregory: Oh. It's water. I grew up. . . I was born. . . . I started yesterday with saying I belong there. I was born there. I was born a mile from the Mississippi River in 1937, and it was in flood. The first story that my family told about me was that I was born when the river flooded. My father was riding the levee that night on horseback trying to make sure the river wasn't going to break the levee. My earliest memories of the Delta are about the water. My grandfather was a fisherman. I spent my life on and off the water. This is the driest place I have ever lived, the furtherest away from water. Cane River is right there. It's a piddling little river for the Delta. Dale?

Dale Bordelon: My name is Dale Bordelon. I'm from Avoyelles Parish. They've got a big Delta [plantation] not too far from where I was raised. It's just wide open country. That's what I remember. The time I was growing up, just dozers and clearing. That was going on in my youthful years. Now you pass by, it's just open farmland as far as you can see. A bunch of good stories about how big the trees were and how good the hunting was before they did all that. It's a big regret. The old people regret it. It kind of took their part away from them for just for farm land. I kind of hate to see it just the stories they have, it kind of bothers me, too. Most of that

land now is not wasn't, most of it wasn't fit for farming, a lot of it. Now, they are trying to put it back in trees, so maybe one day it will be like it was again down the road like it should have stayed.

Ray Brassieur: I'm Ray Brassieur. I teach at UL in Lafayette. My own family and personal experiences, in my younger days, I'm more of a prairie person. The idea of Delta really is not thoroughly through me from birth or anything like that. I did have a chance and many chances to immerse into that water world that Dr. Gregory is talking about through the lives and work of people I had a chance to meet and work with. A lot. I developed an idea of what the Delta was. Then I'm jaded because I had a chance to go to Missouri. They confused me up there because they think that's the Delta up there. They talk about Memphis and the Peabody Hotel and all that. That didn't seem Delta to me. Geographically, yes, it is. Now, I have this kind of understanding of the Delta that's expanded the whole bottom land of the Mississippi there below Memphis. At any rate, like I said, my idea is somewhat jaded right now. I still, though, see the Delta as something from Marksville on down or somewhere like that. That's where I really think it is.

Culturally, though, there are some similarities up the river, all the way up through Arkansas, and of course, Helena. I know that all the way up to Memphis and the Missouri boot heel and all of that. There are some similarities. The populations have some similarities. Some of those are adaptations to that environment, and some of them are poverty. Farming is part of it. Using the river is another part of it, and that bottom land. I think it's a big, big area.

Judith Bingham: I'm Judith Bingham, and I'm the director of the Delta Music Museum in Ferriday, from Dr. Pete's home place. I'm honored to do this because this is my, I could say my nine-to-five job, but this is really my heart — the Delta music. The Delta Music Museum is about collecting, preserving, and exhibiting the Delta music starting in Memphis, Tennessee and on down the Mississippi River Delta through New Orleans. I guess if I answered Dr. Shane's question about the image of something in the Delta, I'd have to go with Haney's Big House. I asked Hezekiah Early, when he was talking about where he'd performed, if he had performed at Haney's Big House. Haney's actually originated in the thirties and forties right on into the fifties. In the early sixties, it burned. It was a very popular African American night club in Ferriday. People like B. B. King, Fats Domino, and all those "earlier musicians" came through Ferriday and played music and then became famous. That's where the three cousins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Mickey Gilley, and Jimmy Swaggart, who Dr. Pete has asked me to talk about, sneaked in to hear Delta music. Haney's Big House is the place where Delta music was being spread abroad in the Delta. It was very popular in its day.

One little story I'll give you. Our clerk of court was on a plane going to Los Angeles one day, and he happened to sit by B. B. King who is from over the Mississippi side of the Delta. B. B. asked him, "Where are you from?" He said, "Oh, I'm from a little town you've probably never even heard of – Ferriday, Louisiana." He said B. B. King chuckled and said, "Oh, yes. I know where Ferriday is. When we couldn't play anywhere else, we could play at Haney's Big House." That's my Delta image.

Susan Roach: I'm Susan Roach. I'm a folklorist at Louisiana Tech and former Regional Folklorist there for ten years. I grew up in Ruston which is in Lincoln Parish in the hill country, the heart of the hill country – not my definition of the Delta although it is in our definition that we are using for this confer-

ence, evidently. When I think of Delta image, the big wide open territory that you were talking about really terrified me the first time I had to go do fieldwork in the Delta, and not a tree in site. Where are the hills? Where are the curves in the road? Stuff just felt exposed and open. I got kind of scared. When I really focus on the thing that, I guess for me, symbolized the Delta after I got to know the Delta a little better – after my first big, initial fieldwork in Lake Providence in the late eighties – is an image that actually got put on the front of this Smithsonian catalog [1997 Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife Program Book]. It's an image of Lake Providence baptism, outdoor baptism. That one event in hot August, when it was so hot part of my belt melted off of me, that whole thing just comes back and gushes over me – the water, the people, and the experience just really immerses me. Somebody used that term and that to me is that formative image.

Marcy Frantom: My name is Marcy Frantom, and I was a student of Dr. Gregory's and Dr. Hatley. When I was a child, my father, who was from Natchitoches Parish, would take me to the stores, and he would want me to collect weather signs from the old men. I guess when I think of our culture, I think of it as being very giving and loving, and how we people unstintingly help each other.

Max Turner: Hi, I'm Max Turner. Me and Marcy do a lot of research together. In fact, we do everything together. We work together; we do research together; we play music together. In my life, I got to play with a lot people from the Delta. I played with them in Austin and San Antonio and places like that when I lived there. I got to play with Muddy Waters at Antoine's in Austin and Lightning Hopkins at the Armadillo in Austin. I opened for B. B. King in San Antonio at the Eastwood Country Club. I've had lot of fun playing with a lot of the old Delta musicians in my life. I just love music.

Rasmussen: Thank you everyone. I really appreciate that. I was talking to Ray earlier. He was telling me about his sense of the Delta right now and how there's a sense of continuity and how that is very positive at the same time that there are these changes going on. He sees those changes as a kind of distortion – a maybe a kind of disruption of Delta culture. I wonder if he could just talk about that for a second. If anyone has anything to say after his remarks, that would be great.

Brassieur: Or during them. First of all, I would like to say that those of us that work in certain fields, sometimes we're called upon to give the point of view or represent a certain community as though we know what that community is like. I think we ought to be hesitant. I know I am much more hesitant right now at this moment than I have been before in trying to say that I am the voice of any particular community because there are some things that I understand about what's going and some things I don't.

There are some continuities. I attended one last night. It was a meeting of the Cajun French Music Association award ceremony. It was a mob. When you think of that genre of music, it's alive and well. It's drawing a lot of people. A lot of the people that go to it, some are musicians, some are dancers, some just liked it – the scene. They have their little kids, and they bring them up in the front and make them talk French, give them an award for it. The kind of thing that supports and encourages continuity is going on. It's going on in scales that I've never seen. We are filling up rooms with that kind of thing. That could be a positive if you're looking toward continuity. There are many other cases.

Next month, in September, there will be the annual reunion of the Bayou Chene settlement. Bayou Chene was a community

located right in the middle of the Atchafalaya Swamp. Couldn't go to it by car, only boats went to it. It was there for many, many years, centuries. By the 1950s, it was abandoned. People had to leave the basin. That's another theme, by the way – that displacement of people or curbing the Atchafalaya Swamp. For the last some, I guess close to thirty years or so, they've been having this reunion of Bayou Chene people. It happens in September near Morgan City. Now, you have people coming to that reunion who've never seen Bayou Chene. There are other generations of people who have never seen it, but they're coming and it seems to get bigger and bigger. That's a kind of continuity. We have to understand that in context. It's interesting. There's a lot of that going on, I think. Attempts to sometimes regain, sometimes maintain traditional patterns. We see that a lot.

At the same time, there's this thing that I don't understand. It's very, very complicated. The only word I can use to describe it is distortion. There is distortion, I believe in my mind. There is distortion in the minds of people who are tradition bearers and who are regular folks and the people that live in communities. Just for example, some of it's political. I don't know if we are supposed to talk about politics in a place like this, but the media is very effective. There are some powers that help to mold people's opinions and minds and everything. Today, there is a strong political bias down south. If there's a problem with the fishing industry or with the oil industry, or with jobs, or with whatever it is, Obama did it! OK. What does that have to do with folk patterns? Now we are facing an unknown face.

We have a known face, by the way, along the coast. For example, we knew that the coast is receding. Populations are going to have to do something. They'll have to decide. Are they going to stay in their traditional area? Are they going to do their same occupations? Are they going to recede? Are they going to move? We already knew that was going to happen. At the same time, the people who are there quite often they say, "I will never leave. I'll be here. My children will be fishermen. My grandchildren will be fishermen." They have that fixed in their minds at the time that the sea is coming in, and the water is rising. Now the water has oil in it.

You have stories right now. I've heard stories now from fishermen and from people along the coast about the oil has stopped flowing. They go out. The fish are still there. The shrimp are fine. They're catching shrimp. The scientists say there's nothing wrong with them. They have friends who are skimmers that go out looking for oil; they can't find oil. The problem is over with. Let's go back to work. Everything is fine. Is that distortion, or is that reality? I don't know. Time will tell.

One thing that happened in south Louisiana for quite a long, long time is this marriage between petroleum and our traditional occupations so that some eighty years ago, we have a Shrimp and Petroleum Festival that was started in Morgan City. Since then, everyone thought that OK that's a perfect marriage. We'll have work; we'll have money; we'll have shrimp; we'll have a festival. We'll have a good time, and everything will be fine. That image is carrying forth. People still want to cling to that so much so that it seems like all of south Louisiana is a cheerleader for big oil. We don't want a moratorium. These are political things. How does that work with tradition? We don't know. That's part of the distortion that I see.

People have stories and ideas about their world, their life, the way they make a living and their families that seem to be in contradiction to what will happen, is happening. People are leaving. There is a displacement of folks away from the coast. Some of them are Indian communities. Some are Ca-

jun fishing communities. They are leaving. One big voice says, "Oh, everything is fine. Everything is the same." A strong voice. The other side is the families are being broken up. I am incapable of really making a great statement about the status of people because I find myself immersed in this same kind of distorted attempt to understand what's going on down there. Yeah, there's some continuity, but change and displacement is going to be a big part of it. Part of it's economic. I don't know if y'all were interested in any of all of that kind of stuff. We can make many examples of continuity, but, gosh, we can make so many examples of change that's happened.

Rasmussen: So it's a kind of disconcerting sense of flux going on right now throughout the cultures?

Gregory: In the upper Delta, if we stay in Louisiana, the upper Delta is northeast Louisiana, north of Marksville, on up into the Mississippi portion and the Arkansas portion in the upper Delta, beginning in the late sixties, the 1960s, the biggest changes came with mass land clearing. The landscape that Dale described, that he's seen all his life was not there. The whole Delta was a giant wetland forest, a hardwood forest. It was one of the last areas of North America to develop. In 1820, people began moving into the Delta and opened up the first plantations. Plantations in the Delta are not an ancient colonial device. They didn't start until very late. That all got sort of truncated by the Civil War.

The plantations slowed down. That brought a lot of change in the status of people – white and black, Indians and others. Then again, just about the time prior to, I'd say World War I, people began clearing land in the Delta for timber. Hardwood forests, cypress, wetland oaks of one kind or another brought in a whole new industry, brought in the railroads in a major kind of way to take that timber out. As the land was cleared, plantations came back. Black people were used to clear the land and then later as sharecroppers to farm the land. That lasted up until about World War II. The farming began to sort of recede. Some areas hardly ever got touched. There were virgin forests in northeast Louisiana, for example in the Tensas Basin, that only ten years ago were cut off. The lumber companies cut them off before they became Federal lands, Federal protected forests. They clear-cut the forest, gave it to the Federal government, and said, "Here. Make us a new forest." We should live a thousand years and see.

I talked to loggers who remembered logging in Concordia Parish in the 1950s. They talk about red oak trees 150 feet tall that had never been touched. The logger actually wept because he cut the last ones. He said, "I told the guys when I felled those trees, I'd never live to see anything like them again." Well, of course not. They'd been growing a thousand years. That landscape that people who grew up there like Dale, never saw. I only saw the tail end of it. I only saw what was left.

By the 1970s, when I left the Delta and kind of moved up here into this part of the Delta, the bean farmers were just beginning to come south. They cleared the boot heel of Missouri. Bulldozers were just getting cheap and popular. They land-leveled that land, took all the little ridges and swales out of it, and they drained it. They moved south. They moved down into Catahoula, Concordia, Tensas, clearing those forests, what was left of the second growth forest. The plantations were marginal to all of that. They were right along the rivers. The back swamps, the big land, it all got cleared. Lots and lots of it got land-leveled. That whole landscape is gone. If you are old enough to remember even parts of it, people can't relate to that. People Dale's age never saw it.

We were doing an archaeological survey in Catahoula and Rapides Parishes for

the state. I had a young fellow working for me. He told one of the elders we were talking to one afternoon how beautiful Catahoula Lake was. Catahoula Lake anchors the Mississippi flyway. Almost all the ducks in North America pass through that lake going to the gulf. It is a beautiful place. Much of it now is in the Federal goose preserve. It's been much abused. It was pretty. It was a pretty afternoon. He said, "Oh what a wonderful place this is." An older gentleman there in his eighties looked over at him and smiled and said, "But son, you only saw the tail of the deer as it jumped over the fence." It's quite true.

There's that sense of loss in the Delta. It's very hard to continue where your ancestors were. I went to the bayou where I pulled hoop nets with friends of mine in the 1950s where the water was ten and twelve feet deep. It was dry and planted with soy beans. I didn't know where I was. It's like I'd fallen off on Mars. We stood there and said, "Looking at the map, this is Big Bayou, but Big Bayou is fading now."

The bean farmers are gone. I can't pick on the bean farmers. They came down from Missouri and had no idea what this country was like. Within the first three years they were there, they lost three crops in succession. They had a flood in 1970 that flooded all their new houses they'd built, washed away all their equipment. They all went back to Missouri broke. The big corporate farms who bought up the land and brought in the farmers are all trying to sell the land, trying to sell the land especially to the Federal government, to the state government. To any of you guys who want to buy it, I suspect you can buy it. Who knows, I'm sort of like Ray now, who knows what happens next?

Since we've much abused that land, we've drilled for oil on it, and that was messy. The oil industry has never been environmentally friendly, no matter how hard they try. Oil came in there. The lumber had taken a big swatch of it out already. The bean fields, lining up bulldozers five miles across and driving those bulldozers twenty-four hours a day until you clear swatches of land, a 150,000 acres of land, no trees, nothing on it. You can walk out there today and walk for seven, eight, ten, fifteen miles and not get bitten by a mosquito. They're in Louisiana. That land's changed forever. That part of the Delta will never be, I think, the same. Some of it might even be a dangerous place to go.

Yet, people persist. People still are commercial fishermen wherever they kind find a place to put a net, put a line. People are still trying to cling to little communities that have been there for a couple of hundred years and all this stuff happened around. There's a TV commercial about the guy who says, "People say, 'Why did you move down here on this land down on the coast?' Well, the land moved away from us." The same thing happened to people in the upper Delta. The land moved away from people. People hung on, hang on pretty desperately sometimes to what they have. Things changed, drastically changed for them.

We talked yesterday, Christine Norris, and Cheryl and I about fighting the dumpers, the waste from Katrina. They had targeted the upper Delta because there were no people there. They were going to dump all of this waste there. Well, there were Indians there. There were commercial fishing villages there within a mile, two miles. They were dumping on a large cemetery that the Indians knew had been there for a thousand years. It took a lot of efforts for us to stop that. A lot of us went to stop that. Not a lot of us, but the local people went to stop that, and the tribes went to stop that. The parish government didn't want to stop that. The state government got stalled because they were worried about the Indian reaction to it, I think, more than maybe anything else. We did stop that. On the other hand, [we] had to turn around and do the

same thing out at Lakeside in east New Orleans next door to the Vietnamese Village. They had to stop the dumping. They just got that done a couple of months ago.

If you live in the Delta, you're used to change, I think. You grow up with change. You're used to the environment. It changes. I'm sort of like Ray says, I don't know where we go. There is a sense of indefiniteness, Shane, that the ones who've been there all our lives feel. It's different. We'd do what we could to put it back, but I won't see those trees I saw when I was ten, twelve years old. I won't see those nets full of fish ever again in my lifetime. I won't see cotton growing in the Delta. Plantations gone, the gins are gone. The big houses may be there because we preserve them with the National Park Service or some other person to help us. The economy's gone. There are less than 1,000 acres of cotton in Natchitoches Parish this year. It looks like Kansas in August. Corn makes fuel – not cotton. Dr. Webb was reminiscing yesterday about miles and miles, vast expanses of flat land covered with cotton. He said, "Of course, it's not there now." That's a good description of the upper Delta. It's not there. We all saw that growing up. I remember cotton. I remember fish. I remember lots of things.

