>> SPEAKER: Hi there. Thank you for joining us. With this online celebration of Juneteenth and the bravery for every enslaved person that fought long and hard. The program is brought to you from the Schomburg Center. Organizer, activist, and leader in the Black Freedom Movement told us there are two things we should all care about. Never forget where we came from, and always braze the bridges that brought us over. My name is Novella Ford and I'm the Association Director. The Schomburg Center is located in Harlem, New York, and part of the New York Public Library. We are a public archive home to over 11 million items that tell a multitude of items in the United States as well as across the globe.

The rich tapestry of Black life and Black history, names that you know and some names that you don't, but all help to tell the story of Black in America, Black in the world. Our physical facilities remain closed due to Covid-19; however, I invite you to visit our digital offerings. You can find them at Schomburgcenter.org. You can find many materials that are helpful in today's world and easily found at the library's website: NYPL.org/2020. Black Liberation Reading List for adults, listing 95 titles. We also just released a Black Liberation Reading List for young readers with 64 titles, so there's something there for everyone in the family. I invite you to visit the digital collections. The Lapita Center, which is home of rare books and other printed material. We'll place these resources in the chat for your convenience. Today I'm joined by an incredible group of scholars, musicians, culinary interests, and descendants of Freedom Colonies. Violence against Marginalized People.

Let me take this moment to thank you for giving us this 21st century battle cry, Black Lives Matter, because they do. For the artists and scholars and educators and photographers and journalists who document moments and movements that help us make sense of it all, and for every ally and co-conspirator -- sexism, racism, and more -- I say thank you. History thanks you. For Brianna Taylor, George Floyd, Trevon Martin -- and the many names we know and those history has never recorded. In the notes for a recent exhibition subversion that we hope we will be able to open at some time later this year or maybe even next. It was curated by Dr. Michelle, who is the Director of the Laquil Center.

Declaring that great responsibility came along with the awareness of slavery's cruelty. He ended his speech with the declaration. "You may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say you did not know."
We can never again look away and say we did not now. This year marks 150th anniversary of Juneteenth, a national implement made even more prominent by the uprisings across our nation. Many are calling today a Nation Day of action And Education as well as rest and community. Today we'll begin or program with Brittany A. Robinson, a seasoned Opera Professional, a seasoned company member in the Metropolitan Opera. Please welcome Brittany, live from the Bronx.

>> SPEAKER: I thank you, Novella, for an amazing introduction.

There is so much happening around the world, as well as the worry from Covid. It's always that ideal and that mindset to always just keep fighting. Keep fighting and always just never stop. Because in the end, it will truly be amazing. The outcome will truly be worth it, and I would love to present to you "Stay in the Storm" by composer Timothy Amogale —

(In song).

"Your heading for the Kingdom. You will anchor by and by. You're heading for the Kingdom. You will anchor by and by. Your mother's in the Kingdom. You will anchor by and by. Mothers in the Kingdom. You will anchor by and by." (Audio difficulty).

>> SPEAKER: Thank you, Brittany. So guess what? I have heard your lovely voice, but I believe that we had a little bit of a connection issue. So I am going to ask you if you could stick around and maybe right after Carla we'll see if we can do it again, because I would hate for people to have missed that beautiful voice right in the moment of climax; okay? Is that all right?


>> SPEAKER: Excellent. Thank you again, Brittany.

>> SPEAKER: No problem.

>> SPEAKER: So next up we'll have Chef, Cookbook Author and Television Personality, Carla Hall who is pure sunshine. She graced the screen to -- I'm delighted that she's joining us to share the influence of Juneteenth in Black Lives Matter on her own life. You may be familiar with her cookbooks of the Carla Hall Soul Food Every Day.

I do believe some of the menus might be available in our collection so it's giving you another reason to visit us at SchomburgCenter.org. The project documents Black settlement heritage. And Black groups reservation practice founded African Americans in Texas from 1865 to
1930.

Moderator, Chef, and Culinary Historian. Please welcome Carla Hall.

>> SPEAKER: Hello. How are you Novella?

>> SPEAKER: I'm well. Thank you for being here.