It's sometimes a lonely place. There's an old blues thing that comes up if you grew up close to Haney's Big House. You've got all these blues metaphors in your head. There's this train that goes across the Delta. Freight trains run across the Delta. In the old days, when they were steam, they blew the whistles. You could hear them for miles and miles and miles. There are country songs and blues songs about the long, lonesome sound. That long, lonesome sound is in the Delta, long after the trains are gone. It's in people's heads. It's getting to be a very sad place. I think that's why there are so many good blues people. The Delta is a sad place for those who grew up there.

Rasmussen: That gives a good transition to Judith. Judith, you brought up several times when we've been talking about why Delta music is so popular with Delta people.

Bingham: I'm often asked the question at the museum, "Why do you think music was so popular in the Delta?" Of course, this is my opinion. When you look at the customs and the culture, of course, first it was American Indians, the Native Americans, and then we entered into the plantation life era with the African Americans who had the spirituals and really came into the blues where they decided to sing the blues and then get away from some of the spiritual aspects of songs to talk about taboo subjects with jazz. It's just a big evolution of music. We came into the blues and then we went into jazz and ragtime. We could just go on and on how it evolves. I like to think that in that time frame of culture and population in the Delta, there was no television, no computers, and no modern technology. The thing to do when you quit working for daily survival, which was every day, you came in from your work whether it was in the plantation life, farming or maybe any type of industry such as saw mills, or the railroad, the thing you had for entertainment was music. Whether you were gathering at your front porch enjoying music or whether you were going to where the community had gathered, it was the type of entertainment for that day and era. I think that's why it was so popular. There wasn't much else to do for entertainment and relaxation.

Also, I'd like to talk a little bit about the cousins. I'll ask you a question. When I say, "Do you know the native famous cousins in Ferriday" how many can raise your hands?

Question: How many?

Bingham: Three.

Comment: I just have two.

Bingham: I get that many times. Some people don't know that Jimmy Swaggert is one of the famous cousins. It's Jerry Lee Lewis, Mickey Gilley, and Jimmy Swaggert. Basically, I guess you could say, and I'm sure Dr. Pete knows more about this because, hey, this is his family.

Gregory: My cousins.

Bingham: They're his cousins from the Lewis side. Two families, three basically came in to these three people. That was the Lewises, the Herron, and the Gilleys. Mickey Gilley is a Gilley [pronounced with a soft "g"]. We all knew him, didn't we, Pete, as Mickey Gilley because that was his surname. I will really confuse you, OK? We will look at Jerry Lee Lewis and part of his genealogy. His daddy was a Lewis; his mother was a Herron. Jimmy Swaggart's mother was a Herron. They were first cousins on the moms' side. I'm not going to say what my husband does – first removed, second removed, because I don't do that. On the Lewis side, Jerry's daddy's sister married Jimmy's granddaddy. The first thing you want to say is that's a different generation. Well, I don't care. That's what happened. Jerry and Jimmy were second cousins. Then Jerry's daddy had another sister that married Mickey Gilley's daddy. Mickey was first cousins to Jerry, and he was second cousins again to Jimmy. They all grew up in Ferriday. One of them turned out to be a preacher. One of them turned out to be a country singer that had seventeen hit songs. Seventeen of them reached the top ten. Of course, one cousin turned out to be "The Killer," Jerry Lee Lewis.

Jerry lived by his own standards, by his own rules. I sometimes think that if Jerry would have played musical politics, he probably would have been the "king" instead of Elvis. He's the only one of the three that has been married six times. Jerry's had a lot of tragedy in his life. He had two sons to die of accidents. He had two wives to die, one from overdose and one from a swimming pool drowning. When you think about the talent in the man, he has great talent.

A story that we tell at the museum is Jerry and his dad, Mr. Elmo Lewis, who Dr. Pete's called uncle [his mother's first cousin], went to Nashville and Memphis to attain stardom . When he arrived in Nashville, they said, "Son, you just need to go home and learn to play the guitar." He said, "I'm sorry. My instrument is the piano, thank you." That was his attitude. He went back to Memphis and went to Sun Studio. Sam Philips at Sun Studio produced the recordings of Elvis. Sam was out of town, but Jerry recorded at Sun and told them to play it for "Mr. Phillips" upon his return. When Sam came back, the rest is history. He started from there. He started receiving both national and international fame. He was really going places. He married his fifteen year old second cousin. Now, in these modern times it probably wouldn't be anything thought of this type of union, but not during that particular era. [It was not uncommon in his grandparents' generation.] A lot of his fame went "down hill" from that fact.

Jerry Lee had a friend that he played music with at the age of fourteen. It was Peewee Whittaker, an old original blues musician. The Folklife Center here at Northwestern U has some of Peewee's memorabilia in their collection. He is also one of our Hall of Fame inductees at the Delta Music Museum. At the age of fourteen, Jerry Lee played on the other side of the river in Natchez Under the Hill. He played with Peewee in an old club called the Blue Cat Club. Jerry Lee said that the club was really rough. I often wonder how a fourteen-year-old got in a club. I guess it was because it was allowed back in the forties. People ask us all the time, where Jerry Lee lives. He lives in Nesbitt, Mississippi near I-55. He's not in really good health but he still performs.

Mickey left Ferriday when he was around seventeen years old, went to Houston, Texas, married, and worked with his daddy-in-law in the construction business. [He] had three children. Jerry Lee came to Houston for a concert, and said, "Boy, look at all the money I made." Mickey decided that if Jerry Lee could do it, so could he. From there he went onto fame. In fact, just to throw a little commercial in here, Mickey is a really, a sponsor of our museum. He loves to come back and perform shows for the Friends of the Delta Music Museum Foundation. He's coming September the 12th. He's going to perform two shows for the benefit of the museum, a 2:00 and a 6:00 show. If you want to drive to Concordia Parish, spend the night, and have a good time in the Delta, well, come on down.

Then, of course, we have the other cousin, Jimmy Lee Swaggart. I don't know why. Maybe Dr. Pete can tell us. Jimmy's name was Jimmy Lee Swaggart. Jerry Lee's name was Jerry Lee Lewis. Mickey's name was Mickey Leroy Gilley. Do you know the answer to that, Dr. Pete?

Gregory: I do. Yeah. Their grandfather was named Lee, Lee Lewis. There's a folk tale about that over around Ferriday that he was named after his uncle Lee Calhoun, who was very wealthy. He had a lot of land, somewhat of a character in and of himself. People always said he was named after Uncle Lee, Mr. Lee Calhoun, but he was actually named after his grandfather, I think, Mr. Lee Lewis. They had two possibilities. I can narrow it down. You have to kind of pay your money and take your choice. I'm pretty sure, though, Judith, he was named after his grandfather.

Bingham: Of course, Reverend Swaggart was their cousin. During early teenage years, his dad was a minister. They moved to a little place called Wisner, Louisiana which is just a little north between Monroe and Ferriday. Jimmy became a minister. His son Donny is now a minister, and his son Gabriel is a minister. It's kind of a family thing. They still have a large church in Baton Rouge.

One story when I'm talking about the cousins I want to leave you with. You know how Jerry Lee, he shakes his head real hard, and his hair comes down in his face. He might stand on the piano stool. He probably will kick it before he leaves and tear the leg off of it. He's real demonstrative when he plays. How that got started, the story is that he was opening in New York for Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins. He'd been traveling with them a little. He just would sit down at the piano, and he'd sing his songs. One night, Johnny Cash and Carl asked him, "Jerry, can you do something besides just sit there? Can't you be a little demonstrative?" He said, "Oh, yeah. I could play it sitting on this bench. I could play it standing up. I can play it on the floor." They said from then on when he opened for them that night in New York. He got up there, and he got with it. He was slinging his hair and doing all kinds of things. By the time it got time for Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins to get on the stage, they looked at each other because the crowd was just gone wild. It was like they didn't care if they came on or not. Johnny looked over at Carl, and he said, "You, know, we may have done the wrong thing."

If you ever see him in any of the casinos because he still goes to some of the casinos, or if you see him, just watch his hair and think about it. He learned how to move.

Gregory: He's the first original hair protestor. He got a Tony when we were in high school. He went out and got his hair all curled and came to school. He got kicked out of school for it. That was before the seventies. Some of you guys remember the hair conflicts in the seventies. Jerry Lee came to

school with a Toni. I'm still kind of shocked by it after all these years. Yeah, he had to be different. He liked to shake his hair.

A little sort of postlude to Judith's story: All those families came from Richland and Franklin Parishes to Ferriday. Actually, they moved to what we called the Black River section in Concordia Parish. They were all sharecroppers, sharecroppers on the Macon Ridge, the big high ridge that goes up through the Delta. Sharecropping got very bad up there, and so they all moved down the river. My grandfather moved first. Jerry Lee and Mickey and Jimmy Lee's grandmother's family moved after him. All her children moved. Within a ten year period, that whole extended family moved south down into the Delta. Sharecropping wasn't any good on Black River either, so eventually they all moved to town.

We started out, many of us, on Third Street, which is right across the street from the museum in Ferriday, in low-rent housing that was built originally for railroad workers. Gradually we all moved away from Third Street. Moving away from Third Street was a pretty good idea. It was a pretty rough little neighborhood. The Herrons lived there. Mickey Gilley's mother and father lived in the same double shotgun house with my grandfather, my grandmother, my father, my mother, and me. In Mickey's side of the house, it was his momma, his daddy, his sister and his brother. We were talking yesterday about what do the kids remember from the past. There was no indoor plumbing. We had one washtub on our side of the house for all the kids.

People lived on Third Street until they could get jobs. They worked in the mills. They worked in small industries. Many of them went off and started little stores or started restaurants, first one little business or another. We didn't go back to sharecropping. None of us wanted to do that. The families all moved together.

You hear that story over and over and over. I've heard it three or four times here during the session about somebody moves, and then somebody goes and takes care of somebody else until they get on their feet. Populations do that. Families are very strong in the Delta. There are still lots of Gilleys up there, a few Lewises up there. The Hampton side of the family, which is my connection to them, most of them are gone. There are probably lots more Gilleys than there are anybody else.

Bingham: Just a couple of more things, and I'll try to be quiet and let everybody else talk. I started out talking about the evolution of music. I'm sixty-five now, and my dad bought me a piano when I was about twelve. My mom says that that's all I did. Before I'd get ready for school, I'd sit down at the piano, and I'd play until the bus came. When I came home, I would start again. I'd play. I learned to play by ear. At that time in our family's life, we didn't really have financial assistance for music lessons. I learned to play by ear. For years now, I've played the organ in church.

I've even watched gospel music evolve. When I first started playing, it was the hymnals only. Then we went into like a little mixed country gospel. I came into that pretty good. I don't know how many of you are musicians, but if there are any young musicians here, I've got a message for you. Now, gospel music has evolved almost in a lot of praise and worship type of music. When I learned to play by ear. . . . For instance, when you're in a C chord, you have a C, an F, a G, sometimes a D. You just had assistance when you listened and you heard it. Now, when I play in C on the new songs, I'm going to E-flats and A-flats and B-minors. The only way I can do it is when they write out the chord progression on my music, on the song. I'm almost lost now. If you are a young musician, just hang in there

because time will come with the music, if you don't stay up with it, it will evolve and go off and leave you like it has me.

The other thing is that the Delta Music Museum is now on the Mississippi Blues Trail. We have a Blues Trail marker in our front lawn. We just got that this summer. The Mississippi Commission has received a new grant. They initially put up, I don't know how many, in the state of Mississippi along the Delta, the Mississippi Blues Trail. They got another grant this past year to put three or four more up out of Mississippi. We were chosen as one of the places to have one. New Orleans, I think, was one. New York was one. Somewhere, I don't know if it was St. Louis or Chicago, I believe the other one. This summer we started a Soul Survivor Festival in our town. We had blues music, and we had the dedication of the Mississippi Blues Trail marker. What's going on in Ferriday right now is to make Ferriday a musical destination.

We have a guy by the name of Tommy Pope who was in the Clarksdale revival to keep blues going. He's a native of Vidalia. He moved to Nashville, and then back to Clarksdale. He's an entrepreneur there at one of the bed and breakfasts. He's come back home, and he's really trying to set up a lot of different things to give us some, maybe a couple more of small museums, really do some things to preserve the blues and some Delta music. I think this is a good thing. We're really proud of it. The state built us an art. . . . The state, I should say, took a 1926 theater that was right next to the museum. Pete went there many times to see the movies. They took that and had to tear it completely down which was sad, but it had some structural problems. The state had built us a $1,000,000 performing arts center there. We named it the Arcade Theater. We have a lot of different performances going on and things that we are just trying to really get moving in that area with music. Susan and I have been discussing. We want to see if we can't have some, in the summer, have some classes. Maybe Hezekiah Early that was here talking about building his reed instrument. Children in our area may want to do this. I think that is part of preserving a culture and part of the music.

Rasmussen: I like what you said about cultural evolution and how that's affecting music over time. I was talking to Max and Marcy, and they were talking about, what was it you described it, kind of a renewed sense of culture conservatism that you've seen and how that's affecting what's going on.

Frantom: Well, it just seems like that a lot of what happens is through informal music jams. People meet each other, and they play with each other. It seems like people are, because of conservatism, people are drawing back, I guess into their own groups. You see a lot more, I think, of the separation between the practice of secular and religious music. I've heard some of the old masters are not playing anymore. A fiddle player was telling me this, Buzz, he's going to be here later, that some of his friends don't play anymore because it's consider to be bad to play the fiddle. It's a devil's instrument. You've got the sort of thing that's going on with that. With bluegrass itself, of course, there's been a split off of people who only want to play Celtic music. The bluegrass purists are kind of funny because bluegrass came from country. Maida and I were talking about this – how bluegrass as a musical genre appeared in the 1960s with Bill Monroe. It seems like secular bluegrass players don't want to play what they consider to be country music.

There was a big flap at the monthly Arcadia jam about somebody wanting to play a Hank Williams song. I don't know. We're seeing this sort of thing going on. On the other hand, I really think that the adversity,

the economic adversity, is going to, I hope, allow people to get involved back in their musical traditions, and perhaps we'll have more flowering from that. It seems like everyone's afraid and worried right now. There are a lot of reasons to be that way. I'm hoping that it will be a good thing and that people will go back to their roots, and that will be a nice thing while Maida doesn't have any money to document folk music. We can all be getting back involved with our own traditions again.

Hezekiah Early talked about the blues not being practiced much anymore because the clubs and venues are gone. What I'm talking about is that traditional music arts are not commercially viable to a large degree. Even though we talk about people wanting to buy blues recordings or performances, people actually sent to buy it more in Europe. They don't necessarily want to buy it here. Because there is no economic base for it, it's difficult to exist without financial support. I'm very interested in ways to combine tourism and traditional music. We went to Clarksdale, Mississippi, and we saw the blues school. I'm so interested in that as being a way to, if the apprenticeship program was a good program, it is a way to sort of stretch your dollars as far as having one master work with many students. You have maybe a percentage will end up carrying on the tradition. It seemed to work pretty well in Clarksdale. It was pretty neat.

Turner: Yeah. The kids were really having a good time. There were singers and players. They had a little girl that was singing with the boys playing electric guitar and drums. They were really good. The school had guitars for them. Each of the kids was supplied a guitar. The folk artist was just really, really good at what he did, teaching the children. You can't jump on them for not playing the right chord and stuff like that because they are just the age where they might just quit on you.

Frantom: Another thing about the jams, too, is that all people need for a jam is a place. We were talking about that, too. It's like, you don't need to pay them – just give them a place to play. That's something that the Park could do, right, Laura, provide the place, set up rules. You can foster traditional music that way.

Rasmussen: That sounds great. Dale, I was talking to you earlier, and you were talking about how things sometimes in the culture are done out of necessity. For example, when you make a duck call, you make it out of cane because that what you had.

Bordelon: Right.

Rasmussen: Are there changes in the culture now that are happening out of necessity, whether you see as positive or negative or neither? What changes are you seeing now in where you're working and where you're living?

Bordelon: It looks like everything that goes on, to me, is just a big modern situation. Talking about the old cane calls? In the old days, that's all they had. It already had the hole in it. They just figured out to make something to call. They'd stick it together. Now they make them out of plastic. They cost $150. Everything is about money, high price, and just junk. Decoys, duck calls, guns, everywhere. You watch the hunting channels advertisements. Everything is just blown out of proportion with this money issue. Therefore, the culture just leaves. There's nothing for the culture unless it should die or like me try to preserve it, live out the old times and keep it alive. The younger generation, it looks like they don't care for it too much. It's just a dying issue.