>> SPEAKER: I couldn't come on without giving a toast to Juneteenth. This is a watermelon and a strawberry slushy with a little bit of lime. So cheers.

>> SPEAKER: Cheers.

>> SPEAKER: So you mentioned that I had done a lot of research for the Schomburg, and it's amazing how much we don't know about our culture because we just don't get it in schools. And I grew up in National Tennessee, and it wasn't until I became the Culinary Ambassador at Sweet Home Cafe and I was thirsty for so much information.

Speaking of menus, I want to share the menus that I have in my book. Watermelon juice we start out with, and then there is a tomato, cucumber and dill salad, succotash salad with corn and lima beans. I took some creative liberties here. A Cornish hen, watermelon, salad with radishes, and buttermilk biscuits. And ending with a strawberry cake. So much of our culture comes through food and understanding the connection to food and that our story has woven through Africa and the Caribbean, as well as the United States and also through Spain.

The more that I learned about my culture, the more that I felt so much pride. And one of the things that I was doing in "Carla Hall -- Soul Food" is to share the celebration dishes, because every culture has them. But also the everyday dishes. There were a couple of times where I was talking to other Black people and they say, "I don't eat too much soul food because it will kill you." The celebration menu but you don't eat like that every day. The Italians don't eat lasagna every day.

The millet and the sorghum, which I love, and it's so nutty -- so these are grains that I got to know. And then I started using them and started making salads with, them and they're so delicious. And it's all about balance. And the other thing that I want to mention, whenever I talk to people about soul food and I see it written in articles is that soul food isn't capitalized. So if you have any other cuisine, it's capitalized. We, as African Americans and Caribbeans that are here, the Black people, we don't have that country to connect to. So when soul food came about in the late 60s or 70s, you think it can be capitalized because it is the cuisine of our
culture. I've pushed to have that perspective about our food.

There's another dish in the book that's one of my favorites and has nothing to do with Juneteenth. It's shrimp and grits, and when I speak to my friends in South Carolina, I talk about the beauty of that shrimp and the grits. So the grits don't have a lot of milk and cream and cheese. You have these beautiful grits that are showcased with salt and pepper and a bay leaf. And then you have these beautiful shrimp, because you want the shrimp to shine. You want the shrimp to shine, and the shrimp is with peppers and onions, and you put the two together and have the beautiful shrimp over the clean tasting grits. So when you strip back all of the stuff and all of the fanfare and all of the — I guess the celebration of it because — and make it not everyday dish, it's so much beauty to our food. And I've just been enjoying discovering myself through food, and I think that food is the ultimate diplomacy.

When you sit down with somebody and share your food and culture, it's ground zero where you can offer a grounding and fellowship. And I continue to do it every day and I continue to invite people to the table. And with that I, want to invite another person to the available with whom I think is so amazing. She is a Chef and a Historian. Therese Nelson. She is so passionate about sharing. Our Therese —

>> SPEAKER: Thank you so much, Carla. You are absolute sunshine. And there's something you were just talking about with you, just talking about finding yourself. And when we were thinking about what this panel was going to be about, the world of culinary history and the history in general and the lens in which we view ourselves. It's so much clearer, and I'm excited to be here this afternoon. I want to introduce Dr. Andrea Roberts. About five years ago we were convened in Austin, Texas for an event call the Soul Summit.

This particular point in history I had a thought about context and all of these folks we should be talking to and celebrating with and convening with in all of the country for the whole entire career. And this particular Juneteenth was perfect moment to start anew, so in the spirit of Juneteenth and family reunion and all of the tenets that keep us forward-moving and all of the challenges that we have. So in guise, it was a food focused event. Two days was fellowship, and there was a panel at the end that I had the honor of being on with Dr. Roberts. The lens that I work through is through the lens of history. When you find yourself in history, it changes the posture in which you do your work, whatever discipline.

Dr. Roberts was superlative on this panel and the work she was — you can't talk about food and posture and agency and in any space — she introduced what, at that point, was a relatively new project which was Texas Freedom Colonies Project. And it stuck out to me as a beautiful
way to come back to center and come back to the tenets that are going to sustain, whatever work you're doing and whatever discipline. We met through the lens of food, but I feel like the Freedom Colonies have sustained this relationship.