It's just a big change in the times I've seen.

Rasmussen: What's the best way. . . ? What's the most successful way to entice or educate young people about their heritage and to draw them into that?

Bordelon: Maybe have seminars and show how the old people used to do. I think it's kind of got to be in their blood. I come from French people; therefore, I like the culture that I was involved in very, very much. I'm trying to do this with my kids. They picked it up. They know the whole background, whole history, that I know. I think parents, the old people, you've got to talk to them. That stems back to every culture. You've got to be family oriented and like the old things and just keep the tradition going. That looks like the generation of people now, it looks like it's not going. It's going the opposite way.

Rasmussen: There's got to be a difference. I mean if I, I'm not a hunter, but if I was, and you gave me $150 and I went out and bought some duck call, there's going to be a difference in how I feel about that than the one that you would show me how to make myself. Even if they might be qualitatively the same, as sad as I might admit, there's going to be a difference because one, the tradition was passed on and became a part of my heritage, becoming a part of who I am and really who you are and who we are. If I just go buy it, there's got to be a disconnect there somewhere.

Bordelon: Yeah. There's no culture involved when doing something like that. You go walk into Belden's or Bass Pro, and they've got aisles and aisles of camouflage and duck calls. When I grew up, I had World War II hunting jackets. That's what. Didn't have camouflage jackets and coats -- my old daddy's jacket. My boys don't have all that with . . . . You hear the old hunting stories, and they just really sank in, just tried to be a part of that. You know, you go to those big fancy stores, and they've got. . . . It looks like now the big shots, the more a duck call costs, the more a gun costs, that's what they want. I do it for the culture reasons. I can blow my old cane call and use my old decoys. I don't have to kill it. I don't have to kill anything. I just enjoy the whole outing.

Gregory: Can you call without a call? [Some call just with cupped hands.]

Bordelon: No, sir. Not that way. [Laughter]

Brassieur: Does the duck recognize the difference?

Bordelon: No. I promise. [Laughter] You've got a good hole. What it takes is a good hole. You've got a good hole, the duck likes to go, they will make you look like you are a good caller.

Gregory: There are people that can call without. I've seen them do it. I never learned to do that. I never could do it.

Bordelon: I've seen several do a good job at it.

Gregory: With no duck call at all.

Bordelon: I went to the store one time. I was looking at duck calls. I had an old man walk up to me and say, "You know what the best calls they make?" I said, "What's that?" He said, "About fifty pounds of corn." [Laughter]

Gregory: It works for deer, too.

Bordelon: It works for everything.

Brassieur: Did they ever use live decoys in your area?

Bordelon: Yes, sir.

Brassieur: What would they do? Tie the duck up?

Bordelon: No. I've got some old friends. One of them is still living in his nineties. They used those little English callers. An English caller would hit about thirty or forty notes without catching a break while your flying mouth will hit about seven notes. He'd put a drake in the front and put the hen behind the blind where they couldn't see each other.

Brassieur: And they would talk.

Bordelon: That hen, little hen, especially ducks flying. He would call. English callers call all the time. He said he [Inaudible] about work. He had her trained. When he'd kill his ducks, he'd go, sometimes he'd just throw her out [of] the blind. He had one trained. She'd pass and get with the bunch of ducks and bring them down. He told me this a bunch of times. I don't know if it is true or not. He said when they'd hit water, the little hen would swim straight to his blind. She knew something. [Laughter] I don't know if that was true or not, but he's a pretty honest fellow.

Gregory: Did they tell you about the market hunt?

Bordelon: Yes, sir.

Gregory: Can you tell them a little bit about what they told you about that?

Bordelon: At the turn of the century, south Louisiana, there was no money or anything. They hired people. . . . They had organizations that hired people to market hunt. A case of shells was about $15.00 in the 1900s. The gunner got about $.25 for a pair of mallards. The man that contracted the gunner, he got $.50 like the French Market. They distributed that to Baton Rouge, Alexandria, all over the state. At $.25 a pair, that's like $12.00 a day the gunner got for about two months. They killed like 100 ducks a day. They had a quota to fill out. The most popular gun was the Winchester Model 97s. They had five shots, and that was the first repeating shotgun in that era besides the double barrel. In those days, ducks migrated, all of them migrated to the marsh. Now, they don't make it this far anymore. They stop all the way from [Illinois]. It's a money industry. There it goes again about money, leasing blinds and fields. People killed a 100 ducks a day with the quota at the turn of the century. There weren't as many people hunting then as now. Now they've got people everywhere you go.

Gregory: You'll see photographs of mounds of ducks, six, seven feet high. They'd kill them by the hundreds. At Catahoula Lake, they hunted at night. They'd crawl out of the marsh. The old people say, "We would shoot the feed." So when the ducks were making the feed call, they'd put their gun barrels over, not even see them, pull the trigger and kill may fifty, twenty-five ducks at a shot. Those ducks all went to the market. Some of them went to New Orleans. Some of them went to Memphis. Some of them went to St. Louis. Ice came with the railroads. When ice came, you could export fish. You could export game. It revolutionized the Delta. [Inaudible] Commercial ice changed the whole industry.

Brassieur: Fishing, too.

Gregory: Fishing especially. There really

was no commercial fishing much before commercial ice. The first ice came on the steamboats from the Great Lakes packed in sawdust. They'd dig a hole and put it down in sawdust. Sometimes fishermen would have to go in the wagon ten, fifteen, twenty miles to get ice. They'd load the wagons to take ice back. Ice got to be really plentiful. Every town in the Delta had an ice house. Ice houses were tied to the commercial fishing. The fish markets were always close to the ice houses. Judith, you know in Ferriday, Ward Luneau's fish market was up close to the ice house, up close to the railroad tracks. That was a big link across there. That's true of every Delta town, an ice house. It affected a lot of things, really complicated things.

Bordelon: In the old days, they used to pack them in big barrels with salt.

Gregory: Salt.

Bordelon: You know, they wouldn't clean those ducks in the marsh hunting days. All they'd do was gut them. Whenever they went buy ducks in the French market, they wanted to see the colors. They wanted to see the ducks, how pretty they were and what kind they were mostly.

Gregory: That's an old rule with buying commercial fish, too. You don't buy a catfish with his tail cut off. Quality blue cats had a forked tail. Mud cats don't. They have a different taste, a different quality of fish. The fishermen know not to buy one with his tail cut. You guys look in the market at all these pond fish you buy now and see if any of them are packaged with tails still attached.

Frantom: It's like don't buy coon with no feet. It might be a cat. [Laughter]

Rasmussen: Susan, you were the regional folklorist for many years for a good portion of North Louisiana. What perspective has that given you of the Delta?

Roach: Would like me to give my presentation?

Rasmussen: If you'd like, sure. Also, if you could also talk about maybe ideas for further research, research that could be done in the future.

Roach: I can do that. I have some pictures. I'm not doing a real PowerPoint as General [Stanley] McChrystal said in a *New York Times* article. The army officers had all these PowerPoints they were showing to the army. He said if they understood the PowerPoints, they would have finished the war. Can you hear me?

I talked with Pete a couple of days ago, and he was telling me what I was going to do. I said, "Oh my God. That's not really what I thought I was going to do. What people are doing a presentation?" "Joyce is doing a PowerPoint." "Gosh, I really need to do a PowerPoint." I don't like PowerPoints. I like slide shows, so this is really a slide show. I wanted to sort of go over, talking about hills – this is the hill country where I'm from. We have swamps. We have man-made lakes and real lakes. We have lots of creeks and bayous. We also come over to Monroe and Ouachita River and so forth. Really, I wanted to talk to you about my involvement in not only north central Louisiana folklife, but also in Delta folklife as Pete taught me the Delta. This is a map. You can't see; I apologize. It's too small here. He did a beautiful map of what he called our upper Delta parishes. I first saw this when I was working with Pete, which led me to want to do research in this area, that and incentive from the state folklife program. They gave us a grant to do some work, and they asked me to be the folklorist in the summers to go and

kind of head some research there.

The parishes we were considering were these: the hill parishes are north central Louisiana – Lincoln, Jackson, Claiborne, Union, and Webster. A couple of those, Claiborne and Webster, are not on the map we're using for this conference really. The research projects that I was involved with are the central Louisiana folklife project 1983-84 and the Delta Folklife project [1990-94]. For those of you who are not familiar with all that research, I wanted to let you know sort of the timeline for that.

Phase 1, as we called it, was really worked on by Pete, and he had done all of that preliminary work. He had publications about the fishermen and so forth. I went out in mostly upper Lake Providence area and then got Ben Sandmel to do some blues work. We did a little bit more, and finally did a summary of everything. I went over to the Northwestern State University Folklife Center Archives and went through all of their material in 1994, I guess it was, and surveyed everything they had that could fit into that upper Delta area. I compiled a list of all of that. It wasn't in a specific database at that time. It was in Microsoft Word files, and we still have that. There were, literally, all of these people in all of this preliminary research that we have tapes on, survey forms on, photographs of – those are not digital format. Those are all hard copies; most have not been transcribed; we're lucky to have a tape index.

In Phase 2, that really grew into something more extensive. I'll tell you more about that a little later. I'll tell you about another project. There was also another project that was going on that interviewed a lot of people in a lot of parishes called the Louisiana Folklife Storytelling Project. That was a big addition to the research. Ellen Blue did a lot of work in the area for that. I also did some work with Lincoln Parish storyteller/ painter Sarah Albritton. I started working with the Louisiana Folklife Program in December '98 and continued on doing various research there, including a music gathering project where I interviewed musicians from all over the north central and Delta areas. My territory covered both of those areas. We had a major research project with the first female judge in Louisiana, Judge Alwine Ragland. Some of you knew Judge Ragland. Betty Joe Harris helped to do some of the research with me. Judge Ragland died not too long ago. We have a huge composite of oral history of her experiences in the Tallulah area. She knew so much about the people there, and the stories she told were fascinating.

I also worked with the Louisiana Quilt Documentation Project, part of my research with the Folklife Program. The quilters in the Delta are prolific. We have lots of sites that we've documented quilts in across the Delta parishes. Also, what was the New Populations project. That was the state Folklife project. We started to look at some of the immigrant communities in the Delta. We really just started, so it's really just the tip of the iceberg. Also working with the Great Depression project put on by the Shreveport Regional Arts Council and the Northeast Louisiana Arts Council in Monroe. We interviewed two elders from each of those parishes. I didn't do all the interviews. I did some, but there were several other people who helped, and I supervised that. So we have all of that material in our library as well.

Back to the Delta Field School. We had a number of people who did research in that joining the team that we already had including Dr. Hatley who should have been on this list. He wasn't really a field school student. He was just out there doing some research out in the Delta. At any rate, these were the researchers. [Delta Field School Student Researchers: Mary Bert Arnold, Jonesville; Shirley Ayatey, Grambling; Mary Ann Benard, Lafayette; Madelyn Boudreaux, Natchitoches; Gayle T. Brown, Lake Provi-

dence; Marilyn Campbell, Monterey; Eugene (Gene) Cloninger, Rayville; John L. Doughty, Natchitoches; Marcy Frantom, Natchitoches; Sylvia Frantom, Shreveport; Betty Jo Harris, Monroe; Joy Marshall, Monroe; Stephanie Pierrotti, Natchitoches; Annie Staten, Monroe.] You can see that Marcy Frantom was part of the team and did some wonderful research. The topics that they did are too vast to go over. Each person did three to five, maybe more, interviews. I know Annie Statton did a ton of interviews. At any rate, this resulted in a lot of presentation. We hoped we were getting our work out there. A lot of people felt like it didn't get out, but a lot of it has gotten out.

We did a folklife exhibit called "Folklife in the Creole State" at the Masur Museum in 1996 [in Monroe]. I picked photographs from all of the Delta Field School and other research, and that went into the exhibit. It was supposed to be a touring exhibit. I'm trying to get the Masur Museum to get it out and see if it's ready to tour still. It was a black and white exhibition with interpretive panels developed for that. Monroe was hosting the Louisiana Folklife Festival for about ten years. Last year it was going to be held—2005, but it was cancelled when Katrina hit and we did not have enough hotels accommodations for the artists. But at any rate, a lot of the Delta participants were presented in that festival over its ten years.

Some of the participants were featured in the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. The Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife in 1997 featured Delta traditions. I told you earlier about how the program book featured Lake Providence on the cover. The Smithsonian Festival is on the National Mall. The map that they [the Smithsonian Festival] used—I thought that you might want to look at that. It's pretty much the same parishes right here that we considered in the Upper Delta. They did go all the way down and include the mouth of the Mississippi. When I think "Delta," it's because of all the documentation from Pete; I don't want to go there because I don't want to take too long. I know we don't have too long until this is over. In the day I had to think about all of this to prepare for this presentation, I was at home and I didn't have a lot pictures in my laptop, and I didn't want to have to go to the office to get anymore. I thought, let's look at some of the people and genres that we did kind of cover in the Delta. I also included some of the hill country people because Pete said to talk about the hills. I put some of that in. These are kind of like place holders, and some are representative. They don't even include some of the stars that we uncovered, in our research. Ike Hamilton, the guy in the center is certainly a star. He was one of the great storytellers and verbal arts people that we documented. He's talking here with the famous Boo Ledoux, an old cowboy from the Cajun prairies. Ray, you remember him well.

Brassieur: From Eunice.

Roach: They are with Bill Bailey from Jonesboro down in Jackson, up in Jackson Parish. They were telling stories at the state Folklife Festival in '92. So that was right after Phase 1 before we even started Phase 2. The painter that I worked with, Sarah Albritton here tells stories of North Central Louisiana and showed her paintings at a number of festivals and exhibits. I want you to think too about customs and beliefs because this was one of the main areas that I was totally taken with. We will look at some of these like the Easter Rock in Winnsboro. Pete told me Easter Rock was gone, but fortunately, Annie Staten found it. Annie and I went that night in 1993 to the Original True Light Baptist Church with Hattie Addison; she is second behind the banner leader there, and she introduced me to Easter Rock. I just wish you would have heard the music in that church. I felt the floor vibrate with the percussion of

people's feet. I just thought I'd gone to heaven or something. It was everything Pete had talked about a thousand percent more. There's Hattie lighting the candles as she prepares the tables for the Easter Rock. We went back in subsequent years and documented it again. You can see the banner is different this year. Of course, that formative experience for me in 1989 I believe it was, when I was there on the banks of Lake Providence at an outdoor baptism which I had heard about my whole life from people in the hill parishes. It had pretty much died out there, but there it was still alive in Lake Providence. Then, low and behold, it turns up again in '96 on the Ouachita River. Those churches in Monroe had told me that they go back to the river called the "Old Burying Ground" periodically just to renew their relationship with the river and that experience there. I read in the paper just the other day that some of the Anglo churches are going to the Ouachita River to do a group baptism. So the traditions change. Other groups take them up. They go back even though that Old Burying Ground right there where those, I believe those old storage silos are not there anymore. They just took them all down in Monroe. It's right in back of the Old Warehouse in Monroe. Lake Providence is still doing their baptism, last summer I went and there it is. People say that it's dying out, but there was about forty people that got baptized that day. A bunch of the churches in Lake Providence are doing that. It was such a dramatic event. It's so beautiful. The preaching and the songs were just exquisite. Other types of events that are still happening are homecomings like at the Tulip Methodist Church in north central Louisiana, where they used to have under the trees but now they have a pavilion or in an air conditioned building. This is in May.