>> SPEAKER: They have. And the food is what has really brought me into this work, because one of my earliest memories in a Freedom Colony was staying with my grandmother. She lived a Riceville community, and that's where she had a chicken farm. This is notable because there's no sign that says Riceville. There's a church, but there's no sign. As a child, I just knew I was going to great-grandma's house and was going to get the best chicken I've ever had and have had since.

Looking back at that time I remember independence. My great-great-grandma went to the store for one or two things, but she had a garden and raised chickens who were later on the table for lunch. And she owned the land and it was a memory I have associated with my childhood, but I didn't know then it was a Free Black Space, as I would call it now. It was the memory of returning back to that, as I continue to lose more and more of my family and the conscious that people won't be around you forever. I had a real realization that that sense of freedom and independence, and the more I researched that, she was in the Farmer's Improvement Society that stretched three states. That society had a five-point platform of not relying on credit. Cooperative economics: My great-grandma was doing that and that question put me on this journey. It's part of what took me on this journey.

>> SPEAKER: I thought that's another part that's always -- I'm always going to be able to help with. Whenever we talk about the space of history and the process of recording history, we call it lots of things; right? But that process, when it comes to our culture, is always this detective work where you're trying to find pieces of evidence that let's you extrapolate out longer lines. And you use the word on the Freedom Colonies website and certainly I've heard you talk about it before, but the specificity and necessity of evidence. Seeds. Cultural seed -- oral history, is all these stories that are passed down. And what your project does is give us important ways to give us these receipts.

>> SPEAKER: I know you call it receipts. By trade my discipline is urban planning. Planning, history, community revitalization and development. Very often those are rules of data, and what data and whose voices matter. And one of my interventions -- what's valid and whose voice is valid and what's true evidence. The Texas Freedom Colony Project is a co-researching project. I use tribal research and also ethnography, spending time with folks and interviewing and participation with people. And all those things, and I'm also talking to people about what matters to them and what makes a place a place.
When you talk about Texas Freedom Colonies, and what is the definition of these places and people try to put boundaries around it, I often tell them so much of it is about the undocumented belief that a place actually existed. And how do you get ahold of that? That is the real question. How do we make our invisible assets and places visible?

Not just to the public and government officials but to ourselves. So that's really the process, and the work of the project is this enterprise in visibility and making that truth accessible and visible to the right people, and especially focusing in on those places that are most vulnerable. I talk about vulnerability of places in danger by under investment and environmental injustice, and there are all the ways that our communities are under attack and very often the last communities we recognize are those with this historic significance. But they're everywhere.

>> SPEAKER: That's a part always fascinating to me. I feel like some of the more important ways, even within Black culture, we do this kind of Cliff Notes version or over simplification -- really need to lean into and you think about figures like -- the book and legacy --

>> SPEAKER: So we know about these places that we're more familiar with, we'll say Eatonville or Rosewood or any of these types of towns. However, there were so many other communities that were never officially established as formal towns, but they functioned as settlements or communities but they had their own sense of governance. They had their central decision making places. Churches doubled as places where people's consciousness were raised with politics and they were places where people registered to vote. We have places not called City Hall, but they work very much as civil space. In the history of these places as told to me, as shared with memory recollect as experienced, and of course as investigated thoroughly through archival and historical research.

>> SPEAKER: Yes. That gets to the function of researchers and historians and the way in which we posture that work. It feels sometimes like there's a preciousness -- a steward ship working as a historian because it feels active and it feels like as a protective nature in which you engage the stories you've been gifted, the posture of the subjects and all are wrapped up into the posture in which you start into those spaces. I feel there's a particular way to be and to work and I wonder how that posture has changed? The balance is tricky.

>> SPEAKER: It's interesting. The ethics in the work is part of the research I do. Everything is part of the research I do. The research question, then, is when and what we want to know is how do African American people retain control over their heritage and stories and places while at the same time engaging the world on its own terms of how do you engage the community? How do I become a conduit for the
representation of these places? It is a huge responsibility. People come to me all the time and say, "You're going to take that stuff and give it to those white folks."

And I say to them, "You have to have a plan. You will not always be here, and who will hold it and what can we do together to ensure that it's held in the most ethical way possible? It makes it harder and more time consuming, but it's what's made the work, I think, so valuable -- not just to me but to the people I work with -- and it really is why I'm doing a book. That's not simply about sharing stories, but it's about really focusing in on how African American grassroots are saving their own community.

Maybe not a degree but they have an expertise and they are doing the work. The book I'm working on is how do we understand the best practices. How do we go back and get that which is valuable and useful and also make an effort to do things differently? To be more inclusive in certain instances? How do we grow our circle of belonging even more than we once did? So we're at this wonderful point in which we can go back and get, but also being critical and bringing technology and everything else that we can to the enterprise.

>> SPEAKER: Absolutely. I would love for you to talk a little bit more about the logo for your project. And it's a theory that I think maybe gets extrapolated out too far from the sense of what it really means. It immediately shifts the posture in everything we do.

>> SPEAKER: As I said, it is about the principle of going back into the past to retrieve so that before you go forward, you're getting the knowledge you need to move forward. Go back to the past and get all of the good stuff. If we just go back to the past, everything would be fine. It is that sense of idealism.

What's the truth about that? The truth about that is very much what we've been talking about for the past few weeks. And we talk about George Floyd and Brianna Taylor and systemic racism that devalues our bodies and our values and our heritage. It's a framework we have to do. We're thinking critically and differently about how we go back and get and how we evolve, if we're scholars -- how are we involving and working with, side-by-side, with communities to determine what their priorities are?

>> SPEAKER: Yes, and I think that's such a really particular distinction to me. The narratives of having to think through who would interview us and what would you put those evidences in. You listen to the stories that are so brilliant, but you do have to wonder how much are folks sharing and how protected do they feel about sharing their stories? And how do we view what is raw material without context? People have context with what they find in your research later on.
>> SPEAKER: Yes, absolutely. This critical framework is about three things that we do as a Texas Freedom Colonies Project: visibility, access, and vulnerability. Origin stories and stories of decline and we record stories of ongoing stories and triumph; atlas and online and on paper where we collect the public stories and finally we collect this data not just for the sake of having this data and being proud of our heritage, but how do we deploy this for saving these securities? Research about land retention and food security and environmental justice and everything else we want to do, and very often that's not seen as valid knowledge.

That cultural agency is not seen as integral to revitalization of these communities, and my work is directly confronting that idea.

>> SPEAKER: The point you made about define and place in a way that's not necessarily traditional is so brilliant. I see -- what that would feel like. So much of it, I think, in the work I do certainly but -- how do you bring people in a way that makes them feel ownership of it? Especially young people. 17-, 18-year-olds and wanting to come where they don't see themselves at all. All of a sudden, you introduce them -- I'm part -- no, no, I'm really part of this? I have a legacy that lays on top of a -- on top of history? It's so beautiful.

>> SPEAKER: It's awesome. It's very much about bringing everybody with you. The lift as we climb. It's a true thing and necessary way to operate for us to liberate.

>> SPEAKER: Maybe talk about this motion of what your project is about and specificity of place, but whenever I meet folks that have that deep, specific connection to their roots in a way such as you do, there's a different posture. It's a beautiful posture, and I'm so excited to have you in this next part.

>> SPEAKER: Yes, and so as I mentioned before, I don't do any of my work without fellow Freedom Colony descendants. And I thought what better opportunity to talk about my work than to bring on Freedom Colony grass roots preservationist Lareatha Clay -- I've mapped over 370 of these places, and while we've a total of over 500 to document and map, these two people have been the real foundation for almost all of the work that I've done in the academy around Freedom Colonies. And so what I want to do today is make sure that we hear a little bit about where they live now and what Freedom Colony or Colonies that they are connected to. So I'll start with Lareatha.