Speaking of customs, people are still growing their peas if they can. A lot of the smaller subsistence farmers are gone, such as Mr. Clonie Otwell. A lot of his traditions probably passed on too. A few people still know how to plant by the signs. Sarah Albritton knows about that. She hasn't got much but a little garden in her yard. People are still carrying on these foodways. Even though they don't grow their own vegetables, they're going forth. The farm crafts, as far as blacksmithing, making your own basic tools, I can't find anybody doing that. They're horseshoeing, making decorative ironworks, and that sort of thing. White oak basketry, I'm afraid, is very endangered. People like Sidney Reed from Claiborne Parish passed on. He taught that craft to one other man in Webster Parish, an Anglo basket maker who has not performed in public, but he knows how to make beautiful baskets. People are still gathering mayhaws in the backwater like Michael Greenfield; he was, by the way, working with Phil Robertson, a famous duck call maker. We talked about duck calls earlier. That was part of that crew gathering mayhaws in the backwater. People are still growing their peas. Maybe a few you can find in the shells in the farmers market or from the farmer directly if you're lucky enough to know one. Most people have them shelled in these electric pea shellers, and buy them already packaged up at the farmer's market. They still take them home and freeze them or cook them in the traditional way. Most of the food preservation like smoking hams, I'm afraid that's going out; a few commercial people are doing their smoking; I don't see a lot of the old smokehouses left. The gourd art has become decorative gourds; people are buying gourds at farmers markets and going home to carve them and decorate them with pine straw and things like that. I don't see clean-swept yards anymore, and I don't really see that people like Ms. Annie Rene Harris who made those yard brooms. The crafting of cornshuck hats made by Leola Simmons in Union Parish, has probably disappeared with the passing of Mrs. Sim-

mons. Quilting, as I said, is very hardy. People like Nova Mercer, who quilted on a frame—those are being replaced by people who are getting their quilting done on quilting machines. A lot of these quilters have these giant machines that they drive like cars. They make those quilts a lot faster. We're beginning to see more communal kind of quilts or maybe quilts made by individuals that are being used for fund-raising purposes such as this quilt being used to raise money for organizations, such as this quilt made for the Dubach Restoration and Beautification Organization. The tatting, I'm afraid, is going fast. There are few older women who still may know how to tat, but it's a disappearing craft. Net making, I should let Pete tell us about how hardy it is. Those of you who knew Vernie Gibson, who would be here today if he were still alive, was one of the best net makers and best talkers around, from the Catahoula Lake.

Gregory: Those are Vernie's nets over there on the table.

Roach: Okay, this is Vernie being presented in 1985 at the Festival of American Folklife, where the whole state of Louisiana was featured.

Gregory: That's all gone commercial. Net-making now, most fishnets are made by a company in Jonesville.

Roach: Champlin's?

Gregory: Yeah, Champlin's. They're changing out from fish nets to baseball catching nets. They make far more baseball nets than they make fish nets. It's almost again like Vernie making nets, making his own with his tools and stuff. It's almost a lost art in some places.

Roach: One of our Delta researchers did interview someone from the Champlin Company. [Back to slide presentation] Here's Howard Henry with hoop nets; I think we've got Vernie's hoop nets over there you can look at. George Allen, a Jena Choctaw, and deer hide tanning was also documented; I think he was in the first phase. The folk architecture is really in North Central Louisiana, more in the case of the dogtrot. That's a big area of research of mine. The Autrey House is our oldest house, supposedly, in Lincoln Parish, and it has been restored. People pretty much stopped living in traditional dogtrots. If they do, they've closed them in so much, and you might not recognize it as a dogtrot. They have been considered folk icons that need to be preserved. Dubach community wanted a dogtrot to be their welcome center and they had me locate a dogtrot for them to move in. It's not done yet, it's still under restoration. They had it set up enough so that they had picking on the porch for their Chicken festival last year. They're doing that again on September 25th if you are interested when they will have some of the bluegrass pickers come and jam. The bungalow houses which were typical of the 1920s are fast going away. You hardly ever see them unless they're falling down. The pyramid houses are going fast, too. The plantation churches in the Delta, which is another big folk architecture type—a lot of them are not being used but maybe once a month or for special occasions, such as the Original True Light Baptist Church. They may meet once a month for services or when people have homecoming and things. There are a lot of older churches like that also in the hill parishes, where they just come back for homecomings. People are working hard to try to maintain them. Some of them have just been taken down and replaced with brick churches. Mrs. Martha Daniels in Clayton at the Springfield Baptist Church, who was one of the organizers of Easter Rock there, told me

that she didn't think they were going to be able to because they needed a wooden floor, so I think maybe the loss of Easter Rock partially can be blamed on the new slab brick churches. Our grave houses, which Marcy has done wonderful work on—I think those too are fast disappearing on the landscape. This one's about two miles from Louisiana Tech.

Frantom: There's a website that's called Ghost Walkers. John Waggoner is going all over the southeast documenting grave houses. There are some wonderful photos on that website. I don't know how many he's got now, but it's just incredible if anybody's interested in that.

Roach: On a tour in the Leesville area last year, we saw that huge cemetery.

Frantom: Pine Grove? What do they call it? Talbert Cemetery.

Roach: It's called Talbot Cemetery.

Gregory: Talbot Cemetery in Sugartown.

Roach: The most grave houses I've ever seen in one place, but that area doesn't fall quite in our Delta definition.

Gregory: Let the Parks Service help us out.

Roach: I guess the martin houses will be here as long as we have mosquitoes. I have not seen as many of those around. In the folk toys, they're few and far between as far as I have observed in the Delta. We have some really neat toymakers documented in the storytelling project. Walking stick carving, we talked about that earlier. David Allen has taught a few people, but I'm wondering how hardy whittling is; no one seems to whittle much anymore. Fred Beavers had an [Louisiana Division of the Arts Folklife] apprenticeship with Ben Robinson to learn to build fiddles and do fiddle repair and Ben has turned out to be a pretty good person at doing that and has learned fiddling along the way.

I wanted to talk a little bit about folk musicians, just briefly about old time country music. Some of our old time fiddlers like Tex Grimsley have passed on, but there are a lot of fiddlers still left that are doing old-time, and a lot of them do bluegrass and old time, as far as I can tell from Fred Beavers who plays both, along with western swing as well. Homer Bailes is really an immigrant from West Virginia, I believe, who is now in Ruston, is actually still playing some old time music, jams with people and is still playing gospel music.

Turner: We have one playing with us today. Buzz Salard.

Roach: You were talking about that religious thing. People like Homer play both and don't see any problem with it, with the fiddling or with the religion. . . .

Frantom: Well, that's good.

Roach: I think [Inaudible].

Frantom: Right.

Roach: He'll play gospel and turn around and play an old time fiddle song. The Cox Family supposedly noted as bluegrass, but actually they call themselves old country recently, in 2004 accepted a state award for lifetime achievement in the arts at the bluegrass club meeting in the Arcadia Depot. They're still going pretty strong. They lost Ms. Marie [Willard Cox's wife] last year; it was a sad year, but they're still playing. The Fiddle Festival, the Louisiana State Fiddle Championship, which I discovered in Boyce

in the late seventies has now moved from Boyce to Marthaville and gone to the Natchitoches Folk Festival. Last year's, this year's winner Jason Saucer is from West Monroe, and the runners up are from the Delta and hill parishes, so the Delta is still strong in fiddling. We have people like Laymon Godwin, who plays old time country musician, new country, teaching dobro on an apprenticeship and also playing pedal steel.

Frantom: The dobro resonator guitar he's playing, too, was made by Floyd Jasper. Floyd is from around Greenwood near Shreveport.

Roach: Right. Right, that's somebody I don't think we've ever interviewed. Somebody needs to go interview him. That's future research. We've got a favorite Delta blues duo, just about north of where Hezekiah's from, Po' Henry and Tookie. They were folk artists of the year a couple of years ago. I just had to mention Mitchell Sheldon. He was one of my favorite blues musicians, actually from Haynesville, near Homer. He's the one that told me, "God likes any kind of music. You can play gospel one song, and the next song could be low-down, dirty blues." He just said, "God loves any kind of music." Rhythm and blues—that tradition, Judge McGee's still around but Charlie Lewis died; he's on the keyboard. I don't see a really strong tradition of rhythm and blues in the African American community right now. I think Hezekiah's right, we really need to get those kids involved and I hope we can do that. We have a lot of work done by Annie Staten with shape note quartet and a capella singing. Also we did a lot of work with Penola Caesar; I didn't have a photo of her handy. She was doing a lot of the long and short meter hymns, the Dr. Watts hymns, and teaching workshops. She also had an apprenticeship with the state Folklife Program to teach Sean Kelly some of these traditions. Sadly, we lost her a couple of years ago. We talked about Hezekiah already but that was some of the first research done in the Delta that we have. Later, another blues and rockabilly musician, from West Monroe of all places, Kenny Bill Stinson, is a fantastic Jerry Lee Lewis wannabe. Some people say he out performs Jerry Lee. There are a number people like that still in the Delta although I don't see the younger generation keeping it up.

We do have some immigrant cultures in the area I mentioned. The Chinese in Ferriday have been a big group. There's a new immigrant who moved into Ferriday, Qin Lin the China Wok restaurant, who is continuing on not only Chinese cooking, but also Chinese paper folding crafts. (My photographs of immigrant communities seem to have disappeared from the Powerpoint.) We've done a lot of work in the Mexican American community in Union Parish for the most part. There have been quite a few traditions documented there from home altars to *quinceañeras* and other kinds of crafts like *piñata* making as well.

I wanted to sort of just think about things that have gone away like the yard art at Campti; you drive by there now, and it's all grown over, and its maker has died, and I wanted us to think about some of the great ones who have passed; this is just a list of ten, and it's not complete but these are some people, and some of them are not represented in photos. I just wanted to think about them again: Penola Caesar, Brownie Ford from Hebert in Caldwell Parish; Vernie Gibson, Caldwell Parish; Rosie Jackson, Jackson Parish (who represents several quilters whom we've lost. She was a spectacular African American strip quiltmaker.); Colonel Ike Hamilton, the auctioneer, Ouachita Parish; Judge Alwine Ragland, Madison Parish; Azzie Roland, Union Parish basket maker; Leola Simmons, Union Parish, cornshuck hat maker; Captain Oren Russell, East Carroll

Parish riverboat captain with an incredible knowledge of the Mississippi River; Whitey Shockley, East Carroll Parish Mississippi River fisherman. Fortunately, both Whitey Shockley and Capt. Russell were at Smithsonian Festival in 1997. Capt. Russell was 92 at the time and sharp as a tack, and they told so many stories on one stage, and those were all recorded. Those were duplicated by the Smithsonian, and they, too, are in our archive. They are virtually uncataloged; the tapes are organized according to stage and artist; the tapes have a rough log. Just a wealth of stories that probably were never captured anywhere else. I think we might want to think about Dewey Balfa's admonition as we think about continuity and change in the Delta: "A culture must be preserved one generation at a time."

Rasmussen: We need to get on with our informance, but I wanted to open it up for a few minutes of questions.

Frantom: Can I ask a question?

Rasmussen: Yes.

Frantom: I wanted to ask Susan: What do you think we should do as far as making the research that's already been done on Delta more useable and more available to folks?

Roach: That might best be answered by Pete, too, considering I'm a cohort.

Gregory: I didn't hear it.

Roach: What do we need to do to make this material more accessible?

Frantom: What's already been done? It sounds like there's just so much that's been done, but it's maybe not in a form that's accessible.

Gregory: I think it's often a problem. What I hear from the communities often is "where is all this stuff?" which is why I kind of encouraged Susan to talk about some of this stuff we have collected. People say, "Where is this stuff? How do I get this stuff? How do we get it back?" How could Judith get some of this stuff back that's been done on Ferriday? I really don't know.

Roach: We've done some little things to get some of it back. We put all of the local kind of musicians in a little mini exhibit to go with her museum because we thought they've got all of these big stars in there, but we don't have Po' Henry and Tookie. We don't have the local, regional musicians presented in their own little community museum. I think that's one way. If we could do more exhibitions. Pete always worked through the book. One of the things I didn't tell you is that Pete had a wonderful bunch of essays. He gave them to me on big yellow sheets like this. They were handwritten in his beautiful, methodical handwriting. We had them all typed up. They've been through about—they were on 5¼" disks, and they were on 3 ½" floppies. Now, we've finally got them in the computers. I gave them to him on a CD again. We keep updating. We haven't updated them, but we've updated the media. They're still being passed on. They're beautiful essays on things like gigging, nightclubs in the Delta. They're very much an overview. I think of Pete as having this just global view of the Delta up there. Here I am with obvious little bitty pieces of information. In the archive there at Northwestern, there are all these little tapes and all these things that we probably need to get people in there and get them transcribed. I tried to get them some categorization like what do we have in genres and what we have here and there.

Gregory: One of the problems, Marcy, I

think, is something we did wrong as anthropologists and folklorists is that we preserved the stuff in the archives, we preserved this stuff in books, we preserved this stuff in the centers, and we didn't give it back to the people we got it from. If we tried now, starting with the Park Service projects we've done here on Cane River. We've tried to do them in partnership with people from the community. I worked with Joey Moran on the Cane River project. The Creole Center here became a funnel for giving back that information to the people we got it from. In that project, we've already lost most of the older informants. Their kids have seen the films. Their kids have heard the tapes. There's somebody in the families that began to feed it back into the community. We couldn't do that with the whole Delta.

Roach: There weren't groups there to give it to. I did things like I would give people back copies of their tapes which they may or may not have had a cassette recorder to play it on. Now, they're obsolete anyway. Or I gave them photographs as I could, but there weren't any overarching culture groups, so to speak.

Gregory: No, there are no organizations that you can feed it through. When the Creoles started the Creole Heritage Center, that was one of the first things, a sort of a grass roots thing, where they were trying to get a place to sort of . . . well, we're talking about a portal for database stuff. The Creole Center is kind of a portal where you can put a lot of different kinds of information and feed it out to a lot of different communities, and families, and whatever. We didn't have that in the Delta. Don't have it still in the Delta. It's kind of a pretty important thing to do to figure out how to get the information back to people. We don't know if they want it or not. If they do want it, and they ask for it, sometimes it's not ours to give back.

Frantom: I was looking at the Delta Initiative website. It says on site that it hasn't been updated since 2001. Now I know that we've got more than a page or two that could be added just in materials collected during the Field School that Susan summarized.

Roach: Now there is something else, too. The Cotton Museum up in Lake Providence, we did some work with them to give back some of the Lake Providence documentation and help with some interpretive information there. At least some of Lake Providence's stuff got back to Lake Providence.

Gregory: Ferriday tried. Ferriday had two festivals of their own. They kind of grew out of the fieldwork up here. We used those festivals to do fieldwork, as well. Those worked until the town ran out of energy. We had trouble funding those festivals. We had no money to do that. That presented a wonderful cross section of the Delta stuff. We did it in Ferriday on purpose because of the music groups and because we had so many different representative people of the Delta there. Other towns didn't follow. I thought everybody'd follow suit and have their own folk festival of their own, traditional festival. That one lasted two years, and then it kind of died. People just wore out trying to do it. It took an awful lot out of the community to put it together – not to mention an awful lot out of Northwestern, out of Susan and other people. I think Maida, you're too young to remember those. Did you help us with the Ferriday festival? Yeah. Maida had just begun to come along here. We worked very hard with everybody over there. Everybody worked really hard on it. They documented a lot of stuff that they kept.

Roach: I have some copies of some of that stuff because we were worried that sometimes they were in somebody's closet or something.

Gregory: Some of it is so lost I can't find it.

Roach: I have a lot. That's all cataloged in the list of what we have. There are some tapes I got that were supposedly video tapes of such and such performances, but there was nothing on the tape. We copied everything they gave us and took it back to Ferriday.

Gregory: It's still there.

Roach: There's stuff there. Somebody needs to start sitting down and looking at it, I think.

Frantom: I noticed in working with the Louisiana Federal Writers Project material that there always seems to be a problem in presenting a collection as to whether you want to be totally inclusive or whether one thing can stand for many examples of that type.

Roach: That's always a problem.

Frantom: How to make that determination.

Roach: If you put it online, say that might be one thing to do is. . . . That's the way to really make it available, not so much to the older folks.

Frantom: You could hypertext to individual details.

Roach: Now that we have the ability to digitize tapes and we can put all the tapes online. . . . Of course, that's hours and hours and hours. I digitized about fifty or seventy-five tapes last summer for the Great Depression project. I spent about three weeks of my life doing nothing but that. It takes time.

Gregory: There is always somebody who feels that this information is so private, so personal, that if you tried digitizing it, I think it offends people.

Roach: We do have releases for the most part.

Gregory: Yeah, we do.

Roach: On things. If we don't, then you couldn't. When we got those releases, here's another issue. There was no Internet. Whether or not that would be. . . . It said for publications. If you want to read that in the broadest sense, then maybe it would be OK. Those are other issues we would have to deal with.

Question: Digitization generally means a lot of things from the point of moving from whatever analog system existed whether it was writing on a piece of paper, or reel-to-reel, or cassette to digital audio format. Generally that means also making it accessible online. Certainly there could be reasons why some things couldn't be completely open and accessible, especially if there are political issues involved. [Inaudible] if you don't digitize it to the point of bringing it from analog cassette. You're talking about three weeks in your summer, but how much research was included? When those tapes start falling apart, it's not just that people spent six months or a year or two years doing additional, it's that that stuff will never be happening again. It's gone once that tape starts disintegrating.

Roach: The tapes had been copied over the years so the ones that are getting to that point. I think that the shelf life in good storage is supposed to be fifteen years on a cassette, but I have some that are older than that that are hopefully still in good shape, my own personal stuff.