>> SPEAKER: Hi. My name is Lareatha Clay and I live in Dallas, Texas. If anyone is familiar with the geography of Texas, I live about five hours away from Shankleville. Dallas is in North Texas and Shankleville is close to the Louisiana side, the southern part of Texas.
>> SPEAKER: And Fred?

>> SPEAKER: Thank you, Dr. Roberts. I also live in Houston, Texas, but I have about 120-mile long route that drive me all the way back to east Texas and drive me all the way back to east Texas in the city of Jasper and the county of Jasper. Which Jasper is the county head. Houston to Jasper, Texas.

>> SPEAKER: So what is it about these communities that makes you keep coming back? Why do you commit so much time and effort? What is it about them that keeps you connected?

>> SPEAKER: When I was growing up, Shankleville was very special. My grandparents lived there and my mother used to take us there on weekends all the time. I know we're going to talk about the -- I remember my grandmother would call us and say, "The peas are ready," and we would go and spend the weekend.

We spent weekends there all the time. When I got to be older, I would be in Dallas on a Friday and it would be a nice sunny day and I would call my grandmother and say, "What are you doing?" And she would say, "I'm doing nothing."

I would get in my car and go visit her. It's just a place of memories of family and fun and we have our family reunions there every other year. Still have them there, even though my grandmother has been dead for 33 years now. And so it's just a place of home and possibility and fun, and you know, being yourself and everyone loving you and you're related to everyone that's there. And it's just a warmth that is almost indescribable.

>> SPEAKER: Fred, what keeps you going back?

>> SPEAKER: In 2014 members of our community formed an organization. We applied for and was granted a 501c3 tax exempt status and that organization, we were able to purchase back into the community what was once our elementary school. For many years it was one of our -- while it was located in our neighborhood, it was out of our possession. And in 2014 it went up for sale and we were able to acquire it back into the community. And the gymnasium built in 1952 is the home of the historical preservation.

All of these things tend to bring the communities together. And another couple projects that we have but also we also have the 4H.

>> SPEAKER: Awesome. So with that, Lareatha, can you talk about some of the big projects, the ways in which you have taken leadership, the ways to preserve the physical and intangible assets of Shankleville?
So in 1988 we started the Shankleville Historical Society, nonprofit 501c3 organization. And through that organization we have the Oral History Projects. We have the Cemetery Cleaning and Cemetery Maintenance Education Projects. Our largest project to date is we were able to get the Odem Homestead, and they were -- descendants.

Shankleville is named for Jim and Winnie Shankle, and they were enslaved in Mississippi in the 1800s, whatever. And the story goes that Winnie was given to a woman as a wedding present, and she and her husband came to deep, deep Texas. She came to Texas. Jim was so distraught that he found out where she was and ran away and found her at a spring in Newton County. And this is where they met again. And I have a cousin who has done additional research and she believes that Jim was owned by the brother of the man that lives in Texas, and that's how he was able to arrange purchasing him in Texas.

After emancipation we were able to acquire a league of land, which I heard is like 4,000-acres. And along with their son-in-law, Steve McBride, they just built a community and it's called Shankleville this day. So Jim and Winnie's oldest daughter is Harriet. I am the oldest descendant. We have a homestead and its significance is it is the only remaining example of an operating and well-run farm from the 1920s to 1960s time period.

I also -- my grandfather, just so happened, was a contractor in the area. And at the time of lumber company was the largest employer in the area and he contracted with them and did carpentry work, so we were able to get on the register. And right now we're in the process of restoring the home to the 1945 appearance that it had, and in fact, my cousin who is there now -- today was supposed to be the start of our family reunion.

We've been having family reunions since 1949. This was going to be a big one, 70 years, and so Covid came in and we'll talk about that later.

Fred, do you want to talk about pre- and post-emancipation associated with Dixie?

I do. I'll start with our motto. "Empowered by the past while focusing on the future."

I'll start with background about prior to emancipation, and I'm going to talk a lot about a man named Richard. About 1950 Joshua Seal and his wife moved to Mississippi with a number of enslaved persons. They were born enslaved about 1797 in Alexandria, Virginia, and at some point Joshua Seal became his master. Records show he was allowed to join the Baptist Church that Joshua and his family attended in Mississippi. After arriving, Richard began being a devout Christian
and built what was the oldest Black church built by formerly enslaved people west of the Mississippi. That's the background of prior to emancipation.