Gregory: It depends on how much happens,

what kind of care you take of them, how often they're played, in terms of the analog tapes. Some of them will last longer than you think. But we don't really know. The thing that bothers me, Robert, is we don't know much about the shelf life of digital records, either. We think we know. We think they're better than analog tapes. I'm sort of like John Paul was about his baskets yesterday. I'm never going to throw my analog tapes away as soon as you guys digitize them for me. I'm just not going to do that because I really don't know.

Any other questions? Y'all have been really patient.

Question: Any archivist can save multiple copies [Inaudible]. Digitization eliminates that. It varies. It isn't done overnight [Inaudible]. The problem with having single copies [Inaudible]. I don't think it's going to be all that hard, but I do think it's something to consider. [Inaudible] something that I'm personally concerned about whenever I go to different archives and I try to access tapes, they're inaccessible because they're thoroughly [Inaudible]. I did have a question. I have a question for Dale. [Inaudible] it seems like all of these all of the things [Inaudible] are talking about from music to making duck calls and duck decoys, we're talking about things getting [Inaudible] under different political economies. The Negro spiritual is something that grew under the slave economy. Blues is something that grew under sharecropping and lumbering economy. Rock and R&B grew under the political economy of [Inaudible]. To me, when you're talking about any of these things, cultural economy of survival of these things depends on one or two of those things which is either artisanship, you produce something that's empirically better than the standardized, sort of plastic version of something. You're carving the better call than the plastic call or your call has a certain meaning to you and people in your community that that plastic call can never have. My question is what is the meaning you get from your crafts, from making decoys, from making calls? What does it mean to you?

Bordelon: It's hard to explain. When I work, I build dugout boats. I pick a beautiful day in the Fall or the Spring when it's sixty-degree weather. I gather under a big tree, a big oak tree at home. I'll just chop all day. I can just picture myself a hundred years ago. It gives my heart fulfillment. It makes me happy. I can't explain. It makes me see how they did it years ago, and it gives me just the pleasure of doing it. If I go hunting with my decoys and my duck calls, and I power my old pirogue, I can power all over the lake all day long and just get excitement out of this world.

I'm doing something like they did, and it's keeping the culture going. I could go home, and the wife could fuss at me, I'm just as happy as can be. It's something I enjoy doing. Some people like going to bars and drinking. Some people get others. That's my kick. I get a big pleasure out of it. Some people think I'm crazy chopping on a piece of wood all day. Some people appreciate it. It gives me a lot of, I don't know. I've got books to read stories about how the old people did and see their pictures. They live in these old shacks. That's all they had. They didn't have any plastic boats. They had to make out of necessity. They had to use what the land provided them and the tools the blacksmiths made. If they wanted to go duck hunting, they had to make their own boat. You couldn't go and buy your plastic decoys in 1900. You had to make your own decoys. In South Louisiana at the turn of the century, people made decoys like those wind decoys to sell. They were going for about $1.00 a duck. All the people that lived in this little village in the marsh made their own decoy [Inaudible] market hunt and made the extra

decoy to sell in New Orleans at the French Market. They'd get a $1.00 a piece for one. That was good money in those days. A dug-out boat in 1930, it cost you about $35.00 to make. Two weeks, it took about 100 hours, two weeks steady work to make a boat. It was $35.00. In 1900, it was about $5.00 to $10.00. That's what they sold for. Right now, that's $2,500.00 to make a boat. A lot of people, the old people made it to sell just for an income. Everything was about an income even back then – the decoy making, the market hunters. That's the only thing they had to use. They used cypress root which was available in the swamp. They did use whatever they could get their hands on and the tools they had to make a living. That's why I like to keep the art going.

Gregory: There's always been this thing that you use what you've got. One of the things that replaced the working decoys, say in Catahoula Lake, where people made hundreds of them, is they use plastic milk containers and Coke bottles. Plastic Coke bottles became the duck decoys. You couldn't have made them out of cypress anymore. They didn't have the trees. Suddenly somebody's using his head watching the ducks. They're making them out of things you'd never even think about making them out of. Of course, when the lake went down, the woods were full of empty milk bottles, none of which biodegraded ever, whereas all of these beautiful, old wooden decoys that we remember people chopping out were biodegraded back to Mother Earth.

Bordelon: Robert, I go. . . . I'm sorry.

Gregory: Go ahead.

Bordelon: I'll go and we go to Three Rivers. I'll go down the Mississippi River, Catahoula. I'll take a day, and I'll just go all over the swamp. I'm not going to buy a piece of wood. I do it like they did it. If I could find a nice piece of cypress root, man, that's like I'm the happiest man in the world. I'll take that home and see if I'm going to make a mallard or a teal. That's how they did it. I just go looking for it; I bring my boys with me. Going as a family and doing it, it's just [Inaudible] as [Inaudible] or hunting over it or killing ducks over it. It's the whole process of doing it. When you do put the decoys out and hunt over it, and especially watch a bunch of ducks land in it, you know you've really done something. That's the enjoyment I get out of it.

Roach: I think a lot of the artists feel the same way. A lot of them tell me it's a gift. They had to use it. It's just that creative expression. Like ask Marcy why does she play? Or Max? Why do they play? Why do you play music?

Frantom: It's just satisfying to do it. When I started playing with these guys, I really didn't know how much fun it was. I mean, you can play for eight hours, ten hours. You're not tired. You don't think about anything. It's also that sense of fitting in somewhere that you are doing something that is part of the great continuum of creativity. I don't know.

Rasmussen: Thank you so much everyone.

Picking and Singing

Max Turner, Marcy Frantom, and Friends

L-R: Marcy Frantom, Max Turner, Floyd Breedlove, and Buzz Salard

Country Music: The Delta "Rim"

Fiddles and fiddlers, guitars, bass fiddles, and always singers mark the Anglo-Saxon based music of the Delta margins and of the "ridges" like Maçon Ridge and Crowley's Ridge that offer the higher ground in the flood plain of the Mississippi.

Max, Marcy, and Friends (Max Turner, Marcy Frantom, Buzz Salard, and Floyd Breedlove) played this informance so the continuum from the older house dance traditions to modern Bluegrass could be heard and discussed.

This music, once identified as "poor people's music" now is played by whole new generations, including one that began to leave the Delta and innovate new sounds, like Rockabilly, in the 1940s and 1950s and whose children are doing cross-over country. The transition from house dances and porches to honky tonks and music halls in Nashville, Shreveport, and Austin has modified the roots, but this remains the music of a large portion of the Delta heartlands.

SESSION V

Session V – Some New Populations

Moderators: Maida Owens, Dr. Shane Rasmussen
Participants: Pinki Diwan, Irma Rodriguez, Dr. Chandan Sharma, Martha Walker

L-R: Dr. Shane Rasmussen, Maida Owens, Dr. Chandan Sharma, Pinki Diwan, Irma Rodriguez, and Martha Walker

The following initial paragraphs include information provided by Maida Owens about the New Populations Project:

The New Populations Project is an initiative of the Louisiana Division of the Arts Folklife Program to reach out to our state's immigrant and refugee communities. The goal is to address an underserved sector within the cultural economy and provide an opportunity to engage these communities in the identification and documentation of their traditional culture and art forms.

Louisiana is home to significant numbers of people from Vietnam, Honduras, Mexico, Cuba, India, China, Taiwan, Palestine, and the Middle East, the Philippines, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Korea, El Salvador, Japan, Columbia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Laos, and Thailand. In addition, there are transnational cultural groups, such as the Garifuna and Mayans here. The priority is on the larger, more concentrated communities with long-term residence in Louisiana that include foreign-born members.

Dun Loc Catholic Youth Group. Photo: Maida Owens

This project asks communities and individuals how they maintain their home culture here in Louisiana. We ask: Do you make crafts, music, or foods that are traditional in your culture? Do you celebrate holidays that are important to your culture? Do you work at traditional occupations?

Our strategy in the first phase of this project was to reach out to these communities by documenting their traditions. Generally, documentation focused on folk traditions rather than classical or popular art forms, although we recognize that some classical or popular art forms take on new meanings in a diaspora setting. Fieldworkers documented community traditions, art forms, and events and then provided essays and photographs that are posted on the Folklife in Louisiana website (www.louisianafolklife.org/newpopulations/). Fieldworkers also submitted field reports on their findings that include lists of tradition-bearers and artists, professional artists, organizations, and suggestions for programming. The slides illustrate the diverse immigrant communities and traditions currently found in the state.

In 2010, the Louisiana Division of the Arts (LDOA) offered the Open Doors Mentoring Program as a pilot to immigrant or-

ganizations in three Regional Development Agency regions: Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Lafayette. The goal was to introduce three immigrant organizations to the arts network and teach them about grant writing so that they could then be competitive in the Decentralized Arts Fund grants program. The Program consisted of grants to three organizations, mentoring workshops, and individual consultations with LDOA staff and CDCs. The program continues in 2011 with additional community groups being supported. The program is funded through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Shane Rasmussen: Hello, and welcome to the final session of the 2010 Delta Symposium funded by the National Park Service. I just want to welcome everyone this morning. Happy you're here. I'm Dr. Shane Rasmussen. This is Maida Owens, and she and I will be co-moderating this session. I just want to begin. I'm wondering if we can have everyone introduce themselves just briefly to our audience so everyone knows who everyone is. I know you've been talking and mingling so well, anyway. Unfortunately, those conversations were not on tape. If you can just introduce yourselves briefly, that would be great. Maida, do you want to start?

Maida Owens: OK. I'm Maida Owens. I'm with the Louisiana Folklife Program which is in the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. I've been there for about twenty-four years. My latest project is called New Populations. That's what I'll be sharing about today.

Chandan Sharma: I'm Chandan Sharma. I'm a retired pediatrician, practiced for several years in Marksville, Louisiana and Baton Rouge. Now I volunteer with Sharing Shores, an Indian women's association as well as Cajun Clickers, a computer club in town. Help them, that's what I do.

Pinki Diwan: My name is Pinki Diwan. I came from India about thirty-five years ago to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, made it home. I grew up with a feeling that we have to give back to community. To do that, we all started an Indian organization called Sharing Shores, which helps the domestic violence, to stop domestic violence. We did a cookbook which later on Chandan is going to talk. It's in the front on a table in the room. Our group is dedicated to help the community and give back to the community. I, personally, work at LSU in the LSU Foundation. My background is in fund raising and research. I'll be happy to talk or give any views on that if anyone has any questions on that, too.

Irma Rodriguez: My name is Irma Rodriguez. I used to live here in Natchitoches, but I moved to Forest Hill, Louisiana in 2004. I own a little Mexican restaurant there. It's a Hispanic community, mainly, out there. I do a lot of translating for people. I help people. I don't work for anybody. I'm self-employed.

Martha Walker: Good morning. My name is Martha Walker. I'm a retired ESL teacher. I've worked for the last ten years here in Natchitoches Parish helping the Hispanic children in their classes.

Rasmussen: Thank you so much. I also wanted to add before we really get rolling that if folks in the audience have questions, there's no need to hold them until the end. If we can make this a conversation, that's all that matters. Please, if you have questions, feel free. I wanted to start today talking just for a brief. . . . Actually, there are several people on this panel that have really spent a lot of their time with foods and how those

foods exemplify the sense of their community. If you could talk about. . . . Chandan, would you like to start? Why did you assemble this cookbook, *Sharing Shores*? Why a cookbook? Why not some other fund-raising activity?

Sharma: One of the things is that food is central to people's lives. They want to hand down the recipes. People remember what they did, when they did, and it's all surrounded with food memories. I think it goes back to childhood. When people move to another place, they remember the food of their homeland or their mother's cooking. Everybody remembers their mother's cooking.

The reason we did this cookbook was two reasons, actually. We wanted to give back to the community. We wanted to do it as a fund-raiser. We also wanted to make sure it was a community cookbook that represented the Indian community. There were several cookbooks. Indian cookbooks were coming out in the market. Now, there are hundreds of Indian cookbooks. There was no real good community cookbook. Also, this was going to be a fund-raiser because we wanted to make sure we gave back to the community. We fulfill that by doing Sharing Shores which is a non-profit organization. We did *Saffron to Sassafras*. The name, actually, reflects both the country we came from which is India. The saffron was from India. Sassafras for Louisiana. We wanted to showcase how we brought the food from India, and then we assimilated using local ingredients. The sassafras reflects that.

Rasmussen: Do the recipes reflect that? Are there a lot of local ingredients that you've incorporated into the recipes?

Sharma: Yes, we have several recipes in the fusion cuisine because when we came, many of us came thirty-five, forty, and some people in Baton Rouge even came fifty years ago. In those days, the ingredients were not available, so they used ingredients that were locally available and made Indian foods with that.

Diwan: Or brought it from home.

Sharma: Or brought it from home. Our suitcases would be filled with spices, especially ground masalas or mixtures that your mother made, and you brought it. My daughter would always say, "Why does Grandma's suitcase smell, has that smell?" She associates Grandma with her smell of spices in her suitcase.

Rasmussen: Was it hard getting that through customs?

Sharma: Sorry?

Rasmussen: Was it hard to get that through customs?

Sharma: Customs got used to. They knew exactly. Do you have this, this, this? They would tell us, "You can't bring this." Over the times, things have changed what customs allows you to bring. I think that so many Indians coming now. The Indians in America are the third largest Asian community after the Chinese and the Filipino community. The Indian community is actually growing by leaps and bounds. It's the largest increase in numbers here.

We have recipes of things like broccoli [which] were never available in India. Zucchini, broccoli were not Indian vegetables. The vegetables that were available there are now available here. There are now Asian markets, Indian markets. You have Farmers' Markets that grow these vegetables and home gardens. Everybody's got. . . . If you can't buy it, they will grow it. The Lou-

isiana climate is so similar to the Indian climate – hot and humid. Of course the Indian climate varies depending on what part of India you live, but hot and humid would describe maybe 80% of the country. Louisiana was just perfect for growing things that were available in India.

Rasmussen: You know, it's interesting to hear you talk about how these foods and recipes are changing. You talk about how the recipes reflect that change. If you were to go to the homes of your friends, in their kitchens, are they assimilating in these ways on a widespread basis?

Sharma: The Indian population, you have to remember that covers the ones who came in the sixties, the seventies, the eighties, the nineties. There really are two generations. One is what I would call the "our generation," and then I would call the next generation "our kids' generation," the ones that were born here and the kids that are coming here as students. You'll see a wide change. Our generation, we were cooking the food that we grew up with, but we really changed it because it was at the time that we learned to cook as young married girls. We used the local ingredients. There was a lot of fusion. We would make lasagna. Plus our children were going to school. We had to change our recipes. They would eat Indian at home, but they would eat lasagna and tacos and everything else at school. We had to make things that they liked. At times they would say, "No, I don't want to eat Indian food." We started cooking the local food. We also started to adapt the lasagna with a little bit of Indian spices for taste that we liked. It became a fusion. At one time what we called the Indianized lasagna, now the chefs are actually using those spices, and it has become gourmet lasagna if you use the spices that we have been doing for years. I find more and more recipes in the magazines that chefs are using that really could be Indian food. I'm very surprised at things that have happened. When we came maybe thirty years ago, there were only a handful of Indian grocery stores all over. Now, because of the Internet and the local thing, everything is available. Today what has happened is that we have made a full circle because the world has become so small. Things that are available in India are now available here the very next day or at the same time. Culturally, there's not the distance.

I wanted to, when we did the cookbook, we wanted to pass down our recipes that we came with. We wanted our children to have something. One of the things that has happened, today's child cooks differently, if they cook. It surprised me, the technology. They don't use a lot of books. I asked some kids in the plane as I was going, "What do you do?" They said, "When I want to learn something, I get my mom on the webcam. I have my webcam. She's standing there and stirring, showing me how she makes this." So, she's talking there, and he's typing his paper, or downloading it, whatever. He doesn't feel the need to even go on the Net. My daughter goes on the Net, and she says, "Oh, I want to make this." You go on the Net; you find a recipe. There are thousands of sites. They get it from the Net.

There's nothing like having a true and tried recipe book. It's just like most of us have *River Roads*. *River Roads* community cookbook has been the largest selling cookbook. Everybody in America knows *River Roads*. To me, our Indian cookbook is kind of the *River Roads*. It will go down after years and years and years. These were tried and true recipes that reflect the community with diverse types of cuisine. It reflects the changes that we have made. There are different ways the kids are learning. The new kids that are coming in are actually cooking just like they cook at home two years ago. I think because these technologies are available, they

are not assimilating into the local communities like we did many years ago. We were forced to, whereas today, everything is available.

Rasmussen: Irma, hello. What are you seeing in the Mexican community? Are you seeing the kind of assimilation in the foodways, or is it more conservative in its trend?