Now after emancipation, many of those formerly enslaved persons remained in Dixie Community, and they lived closer together under the leadership of Uncle Richard Seal. I'm pretty sure you heard about Bobby Seal, one of the founders of the Black Panthers. Uncle Rich would be Bobby Seal's grandfather. Deep roots.

>> SPEAKER: Deep roots. So with that, I really want to give you both an opportunity to speak to this unique moment and the challenge that's it presents to Freedom Colonies. That could be anything, but most notably, I think of Covid-19 and why it's important for young people to value the physical and intangible assets.

>> SPEAKER: In our case, every kid that's associated or connected to Shankleville knows the Shankleville story. It's a hit. When we have our homecomings — I think Fred mentioned the homecomings which raise money for cemeteries in the air. Or when we have our family reunions, there's always a trip to the spring, the spring where Jim and Winnie Shankle were reunited. We have a ritual of drinking water from the stream in ritual of that. Today would have been our family reunion, which would have included going to the stream and everything.

We're trying to put together a virtual family reunion. My cousin is there and so excited, and the way we've been restoring and working on the house is we have an architect working with us. And all the work has been done by my grandfather's grandsons with this cousin being the head guy and project manager, for lack of a better term. He is a project manager. And the story of cousins and his grandchildren and my other cousin's grandchildren.

We get together and have work weekends. Go up and do the work and we have real contractors come in every now again and do the work. He's going to do a live reunion from Shankleville this Saturday night, tomorrow.

>> SPEAKER: That's awesome. I love it.

>> SPEAKER: He's going to show the progress on the house, because we've also raised money within the family. And he's also going to take a walk down to the spring and do the traditional things and tell the whole story of the spring. And we're hoping that this works out. And we've been happy that the main people planning it — because our family reunions have been going on so long. We're going to do this. Everyone knows what they're doing, and everyone knows what they're kind of doing so since we've had to step outside of the box, the main people coming up with the ideas are the younger generations. Or we call them the green shirts.
The generations -- my parents' generation is green and mine is blue and the next is yellow and so the kids in college or younger are green and the little kids are red.

>> SPEAKER: It takes a lot of work and organization.

>> SPEAKER: That's going to be fun.

>> SPEAKER: Yeah. So Fred, I know that we're almost getting to the questions, and I see we have a lot of questions. But do you want to remark at all round, the great work you've been doing with young people?

>> SPEAKER: I want to go back to something that was said about Covid-19. It's really effected our organization, because this is the period when we need to rent out the building for these types of events that we talked about earlier. And not having that source of revenue puts us in real bad. We're going to get through it, by the grace of God.

But what we do with the youth -- we have a young youth mentorship program where we meet once a month. We usually meet with them on the same day we meet with our -- it's the same day we have our executive board meeting, which is the second Saturday each month. So we meet once a month with these groups. We're doing some exciting things, and I'm proud of the youth in our community for sure. Those are the kinds of things we do with the youth. We also work with some of them with the scholarships. We don't know where they're going to school yet or if they're going to be able to go. We're trying to be prepared in case everything opens up and we'll be able to do that.

>> SPEAKER: So I know that we have questions --

>> SPEAKER: The comments are going off. You all. Preserving more Black communities and places could be a restorative gesture of operations. What are some of the things to make that happen? Where do folks start; right?

>> SPEAKER: So I think a lot of it is knowing about what's available and what's accessible and also knowing about your assets. So an asset-based approach is not just saying we have this building. But it's saying we have these individuals with this know-how. We don't all necessarily live here, but I have a cousin who's an attorney. We need to start a nonprofit. Where's the cousin? Oh, I don't have that cousin. Oh, is there an attorney that would do the pro-bono work? It's about being resourceful like our relatives were. We know someone who is a carpenter or a plumber. There was a time when those were the people we depended on as large scale. It's taking the opportunities to learn.
Local historical commissions don't have very many people that look like us on them. So one of the things we have to do is interrupt and interject and get involved, and very often if we don't, we're leaving money on the table that belongs to us. There's different projects and different opportunities for grants and revitalization and disaster protection and we find out way after the fact. What's key is the education and access and knowing about these resources, and often it behooves us to reach out to the communities and empower and offer them the same access of information that we have.

>> SPEAKER: Amen. I think sometimes in Black spaces we talk about lack of support and what support looks like, and we don't think about what it could look like if we thought about more broadly about what we have in our community. The second question was really interesting and it was about DNA. And so that -- is that part of your work at all?

>> SPEAKER: Not at all. And I actually pay much more attention to the informal kinship networks that I've observed. African Americans have a way of kinship and I wrote an article called "Count the Outside Children."

We have a way of belonging in community and family, and it's beyond the biological -- it's exciting to say I can look at this African ancestor and I know I'm from this village, but what's key is knowing about the relationships and how we constructed families before we got here. They're my cousin. Are they blood? No. I just call them cousin. Some are kin and some are not, and there's a bond and sense of belonging that they're able to deploy to get things done. That's what I'm more interested in than DNA.

>> SPEAKER: I think of people like Michael (inaudible) who thinks particularly about our traditions and being able to map them as far back as possible. What I'm interested in is the same sort of thing you're talking about is these points of history and heritage that will absolutely follow with you, kind of envelope you, be in your marrow and bones and everywhere you go so you become the representation of that heritage because you value those assets more keenly and become so infused in the way you move through the world. Feeling relative to culinary world.

>> SPEAKER: Absolutely. That's history for sure. If it's okay, I see that there's another question. I don't know that we have time.

>> SPEAKER: I'm all for it.

>> SPEAKER: Okay.

>> SPEAKER: As churches are safe communities in social life, how important are they to Texas Freedom Colonies and do you feel they have
played a certain role in preservation work?

>> SPEAKER: Do either one of you want to speak to that?

>> SPEAKER: What was the last part of the question?

>> SPEAKER: Basically, community spaces like Mr. McCray talked about -- do you find that churches are a hotbed of this research -- that are disproportionately better at having those records than other places?

>> SPEAKER: In Shankleville there are three churches. The Church of God is one. When I was going up in the late 60s and early 70s, the churches were very vibrant and they had, you know, preachers that shared congregations. So if you had Sunday school in one church, then you would have church -- everybody from the three churches would go to whichever church would have the 11:00 o'clock service. That is not as much anymore and the congregations are a lot smaller. Between the three churches there are maybe 50 members. They are really struggling, but when we have the homecomings, they still get together because the homecomings rotate between each church.

It's always the first Sunday in August for us. Then the other churches don't have church and everyone goes to that one church. They continue to play a role but not as -- they continue to support what the Shankleville Historical Society does. They're not in the forefront as it was years ago, but primarily the community is not as big as it once was. And it has many seniors and less people available to take lead roles.

>> SPEAKER: The way we know they exist or still existed at any given time is because the church is still standing. That's all that remains of the settlement. And the other challenge is that in the 60s, 70s, 80s, it was very important and we were very proud of our building funds and being able to put on siding and changing out the windows. But what that did is the made them not as historically significant, because the integrity of the building changed and because of this institutionalism of racism preservation stopped the access to fund to rehabilitate these properties. How do we support faith communities being able to rehabilitate buildings and revive them?

>> SPEAKER: That was one of the disappointments that I had when we put the Odem Homestead on the national register. The original plan was to have the whole community go on, but things had changed so much that there was no significance left in those three buildings enough for it to be -- and the churches would have been the keystones in the community of being listed. The only building left that could make it onto the national registry was the Odem Homestead.

>> SPEAKER: If I can piggyback off of that a little bit, Dr. Roberts. Our organization applied for the Dixie community a historical marker,
and it was awarded in 2019 and we are hoping that that historical
marker keeps that community together. Because, like you said, usually
when the church dies, the community dies. But all these folks are
still living in that community, and if we can gather pride about our
community and what this marker means, what is the significance of that
particular community, then we're on our way to something, I think.