Rodriguez: It's a lot of likeness about the culture like she said about her explanation from her talking. I was listening to her very closely. We have a lot of things we do the same. In Forest Hill, it's a big, large community. It's like 4,200 people in thirty-five miles. The main reason why I moved to Forest Hill, it was to cater to the Hispanic people.

We started doing like we have a tradition of like Saturdays and Sunday mornings, Mexican people get up really early. They eat *menudo* which is a pig tripe soup. They like it for some reason. I don't, but a lot of people, a lot of my people do. They get up really early, and that's what they want to eat for breakfast. When I first moved to Forest Hill, I was catering to a lot. I still do.

My restaurant has turned around. Now, I've got more American clientele than I do Hispanic people. We are trying to figure out. The reason why I'm saying now it's different is because I used to have a little convenient grocery store and cash deli to go. That's how I started my business. I used to cater more to them. My clientele has improved. I've been kind of losing my Hispanic customers because a lot of them, they work at the nursery business. They are sweaty and dirty. When I have a lot of doctors and lawyers and people like that that come to the restaurant now, they are kind of embarrassed to go in there. I took the grocery part out because I bought a new building. It's larger. I had lost a lot of my Hispanic clientele, which we are working on having another building next to our restaurant so we can do it again because it is a really good population. We are missing out on that. We didn't mean to do it like that. My son has done instead of writing down the recipes and stuff, we have videotaped the recipes. We speak how the portions and the measurements and how we do it and everything. They got it on a CD. Instead of a book, we did it on a CD because he said, "Momma, you're not going to be here forever. When you're gone, we still want to see how you did it." That's how we have done our recipes and stuff.

Rasmussen: That's wonderful. One of the problems that I experienced in Louisiana is that it's very, very difficult to get some types of food here. For example, the Chinese restaurants are all buffets – not all of them, but many of them. They're not Chinese food that I can tell. It's very, very Americanized. It's certainly not what I imagined Chinese folks eating at home. It's not the Asian food that I experienced when I was in Asia for four years. I never encountered anything like those dishes in Asia itself. We were in Abbeville once. My wife, we were at a Chinese restaurant. It was going to be this awful buffet. My wife went back, and something got into her. She went back, and she started talking to the folks in the back. They are all Korean. She said, "Can I have some Korean food?" They were so touched. They were so amazed, "You want Korean food?" "Yes. Can you make us some Korean food?" It was kind of a wonderful experience.

Generally they cater in Louisiana to what they think Americans want and expect. It's really, generally, not very authentic, nor really very good, to be honest. Do you experience something in your restaurant where people expect it to be Americanized?

Rodriguez: No. We try to keep it as more authentic as we possibly can. We do have a lot of quesadillas and taco salad and stuff that

American people like. We also do the cow's head, which is called [Inaudible]. We do the *molé* which is the traditional wedding dish that you do for weddings and birthday parties. We do the *huevos rancheros* which is a real Mexican breakfast. We do the beef tripe soup. Every Friday we do an authentic Mexican dish. I mean we do tamales in banana leaves. We do *pozoles*. We do *sopas* stuff like that that none of the Mexicans restaurants have got around here. We have been certified in the state of Louisiana through the Mexican Counsel to be one of the most authentic Mexican restaurants. We are on the tourist guide of the United States as an authentic Mexican restaurant. We are trying to keep it. American people like that. That's why we stay really busy as we do. They go in there. I have a lot of people going in missions to Mexico, and they learn how to eat like the way that we do it there. We do tripe tacos because that's an authentic Mexican food. I have a girl, and she came in there and she said, "I like to come here because if they want one taco, we sell one taco. They like it with cilantro and onions and limes just like we do in Mexico." They make a request and we do it. I have a customer that came in there and said, "I want some *molé* enchiladas. Can you do that?" I said, "Sure." We went and did the *molé* enchiladas for him. We cater to the white people. Not just anybody is just in a Mexican restaurant to eat quesadillas and taco salad and things like that. If they want to go to my restaurant, I want them to have a good experience, the closest to what Mexican food is supposed to be.

Sharma: I find that the American palate has really changed over the years. It is more adventurous now. The world's becoming smaller. There are more communities that are coming in. The exposure to authentic food is much more now than it was in the sixties. At that time, people. . . .   The "curry" that never really existed and was made. We never had that kind of curry that I find in cookbooks of forty years ago. We never ate that. Now you find more and more authentic recipes because the palate has changed. People want more authentic food.

Rasmussen: Sometimes I wonder though, aside from food, do people have expectations about your culture as a whole, other aspects of your culture that maybe are not accurate or they're not able to see clearly what your culture truly is. I'll give you an example. I went down to Pho Fest in New Orleans. They called me and said, "Do you want to come down because we have some Lion Dancers here?" I was looking for Lion Dancers for the Festival in 2009. So I said, "Great!" I got in my car, ran down to Pho Fest, and it was spectacular. They had all these high school Lion Dance groups. There was one I really liked. They seemed a little better than the rest of the groups. They seemed more, more cheerful and funny. There was another group that really wasn't that good. They weren't really well practiced. They were pretty, kind of nervous. I kind of was intimating to one of the folks there that was in charge. I said, "I'd like this one group to come up. They seem really good." "No, you don't want them!" I said, "I really do." "No, you want that group." He wanted the group that I thought wasn't really that great. He said, "Don't worry. They just haven't practiced. They're the best group here. You just need to trust us." So I said, "OK." I went out grumbling, thinking that I had kind of been pushed into something that I didn't know was the best. They came up, and they were the best. They had six months to practice. They came to the festival. They were spectacular. They were well above any of the other groups. They knew it. They could see it. They knew the signs to tell. They knew the people individually. I could not see it at first. It was only by trusting them and going with what they said that they

were right.

Do you see sometimes people looking outside into your culture and, not just with food but with other things, and they have maybe the false impression or they don't understand what is really going on?

Diwan: I can say something on that. First I can answer your question. I think mostly, being an Indian, what I have heard getting close to my American friends is the only thing false they all think is Indians have it easy because they are all smart. Their kids are going to be doctors, engineers. They forget that how it happens is all the sacrifices that Indian parents are putting behind, preserving the culture that they brought from India is that how my parents did when I was growing up. My mother never had her priorities. It was all what we needed. It was all what we need to do better in life. It was all what we need to buy to learn more. That's how we raised our kids here. I have two sons. Everything I did from the day they were born is always how I can pass my culture to them, how I can give them the value system that I brought from there [India]. I was going to mention like food, for example. This is a cookbook for other people. When my kids were growing, the kids from his class or the games, they came to [the] house. It was open house for them. As I grew, I always saw that happening. They all ate there. They saw it was always available for them to learn our culture, see us, what we do, how our family is together, our family values there. That's one thing I find that a lot of outsiders do not understand, the real hard work behind it.

On weekends, I, for example, I was just telling her. If my son is moving next week, my priority on the weekend is going to be how I'm going to get all this stuff ready. We are going to do the checklist of what will make him more comfortable instead of doing my own relaxing on the weekend. I will probably not go do my nails, or I will not do what I wanted to do probably because we still focus on them until they're ready to serve in this world and be on their own. That's going to be my legacy. That's going to be what I live for. That's what I think one thing is we truly would like to share with other people. I'm saying not only Indian parents are doing that, but every parent wants to do this. That's one of the secrets that people do not sometimes understand clearly the why some of those kids do better than others in the class. We are so involved in their life. Our whole focus in life is kids, like sacrificing or using every penny if they want to learn jazz music, they want to go to any certain conference, leadership conference, whatever. We want to make sure they get every opportunity that they can learn and go.

Our generation had to work way harder, whoever the first generation is. I'm sure in all immigrant communities the same thing happens. First ones come in, the dollar has to be stretched so much that you don't want to use it because you want to send back home. We are a sandwich generation. I still take care of my mother-in-law. I still want my things to go to my kids, the more values that we can give even though we have fusion recipes and we've talked about how things have changed, we truly want to introduce our festivals, our culture to children so they recognize that. Whether they carry it or not, that will be their decision when they grow up. I'm finding more and more as our nephews, nieces who are grown and have children, they go back to again the culture that we introduced them when they were young. They want to give that to their children. At this time, I have few cousins, nephews and nieces in New York and other places where they are now searching how they can teach their children Hindi or teach them Sanskrit or teach them all world religions so they can adopt the same values and things even when they are married with another culture. They want to

give the children all the background. Our children learned when we did the festivals like Diwali, the Light Festival. They know what foods, authentic foods we serve at that. We all still make the effort. When the festivals come, we want to present that picture that we grew up with. They're, at least, seeing it, and they can have the memories of it.

How they live everyday life, that is of course, the things have changed even otherwise. Health conscious people, when I was growing up, there was no issue in the house about butter. We ate it. That was just it. Now, health-wise, what we are told and see today about our food habits, our things, it has just changed internationally because we have more findings, more awareness of those things. So that has changed in our culture as well as any other culture, that we will not be using so generously the butter in the cooking as much as our moms did or some of the spices. We do value the herbs that we grew up with, how healthy they are and how helpful they are for your health. We are definitely keeping them in our kitchen and using ginger root, garlic which people are now taking pills of. They are going and buying [the pills] for cholesterol, for lowering blood pressure. There are certain vegetables like she mentioned that they are growing in their own gardens. They can have that use and health benefit because that's how we can preserve that culture. There are both aspects.

There are certain things we are changing because change is like nature. We have to change to be able to adapt. If I had just come from India, maybe I would be wearing an Indian sari or Indian clothes. But, we work here, we move around here, we drive. We had to change a little bit in our everyday life to be able to fit in your culture. We are the outsiders. We are the first generation. That's what happens. Sometimes they are needs; sometimes they are wishes. Sometimes it happens because of the culture you are living in. If I want to go get a job in a certain university in certain administration, I don't think I can walk in for my interview in my sari, and they would hire me. It would be very little chance if they do that. You have to change and train yourself to be living, to be able to sell yourself. We learned that when you live here long.

Mendhi Painting. Photo: Maida Owens

Our children who are born here, they have definitely learning in schools what is expected from them. There is going to be a little change with the outside of us, but the inside, the value system, the culture will stay the same. How? I grew up seeing my father doing social service all his life. That was his way of living, helping the poor, helping the needy, work with Mahatma Gandhi. He did things that showed us. When I was little, I didn't think about it much. When I grew up, I wanted to do the same things because that's what I thought was the good thing to do. Our kids have to see those values in us, how it's important to give back, how it's important to leave your legacy, and what is important role, whether it is school, whether it is music, whether it is clothing. What is our culture? We do want to pass that to them. That's one of the reasons why the book was written because we have little stories in it where they can read when was this food served or why was this done. At certain times of the year, like there's a time when their sugar cane

comes. They make juice out of it then make this pudding out of it, so it can only be done that time of the year, in festival when they serve that. Those are the kinds of things that you want to share with the children by showing that this is how we did it. That's where I think there's a lot we've preserved, a lot we changed.

That's how only way the melting pot. We are mingling in this culture. We always appreciate. That's one of the way why we did this book was to thank the local community for the opportunities they gave us when we came here, the friendship they gave us that we wanted to show them how thankful we are. The only way we could do was to give back to community and show we are part of you and you are our adopted motherland. We want to be loving you as much. This is where we are living now. That was another message we wanted to send to our peers who are immigrants that you don't come and utilize this country and live here. You adopt it, and you give back so that your children and others can learn. We have the equal responsibility. We can't be on the side of taking. That was one of the main, main things why we wanted to be so passionate about it. We continue to do that. If book is sold, we want to continue to do volunteer work, soup kitchens, or whatever way we can. Some of the women who are in our group are retired. That passion needs to be there in society. Whether we are from India or from anywhere else, that is something we would like to encourage people to do. That's what I wanted to say.

Rasmussen: Thank you.

Sharma: One of the things that, of course, all immigrant communities, is the conflict that is there with 1) the immigrants, and 2) even more with the children born here. I think we are seeing that today. It's very much in the news. Should children of illegal immigrants be citizens? The children really have to make their own identity. Immigrants bring their culture. They know why they have come here, what they're doing, the preservation, the handing down of that culture as they knew to their children. The children are really sandwiched between their peers and their families. The cultures may be so totally different. For them, the assimilation to be like the others and yet be like their family. I think it's an ongoing thing that they face until such time as they become adult and then feel really comfortable and then are able to say, "These are my parents' values." They have really incorporated them inside, and they are passing down to their children. During the times when they are in elementary school, and they may be dressed differently. They may be bringing different foods. They don't eat the same things that their peers are eating. They're not allowed to go for sleepovers because that was not done.

When my children were growing up, I would call a friend who was, I would call her local, married to an Indian, and get advice from her. I said, "Is it OK to have a coed sleepover?" I had never done or heard of a coed sleepover. What goes on? Yes, it was better to have it in your house than to let your daughter go to somebody else's house. At least you know. Those kinds of things, the children want to be like everybody else, and we who have never experienced it before, we have to then adapt and change and understand in terms of food, in terms of clothes, in terms of dating, all the aspects. I think in many cultures there is the same. Like she said, the Indian students or the Indians are brainy. There's even more pressure on them, the students, to do well because it's expected. You're Indian; you've got to be a valedictorian, or you've got to be a doctor. You're not going into medicine? You want to be an artist? You want to work in theater? My goodness, those professions are unheard of. Over time, over the years, over the decades you

now find, although a great deal of numbers of kids are going into the traditional professions of the sciences, there are a lot of students who are now going into other fields that they want to.

Diwan: The reason is, Chandan, because the first generation who came here, they came with one purpose, and that was to better their lives, higher education. Most first people who came from India were. . . . . Friends I have locally who have been there over forty years, most everybody came for higher education. The kids automatically expect that. They have to do better than their parents because they are provided way more than what we were provided when we came here.

People who came here, they used to be able to come with $7.00 in pocket. That's it. You could not bring money with you when you came to U.S. I came with $7.00. When you came in, you worked as wherever. If you have some relatives or friends or some organization that would help you, would be the only place. Then you lived on basically $1.00 a day. You ate a doughnut or you ate whatever. You lived with somebody. They had to work hard to be even paying their bills as the student, whether they gave them a scholarship, that was the only way used to be able to come at first. It's changed.

The world of technology has really made a change in the whole world. People are learning more about Indian culture automatically through the Bollywood movies, or whether they are watching TV, or they could pull whatever work they needed on the Internet. Henna is one of the examples. That was a traditionally eastern thing. I have American friends call me when they have a party at their house, "Can you tell me a name of some artist that can come and do henna at our party?" It's both ways. The culture has been adopted by locals and brought from there. We are exchanging those things. The hardships that people brought in the past better living to children, that's automatically not going to be the same working hard habits or the way that we would rather do the cleaning in the bathrooms ourselves and save $75.00 than calling the maid because, to me, that could be used somewhere else. They are not going to do it. Once they have jobs, they want to enjoy life. They didn't live like that. I think those things are very natural. I happily accept them because that change is going to happen automatically. They are not going to feel if they spend a dollar as much as I feel when I do. I have to see if it is the best use of it. Can someone else who does not have money be able to use this back home or here? A hundred thoughts will go before we actually spend money. What happens is the children are not living under the same circumstances as we lived when we came as first generation. That change is always going to be there. I'm hoping the same happens in your communities, too.

Rodriguez: What I was going to say about what she was talking about is every culture that immigrates to the States, I think we're different. We've got different . . . . All the Latino cultures are known by physical labor. We do a lot of construction work, a lot of restaurants, a lot of cleaning houses just the stuff like that. I have a son who just recently graduated from LSU in Baton Rouge. When we went to the graduation, I had heard only three Latino last names came through. Mostly it was Asian people like Japanese and whatever and Indian people. We got differences. We're known for the physical work. If you are doing a driveway on your house, a lot of white people call me and tell me, "Ms. Irma, do you know anybody that can come and help us? We are throwing a driveway at my house. We need a couple of men." They will not call her; they will call me. They call me like, "I need a nanny." I told Christy, my daughter, I said, "We need to put some kind of work agency here. We'll make a lot of

money with that." Everybody comes. Recently, I had found Dr. Carlton. He's a dentist in Alexandria. I found him a nanny. They were having their first baby, and there are a lot of people that don't have a job. There was a single woman that I recommended to him. Now, every doctor in Alexandria is calling me. She's like the best they ever had. They are really pleased with her. We try to adopt this culture, too. American people are trying to cater to us.

Sharma: Let me ask you a question. Are most of these people, who are working, they speak English well?

Rodriguez: They are doing the best they can.

Sharma: OK. One of the things I have found is some cultures do adopt that much faster here because they're already prepared to communicate in English when they come in here. That helps them, I think, in some ways to be able to tell what they feel. One of the reasons I have found, I don't know about here, in some of my relatives who live in California or Seattle, they are told the reason they can easily find some nanny or someone to come work at the house. There are some communities where people are not able to speak English. This is the job they are happy to do. That is another issue in some of the communities I learned of it whether it's yours or others. We're immigrants.

Rodriguez: Right there in Forest Hill, we had got a lot of people that are very concerned about us, the Hispanic people. We've got like night classes for adults when they can go and take English classes. There is a hospital in Oakdale, Louisiana that is coming next to my restaurant. They are going to build a clinic for Hispanic people. They are trying to teach women about. . . . We recently lost a little kid there in Forest Hill. He died choked on a grape. His momma did not know how to do CPR. A lot of things like that. The American people have gotten so involved with our culture, with our community.

I'm kind of a leader because everybody comes and tries to do something, they come to me. Everybody comes, where there is a doctor, where they is a clinic coming up, where there is whatever. They come and they ask me, "What do you think about this. Can you be involved? Can you help us? Can you come and tell us what the necessities are around here." A lot of people are just really concerned. We are really grateful for that.

We had the Hispanic Mass. Father Pedro, he does our Mass on Saturdays. We are trying to preserve the culture. We are trying, doing the best we can, trying to learn how to communicate. I'm really hard about my people telling them, "You really need to learn. Step up and don't be known for drinking and driving and beating up on the women and doing stuff like that. Do something different. Be known because you'll succeed." Quite a few people in Forest Hill had come with nothing. They are big entrepreneurials. They have got very successful people. I got one next door to my restaurant. He has got sixty-five people working under him. They are very business oriented.

Sharma: One of the things, hard work has always paid off here. You can be anything you want to be or do anything you want to do. You have that opportunity to do it.

Question: [Inaudible] I really appreciate Senora Rodriguez for talking about the tension you felt like you had in the restaurant amongst the workers and the other customers, wealthy, American customers. I feel like what we are lacking here is a point of reference. I feel like things are discussed in broad terms of national character, sort of like country of origin. What I don't get a sense of at all is where are the regions that you're from

in your countries? Where are the regions of the people in your communities here from your country? What is your point of class reference in your country vs. the point of class reference here? In other words, were you a shopkeeper in Mexico? Did your family come from similar occupational categories in India in whichever region you're from? Also, what about the communities here? There's a shift. For example, in Mexico there's a shift in people coming from different regions in Mexico. In India, you can talk about these immigration of students, but if I go to New York City, I know so many women that are in New York from south Asia, not just from Bangladesh, but from India who are domestic workers, working class women and men who are H2 workers maybe working on shipyards or building boat platforms that are maybe from Tamaldahoo or Kerala or something. Those kinds of things I feel are important points of reference that are missing from this conversation.

Sharma: Let me address some of those issues that you brought out which are really good. Originally, the immigration that occurred here amongst the Indians was based on the type of professions that America needed. Your immigrant visa was really for that. There were also the students who were immigrating. It was a different class, mostly the engineers in the sixties. Indian immigration started in the 1900s. They were the migrant farm workers that came from Punjab, and they settled in California. That was the large immigration. In the sixties, it was the engineers. In the seventies, it was the physicians because there was a great need. There were no residencies filled by American medical graduates. They needed physicians to go and do smaller towns. The eighties and nineties were the IT. The later immigration was not on a resident status. It was on the H1B1 that you mentioned. Number one was the student category and then the temporary worker category which was later converted. If you were lucky, you converted into the resident status. Over the years, then it was the families that came in. You had one class that came in and assimilated into the higher professions here, the higher paying jobs. Then you have the families coming in. The families that came in worked anywhere because they were not the professional. . . . Their visa was not based on a profession. Then you have the students who are doing their PhDs and by night will be working in a McDonalds or Taco Bell or anywhere that they can get a job to supplement the income.

Over time, the communities get very diverse. You will find them in every profession. You will find the Indians, not you, I. My sister works at Sears, and she drives a school bus. She had a profession, and when she retired and decided she was going to stay and help her children here, she changed her job. From being a professional, she is now a school bus driver and a Sears worker. Also, the communities that you mentioned, you will find that there are two major regions. In India, initially, they were represented by everybody. Now the two largest communities come from, one is the south which is Andra Pradesh. It has become the IT capital of the world. There are colonies and buildings and townships that are coming up overnight. There are kids going to college and companies that are going from U.S. to India and hiring people there. They are called the IT campuses, Information Technology campuses. Yes, they are from Bangalore which is the south and Hyderabad. Even I don't understand the languages that they speak.

The other large community that has come here is from west which is Gujarat. These are big states. They again are a very business-oriented community and very family-oriented communities. You will find one person who has come a long time ago and started a business here. Suddenly, you will find all his family members are here. If you

go to motels, many are owned by Gujaratis. People sometimes ask me, "Does Patel mean 'motel'?" No. It doesn't mean that. That's not the profession. I don't have the percentage of motel owners who are Patels. That's the Gujarati community. One person owns a motel. They help their community. They get all their relatives. When they do well, and all people employing them, when they do well enough, they also loan them money. The banks are not giving them money. They get money from their family and friends.

Diwan: One thing in that is when one person is here and they are naturalized and they became a citizen, if they apply for their family in the legal way, then the brothers, sisters are under eighteen or whatever, it's a line. It takes ten years to fifteen years to get the immigration. That's how much wait it is right now. If they came like that, at that whether they were prepared for this world or whether they were in any profession yet, they are coming because they got the opportunity at that time. At that time, they will get any job. If they were to work in any business selling something or keeping. . . . . Some of the ladies that we understand in the New York area who are doing the housework are the people who have their either mothers, mother-in-laws, or someone moved here, and they can't do anything else because either they are not highly educated or cannot speak English. Then this is the kind of thing they want to still do and earn some money because they get too bored staying alone at home or don't feel comfortable. That's the way I have heard it. It's easier in bigger cities to find help of your own country, speaking person. Like I mentioned, Seattle, New York, Detroit, Houston because there is so much availability there.

Sharma: Also they feel comfortable with their children having the same kind of culture. They know that their children will be taught a language. The nanny will cook the same food that they cook.

Walker: There's a lot of change. Before, it was the fathers that went out to work. The mothers stayed at home to take care of their children. The mothers weren't able to get out in the work force and learn the English that they needed to learn. I know like here in Natchitoches, they've helped a lot with, and other regions also, also in Forest Hill. They started night classes or morning classes for the Hispanic people. The mothers can help also their children to learn. They started the ESL teachers to help the Hispanics in their classrooms so they can learn more and be able to pass their tests and be up on par with the American children.

Sharma: Usually the advantage with Indians is that English is taught in all schools in India from kindergarten.

Diwan: It's compulsory there. We had to do it. It's compulsory there.

Walker: Some of the Hispanics that come in though, it's not taught in their classes. They come in with no English at all.

Diwan: Exactly.

Walker: The immigrants, what I see, the family is very close-knit. Though I'm American, my five, I have five children from Spain. They came in. I'm ashamed to say it, but they didn't know English when they came here. It was a big sacrifice on my part because I had to teach them English. I remember staying up until 2:00 in the morning just doing homework with them. Of course, I'd have them in sports activities and everything else. It was a big sacrifice.

Talking about the customs when they went into schools, the children tried to stay

with their own customs. The Americans, they were very surprised with them and would ask me, "How do you do it?" We'd go to football games, and my children always stayed right there with me. They didn't go out with other friends or anything. The mothers said, "Why do your children always sit with you?" I said, "That's the way it is. They're with me." It surprised a lot of the American mothers: "My children don't care anything about me. They don't want to sit with me. They don't want to talk with me." Immigrant children, I think, because they have more of a relationship with the mother and the father, they're more close-knit or prefer to be with the family. Somebody mentioned like the children going to somebody else's house to spend the night. Oh, no. That's not done. I know my children never spent a night away from home.

Diwan: That's how we grew up.

Walker: Uh-huh. That's how we grew up, and that's what we taught our children. I know like me, I've got twelve grandchildren. I was talking with my daughter, and she said because she's trying to teach her culture to her children. I asked her. I said, "What are you going to do when you child is invited to somebody's else's to spend the night there?" "Oh, no. They can come over and spend the night at my house, but my children aren't going to go to somebody else's house to spend the night."

Sharma: Did your children rebel?

Walker: I don't know what's going on in the homes with the Internet and everything else.

Diwan: But the other thing is that is also a point when my kids came to that age, that's when I found it was necessary for us to know their friends' parents. I developed a good friendship with all those parents. Those kids were either staying at my house, or my kids started to go to their house, even for the afternoon. You know their culture, what they do, what they believe in, what they would allow, and how much they will not allow. That is why it was important for us to be friends with those communities as well.

Walker: Well being friends with them, I mean in school and everything else, yes, they're friends and everything else. The thing is just the culture of Spanish culture is they don't spend nights away from home. They spend it with their family. If you went somewhere with your children, your children just didn't take off and go running around with somebody else. If you went with your family, you stayed with your family.

My children graduated from NSU. At the cafeteria, the people thought it very strange. I had five of them at one time at NSU. They would eat there together, all together. In Spain, they usually have a two-course meal, a three-course meal, and after that they have the coffee and a chit chat for like two or three hours. That's what my children did. They would eat together, and then they would sit there drinking coffee and chit chatting and talking and everything. Some of the other students were looking at them, "Are these professors, or what's going on here?" They started inviting other people to their table, talking with them and everything. That's just some of the culture.

I would open my house to the international students. What I'm seeing today is things are changing. The parents come in with the children. Now the children go to school. Now they are beginning to graduate and start into college and get a better education, get better jobs. My children all graduated Master's and doctoral degrees. I have a son-in-law; he's from Guatemala. He just finished the Nurse Practitioner and is now working in Campti. They're bettering them-

selves. They're not just working for cement or construction. They're bettering and going to college, get a better education. Their children will have it a lot easier.

Sharma: Did your children have any conflict accepting your values vs. what their friends were doing?

Walker: Yes, they do. Children do have a conflict because they have a different culture. All of a sudden, it's like a shock. The American people, they don't do things like we do them. I guess they try to incorporate themselves to the American style of living. I think it's the parents that they want their children to keep some of the culture. They might kind of rebel a little bit there, but as they grow older, they appreciate, and they hand it down to their children.

Rodriguez: Talking about what the conversation that is going on in here about our children not spending the night somewhere else, I have all kinds of kids that still live here in Natchitoches or they live in Baton Rouge or in New Orleans, or wherever they are, they adopted me, and I'm to them Momma Rodriguez. I have never let my children go anywhere else and spend the night. I was a single parent. I kept my kids at my house. I told them, everybody can come and spend the night here. We closed in the garage, and we made a big room right there. We put Nintendo; we put whatever. I remember that I used to go and put pillows under everybody's head, get up at 3:00 in the morning because they were playing Nintendo and games and whatever. It looked like drunk people because there were empty cans of 7-ups and Sprites and whatever else all over the place. I would tiptoe trying to not wake anybody up, going and fix everybody's head onto the pillows and cooking chicken wings at 3:00 in the morning, macaroni and cheese, stuff like that. Everybody until today, those kids stop by my restaurant, and I'm known as Mama Rodriguez. They go, "We're going to Mama. Mama Rodriguez." They named me that. That's a lot of grown kids; they are twenty-four, twenty-five years old. They stop by and they still call me that. That's what I was known by.

Gregory: [addressing Martha Walker] Can you talk a little bit about the language loss because everybody is assimilating. I was listening to everybody who has the same basic experience. Martha and I grew up together. Do you want to tell them what you did to me?

Walker: What you did to me! [Laughter]

Gregory: We had to [Inaudible].

Martha: Dr. Gregory, his family is from Ferriday and was very close to my family. When I was five months old, my father took me to South America, to Bolivia. We live there for about five years. I came back when I was five years old and soon lost a lot of my Spanish. My father told Dr. Gregory, "To Martita, you only have to speak English, Spanish, because she's forgetting her Spanish." He'd come and visit us, and he'd start speaking all this Spanish to me. I was just furious. I was so mad because I didn't understand what he was saying. Years later, he helped me get my children into NSU. I would tell my children, "Now, make sure you go see Dr. Gregory and speak all the Spanish you can to him." He said, "I don't know what they are saying."

Gregory: Irma asks me sometimes, "Do you still speak Spanish?" I have to tell her now that I know she knows Martha. It's Martha's fault!

Diwan: Interestingly, my mother-in-law, she expects my both sons to speak in Hindi when

she talks to them on the phone. Mostly she's here. When she's away, she wants to talk on the phone. When she talks, they will leave our room because they feel hesitant because of their accent. They can speak, they communicate, but they're not sure if anyone else listened would they laugh. That is a hesitation they have when they speak Hindi because they are not speaking every day.

Rodriguez: I can tell you a long, long time ago when my children were like five and six years old, seven, Tony and Eddie, we used to go to Wal-Mart. When I first came to Louisiana, I came in 1983. I was three months pregnant with Tony. There were no Spanish speaking people whatsoever over here. I remember I used to go to Wal-Mart. They didn't have any avocados; they didn't have any cilantro; they didn't have any tortillas. They didn't have anything. I would talk Spanish to my kids, and they would say, "Sh! Mom, don't talk like that. People are going to laugh at you." They used to be kind of embarrassed about it. I tried to tell them, "No. This is our heritage." That's when I started talking to them about we have to keep our culture.

We do like Rocking Baby Jesus on Christmas. We still do that. Every year we do that. Now they like it. They look forward to the day. I remember when Eddie was in 2nd grade in Ferriday. I built a piñata for him, and I took it to the school. All the kids had a blast with that. After that they liked their birthday parties to have a piñata. To have our food that we cook and our customs that we have, that's how I raised them. Now they're very proud of it, and I'm glad I did what I did for them.

Walker: I know when my children were in grade school, and we were here, I would always speak Spanish to them in public when we went to shopping or stores. That way, nobody could understand if I'm fussing at them or not. At home, I would try to speak English to them, to help them out. Now with my grandchildren, they try to speak Spanish to the children at home so they'll be bilingual. Most of them, most of them are, out of twelve. If they don't speak the language, they are learning. They can understand a lot of it. They are still real young yet.

Diwan: Actually, it is becoming opposite now from what you were saying. Your kids were almost embarrassed for mom to speak Spanish whereas the world has changed so much now. Now, we have so many Spanish people here that if we don't know Spanish, we are going to have a hard time.

For example, my son was doing residency in UT [University of Texas]. He started to learn Spanish because he did not feel comfortable seeing any patients who only spoke Spanish, and they had to call the translator every time. He found that it was a waste of money, a waste of time. He wasn't getting the exact diagnosis that he could if he could clearly communicate with them directly. Last year, he finished up. He called me. He said, "Mom." He's carrying the Spanish little book in the pocket all the time. He learned fluently now because he had to do it because he said he never felt comfortable giving any information to a patient unless he knew exactly what they were trying to say. In translation you lose something.

Walker: You lose a lot.

Diwan: I think it's becoming now that it's going to be more and more need for professionals, doctors. Otherwise, they will not be able to help them.

Walker: When I was working as ESL, English as Second Language, to the Hispanic community, I would tell the children. I said, "Whatever you do, do not forget your Spanish because that is going to be your bread of

tomorrow to be bilingual and know Spanish. You'll be able to get a job anywhere."

Diwan: I can clearly say that. That's what has happened in our area.

Walker: That's what I always told them. Some of them, they did almost forget their Spanish. I would always try to encourage and tell their parents also, "Look. Make sure you speak Spanish to your children at home so they don't forget the language."

Diwan: Most Hispanic communities are also known for family values. That's one thing I hear again and again is they are always very close.

Walker: They are very close-knit.

Rodriguez: I always told my children, "God first, family second, and the job is third."

Sharma: You mentioned loss of language now. India is a nation of twenty-two major languages. Forget about the dialects and the regional languages or dialects. What is happening is if the two parents come from the same region and speak the language to each other, however much you teach a language, language is, actually, an ongoing thing. You pick it up. You're not just taught. You hear the words; you hear the nuances, the meanings. You understand. That's an ongoing thing. It's easy for them to learn or understand a language if two parents come from the same area either of India or here or anywhere. Now more and more people are getting married that belong to two different areas. I tried to teach my language. My husband doesn't speak the same language as I do. I speak his language. When we met, we never communicated in his language. We communicated in English. We were speaking English to each other even at home.

Diwan: In higher education it's very complex.

Walker: It's hard. My first husband was a Spaniard, and I spoke Spanish and English. My children, when I was living in Spain, I spoke only Spanish. It was hard for me to switch rapidly English-Spanish, Spanish-English all the time. Everybody fussed at me, "You have to teach them English. You have to speak to them in English." I just couldn't do it. Now, when I came to the United States, I just spoke English to them. Once they had learned their English, then I would do both languages. Some of my children are married to Americans. My daughter is married to an American. She doesn't really speak Spanish to her children. My oldest son is married to one from the Canary Islands, a lady from the Canary Islands. Since they both speak Spanish, their children are more bilingual and they speak Spanish all the time. My daughter that lives here, he is from Guatemalan descent. His parents were from Guatemala. He does speak Spanish, fluent Spanish, but she doesn't speak Spanish all the time to the children. She'll speak it whenever she thinks about it. They're not as fluent in their Spanish, but they understand a lot of the Spanish.

Diwan: You had a question about where we came from and what our backgrounds are. I think we should address that. I came from Punjab in India. I grew up there. My husband came from New Delhi which is very close to that. Caste, you mentioned caste and what background, professions and caste we came from. My father was an attorney and elected member of the legislative assembly, MLA they called it there. He was a social worker. Caste-wise, we were from the Brahmin family. I don't know if that answers what you were asking.

Question: I wasn't asking caste per se or just

social standing.

Diwan: You said class.

Question: That's interesting. Was that the state level assembly or national?

Diwan: It was both. First he was in the state, and then he was in the national. We had the visits from the President and Prime Minister frequently in our house because of his involvement in politics. He was the first elected official after Indian independence -- the first election in the fifties. We had a very large family. We are ten brothers and sisters. I'm the ninth in the family. His goal and mission in life was that everybody in our family should have higher education. Everybody did. A few of us came for education purpose to the US. One of my brothers came to the Mayo Clinic to do post-research work on the cancer. That's how some of them moved here. That's the kind of profession mostly in our family was.

My mother was uneducated, totally uneducated. That is the beauty of the family I was going to say. She never went to school, but the times she grew up in early 1900s, they did not allow the women out of the home to go school. She learned whatever she learned at home. If she were living today, she would be probably 100 or plus. That's why. We're talking about the time they had early marriage and when they had no schools for women. They were just home schooled because the circumstances in India were such. She was the one behind every child who went to college, who went to higher education because she did inspire them, took care of them, and made everybody go through that. That was her goal. She was a stay home mom. My dad never was home. He didn't even know what schools and colleges we were attending at certain times because he was so much in politics, social work, and his law practice. He hardly had time to. He came home; he ate. He attended his clients or phone calls and went to bed. She was the one who actually raised all the kids. I wear her ring all the time to remind me what a mother's influence in life can be. It is a very, very respectful thing to me.

Gregory: I think it's interesting when we have a panel from the New Populations which is Maida's term, who are all women. [Laughter]

Diwan: We made more effort to come on the weekend.

Gregory: I helped Shane contact the Latino portion of the panel. In both cases, they're very important to maintaining the culture. In Martha's case, and even in my family, that's the case. Like Irma said for the whole Forest Hill community, they send you to her for everything. Maybe we should talk a little bit about men's roles in the community.

Diwan: I think that role that one of the books explains pretty well is *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. I think women have more kindness and friendship and cultural things that they want to be involved in than men. I can't generalize all men, but most Indian men, we have, they are professionals, the ones we are, at least, mixing with. They are into their professions, and they come home, they read a book, they do gardening. They do what they want to do, but not necessarily going to open a non-profit. They are involved in the existing. . . . Chandan's husband is retired, so he is involved in several organizations that he chose to serve on. This is the kind of thing we are doing because I am still working. We got in touch with Shane because I work at LSU, so it is a higher education related acquaintance we made. I don't know if you have invited any Indian men or any from our local Commu-

nity. As you see, Bobby Jindal, his background is Indian. There are men who are out there doing things. I don't know what really a man's role in this cultural thing. I think women are more into it always. We share more with each other, what's happening, how you are raising [your] child, how I'm doing it. I think women take that control in the house.

Sharma: Let me give a little perspective on men's roles. I'm going to talk about Indian men.

Diwan: Especially our generation. It's different now.

Sharma: It's different. So I'm going to go over the changes. Indian men were raised by women and the traditional role was like here and everywhere else. The man was the breadwinner; the woman was the stay-at-home mom and the nurturer. She took care of the home, and he took care of the outside. The roles were clear cut. When we came, when I came here and got married to a man I had known for several years, a different cultural background. He was from the north; I was from the south – different language, everything different. When my mother-in-law first came, at that time I was a physician, and my husband was staying at home. He had lost his job, his business. She really had a hard time relating to this: her son was doing the laundry. Her son was ironing, or her son was cooking. She would be in tears. Here I was this terrible daughter-in-law. Had the roles been reversed, which were reversed in most other Indian residents. My colleagues were all Indian men whose wives doted on them when they'd come home after a hard night at work or residency. They'd have their meal ready, the cup of tea ready. Like she said, they would put their feet up and read the book. I had a hard time relating to it because I was doing exactly what my colleagues were doing, and I had to come home and do the cooking and the cleaning. Everybody used to say all the time, "Oh you have such a wonderful husband. He does the cooking, the cleaning." Whereas the woman who did all that, nobody said she was so wonderful because she cooked and cleaned and catered to her husband.

Diwan: It's expected from her.

Walker: It's how the wife trains the husband.

Sharma: Or how a mother trains her son.

Walker: I made the mistake. I made the mistake of teaching my sons how to clean their room or clean the house and cook. Now, my sons are the ones who clean the house, cook, and take care of the children. I made a mistake there.

Sharma: Both boys and girls are working professionals. The Indian girls are looking for men who will cook: They say, "I don't cook; I don't this." One of the things they are looking for in a husband is, first question, "Do you cook?" My nephews all cook because they were trained to cook.

Diwan: Your son-in-law cooks.

Sharma: My son-in-law cooks, but my daughter also cooks. Both my daughters like to cook. It's like if your son cooks and his wife doesn't, it's like, "Oh, my God. What a wife he's got." If you have a daughter whose husband cooks, it's like, "My son-in-law is so wonderful. He cooks." Different standards, but things have changed over the years.

Walker: I think a lot of changes . . . . What happened was that when the woman went out into the workforce also. Both of them come home tired, so they have to half the workload

at home.

Sharma: I think equality is coming more in the family.

Walker: Equality.

Sharma: Call it whatever. The women have realized that they are equal, and the men have had no choice but to accept it and say, “OK. These are not clear cut demarcated jobs.” You know what has changed? It’s not just here. In India, we look at the young couples in India. The women don’t cook anymore.

Diwan: Because they’re working, too.

Sharma: So they are not coming here and changing; they are changing back home. Those parent who try to teach them to teach them and say, “No,w you girls have to do housework” are few. We were brought up that a girl needs to know how to cook, to sew, to clean, how to take care of the child. Today’s young girls in India are different.

Diwan: They’re working.

Sharma: They’re working.

Diwan: They start as soon as they leave college. They’re working; they get a job.

Sharma: At the same salary level as the man, sometimes better. So they say, “I’m not going to do all this. This is not my work. I am equal in all terms with a man.”

Rasmussen: I want to thank all of the participants today. We brought up so many issues and so many wonderful. . . . There was a lot more I wanted to ask. We didn’t even talk about the *Quinceañera* that you hold for your daughter, Irma. I wanted to be sure and ask about that. We’ve kind of run out of time.

Rodriguez: Is that what?

Rasmussen: Could you take one second, Irma? Could you take a little bit and talk about that that you do for your daughter? The *Quinceañera*? I’m mispronouncing that so horribly that you can’t understand it.

Rodriguez: OK the *Quinceañera* is like when a girl turns fifteen years old and becomes a young woman, they celebrate it. It’s a big party. It’s like a wedding without the groom. The father comes and does the first dance with the girl. This is like the very traditional old, old fashioned party. The father is carrying the high heels in his hand. The girl comes with a pretty, prom-like dress. He puts the heels on the girls, and they give her. . . . They do the first dance. That is when she is allowed to wear makeup. They give her the last doll. That’s the last doll. Momma comes and gives the last doll to her. They celebrate it with a big cake like a wedding cake. They just put the little girl on top with a pretty dress. It used to be either pink or blue or yellow, pastel colors. Now it’s hot pink and hot blue. It changed through the years.

In Forest Hill, it’s a very tradition-oriented community. We have mariachi bands coming from Houston, from wherever Dallas or San Antonio. My daughter, she recently got married. I said recently, two years ago. We had her wedding at the civic center in Alexandria. We flew a mariachi band of fifteen girls. It was a really nice deal. All the people were impressed. It was a really nice wedding. We had all traditional food, and believe it or not, I cooked [it] all. I did the groom’s cake and the wedding cake. We didn’t have any sleep for three days. It was really nice.

Rasmussen: You went out so much that I’ve learned about this because I read about it in the paper.

Rodriguez: It was in the newspaper, yes. It was really nice. It was really, really nice. It was an outstanding wedding. I'm proud that we could cater our culture and show. We have so many customers. We have to make a big wedding because everybody wanted to be invited. We wanted to invite everybody, so we had a big wedding. I was just happy and pleased that we could show a little bit of our culture all in one time on one deal for everybody. Everybody just talked for days. Until today, everybody comes to the restaurant, and they talk about the pretty girls with the mariachi band. They did a show. One of my brothers came from Mexico, and he got up with the mariachi band and sang a few songs. It was just all nice.

Sharma: And I am getting so hungry just hearing about it.

Walker: I think today with the culture, before the Americans didn't communicate well with the immigrants. They kind of shunned them, kept them away. Now, things have changed so much. The Americans are going out. There's more travel; they are going to other countries. They're learning more. When they come back to the United States. . . . Let's say you went to Mexico for a vacation or whatever, when you come back to the United States and you run into somebody from Mexico, you're more willing to talk to them and share that culture that you learned over there, their culture.

Rodriguez: And they went and ate something there, and they come and they ask you, "Can you do this? Do you sell this? Where can I find this?"

Walker: Because of the travel and the Internet, the television, the communications, Americans today are more willing to share the different cultures – the immigrants' culture with the American culture. Americans share their culture with the immigrant culture.

Sharma: One of the things I wanted to share with y'all was we talk about the immigrants who come; they think of themselves as, "I'm Indian. I'm Spanish. I am Mexican. I am this." I have to quote my young daughter who, I think, was in second grade at that time. She would pronounce some names that weren't said the way I would say. She would say, "That's how he says his name, and that's what we call him." Some other name. I would say, "Is he Indian? Is she Indian? Is he Filipino?" She said this to me, "Mom, in my class, everybody is American." That to me, I'll never forget. I never think of anybody now as where they originally came from. This young child saw everybody as American. The other funny thing which she said was, you know, out of the mouths of babes comes out the truth.

In our house, she and her sister were born here. They had an American passport. I had changed my citizenship. She said to somebody, "In my house, everybody is American except my father." She did not see, she didn't think she was Indian or I was Indian. We all had an American passport except her father who later changed. After a few years, he changed his citizenship.

The third was, my friend's daughter was called Nisha Basu. Her father was Indian; her mother was local. She looked like a white American girl. She looks, she's Polish decent, Italian decent, with a name like Nisha, which is Indian and Basu which is Indian. She was going to India and wanted to do some volunteer work. I called my friend and said, "Can you give her something to do?" She said, "Oh, Nisha Basu? OK, she will be probably knowing Bengali, and does she know Hindi?" I said, "Don't be surprised when you see Nisha Basu. She is as white American as you get." Sometimes the stereo-

types that we think about when we hear a name or feel something or how we see ourselves, it's all a mixture.

Rasmussen: Yeah. Thank you everyone. I wanted to turn the last minutes over to Maida. Maida, you've done so much work with the New Populations. Could you tell us about that?

Owens: Yes. My current initiative started in 2006. Basically, the Division of the Arts had never really reached out to the all the immigrant and refugee communities. They asked me to come up with a strategy to start to interact. You ask a folklorist, and what do you do? The first thing you do is identify and document. That was intended to be the first phase. Susan has some handouts. The first phase ended up lasting five years which was not the original intent. The second phase is just now beginning where we're mentoring some groups to integrate them into the Arts network if they choose to be. That's a list of all the different projects that we've done. I had Federal monies that could only be used for this project, so they didn't get cut. The project is continuing.

Basically I put out a call for proposals, and people responded. These are the ones that ended up getting funded over the last five years. I have a PowerPoint. Could you start it? It's just images of what the research has revealed. The immigrants that are in Louisiana are primarily Asians and Latinos. We are not a refugee settlement site for the United States. We're not one of the major ones. We don't tend to have the Bosnians and the Rwandans, all the groups that you read about in the paper that are coming over as political refugees. The five most numerous groups that we have are Vietnamese, Cubans, Hondurans, Mexicans, and Indians.

[Referring to PowerPoint] It's on nine-second relay. Is it?

Rasmussen: Yeah.

Owens: I just wanted to share with you what we found. Some groups have been here for many years while other arrived recently . . . . Our criteria were that the community had to have foreign-born members. The oldest group is the Cubans who started coming in '65. Some of these communities have been coming all along. Filipinos, there are seven generations of Filipino immigrants in Louisiana. Dance tends to be, and as you'll see with the Chinese Yang Gwang dance troupe that's going to perform next, dance is frequently very important to many of the groups because it provides a [way for them to socialize and maintain their culture] . . . . Recognize people? Oh, and I want to point out . . . .

Diwan & Sharma: We know [unclear]

Owens: I want to emphasize that everything, all these images are here in Louisiana. When I've shown this same slide show elsewhere, people assume that I've traveled all over the world: "Oh, you've been to India." No. There are three temples in Baton Rouge, just in Baton Rouge. They have no idea there are three temples. That's just the Hindu community in Baton Rouge.

All the different groups, and y'all touched on this with your personal stories, that one of the major lessons I've learned with this project is that you cannot make assumptions about one group based on another. One size does not fit all. Every single group has a unique circumstance: why they came, when they came, under what conditions. You're talking about Hondurans who left after Hurricane Mitch vs. professionals such as the Indians. Just an incredible range of circumstances.

All of them, as you've seen today, are wanting to pass on important parts of their culture. Some become more symbolic. Others, it's just because they want to eat the

food. The food is definitely the most resistant to change. That is absolutely, with everyone, that is the number one tradition most likely to get passed on. Crafts are definitely the most challenging for a couple of reasons: the amount of time it takes to do crafts. Also the function of the craft has changed, and it's more about nostalgia and memories, more so than you need a doily. I could go on.

We are continuing the project. It is Federal funds. How much more documentation continues depends on funding levels in the future. We've been focusing on the Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Lafayette communities for a couple of reasons. That is where most of the immigrant groups live in Louisiana. Outside of that region, it's primarily urban communities. The Mexicans are the only ones that are significantly in rural settings. I could go on and on about New Populations, but I think it's time to share a performance with you.

Rasmussen: Yeah. The Sunshine Chinese Dancers. Please stick around. This is going to be a great treat. There's a great website that they can go to find out more about New Populations, isn't there?

Owens: Yeah. In the handout I passed out, the louisianafolklife.org website has all this information that we've documented.

Rasmussen: It's a beautiful site. They have different pages and articles about many of these different communities and great full-color shots. It's really worth checking out. Thank you so much for coming. To our participants, thank you so much.

Owens: I really should address that. Chandan is asking about our funding. You'll find at the table back there a blue handout. The Louisiana Division of the Arts funding has been very significantly cut this year. We're also doing a strategic plan for the next four to five years. We're going to have a visioning for folklife. There's two ways to participate – a workshop and an online survey, so please, please participate in that.

Sunshine Chinese Dancers

Guiyuan Wang, Xiaomei Seal, and Chinese Dancers

Sunshine Chinese Dancers

The Yang Guang (Sunshine) Chinese Dance Troupe

Beginning with four dancers in 2005, the Yang Guang (Chinese for sunshine) Chinese Dance Troupe has since blossomed to almost thirty dancers. The dancers come from all walks of life – students and housewives as well as government and corporate employees. Through their stylized performances of form and movement, traditional dancers literally embody aspects of their culture in ways that words alone cannot convey.

The Troupe graciously performed Chinese and Tibetan dances at the Symposium. Elements of the choreography for one of these dances, “Tapping the Song,” date back to the Wei, Jin, and Southern Dynasties (220 – 589 A.D.). The performance of these dances is a combination of serious play and joyous work. Far more than enabling continuity of a part of their traditional culture, the Troupe’s performances breathe life into old forms. These dances become representations of the power of the folk to display in song and movement some of the oldest universal yearnings of humanity, such as the desire for love and marriage, and the expression of the joy of life itself. Old forms are revitalized and transformed into a line of cultural communication and transmission.