>> SPEAKER: Yes. Yes. The most important thing you're saying is
you're on the way to something. It's a process. Everything is a
long, ongoing freedom struggle; right? Just like the rest of our
freedom struggle.

>> SPEAKER: That's right. I just want to thank you all so much. I
think there was something really particular about -- there is
something particular about the way you folks from Texas seem to -- you
are so specific about pride of place and you are so specific about
protecting what is rightly yours and what posture is inspiring to see.
I think we'll have some of the links and information on their
projects, but certainly you can find these beautiful people out in the
world and help and donate. I thank you for being with us. It's been
wonderful to hear your stories.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you for having us.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you for such a beautiful conversation. There were
many questions asked in the chat section, and certainly people were
asking to be able to learn more about Mr. McCray about Miss Clay, so
if there are websites, we will also include them in maybe the
description of the YouTube place where we have the video. If not,
we'll putt it in the chat as well.

Therese was with us a little bit last year. One of the things Dr.
White mentioned is that too often we over-elevate the work of
academics with the folks whose work and labor we could not do without.
I want to thank Dr. Roberts for introducing Mr. McCray and Miss Clay.
That pride in place. I think we should all find that wherever we are
on this planet, pride in place, but also the freedom to be prideful of
those places.

Thank you again. We'll drop in the comment section, again, the link
to the Texas Freedom Colonies Project so you can learn more about
that. Now, we're going to turn to the last segment of the program. I
promise you, you will have treated yourself to the wonderful end of
this program.

Many of us have been without our rituals and celebration through this
time of quarantine. We will now hear from Rootstock Republic. Please welcome Juliette and Jarvis.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you so much, Novella. Peace and happy Juneteenth. Peace and happy community. Thank you for that incredible introduction. We are the co-directors of Rootstock Republic. Increase dynamic platforms for us to be seen, heard, and celebrated.

>> SPEAKER: Absolutely. Hello everyone. Happy Juneteenth. One of our -- letter to Nina Simone -- powerhouse visionary singer/songwriter/pianist and so much more, based out of New York. The project is 15 of love songs and blues and protest music and features some of our dearest colleagues we are so fortunate to call family. Juliette Joneses, myself, and Robert Benson and -- bass player and --

In this set it includes Strange Fruit and Strange Fruit, of course, is one of the most iconic songs of the 20th century Civil Rights Movement. And as we know, it was made famous by Billie Holiday.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you for that Jarvis. One of our commitments in the project was specifically to bring on Black players in part because that's our mission and legacy work, but also many folks know that Nina Simone is classically trained and she defined that genre by her own standards. We really believe in the invasion of creating our one. For us it was important to uplift Black people and music to the avenue of expressing what we need to say through that avenue of classical music. And it's part of why our instrumentation includes a strings sextet with piano.

A lot of the orchestration was written so we have, if you will, range of our instruments and voices and part of our legacy. It was important for us to feel we could always access that through the music, and you'll hear that later today. And as Jarvis mentioned, it was important for us to highlight Strange Fruit. It is difficult to hear and play. We don't treat it as a performance. We treat it as a ritual.

We know the New York Times called it a declaration of war, really. But we also feel very clear in the ways was a crucial marker to stamp the Civil Rights Movement. Here we are 400 years later, still fighting the genocide against Black and brown bodies. Thank you so much for taking the journey with us.

>> SPEAKER: One of the things Nina Simone left us with and charged us with the choice and with the duty to reflect our art. We really wanted to take this to heart and sit with it. And we feel as though we're summoned by all of our ancestors to stand call in that calling as an active resistance to survive and to trust redemption. And our humanity was ignored.
>> SPEAKER: I was the honor of participating with Black joy in the hour of chaos, and in that work he reminds us that joy is the human right and that spring is for the taking and that joy in the living Black body matters. Through our work, through the vehicle of dear Nina, we claim that birthright to be the very own. And we fight forward for the liberation for all black bodies.

>> SPEAKER: So we created a visual experience to accompany our performance of Strange Fruit. And the recording that you will hear is from our -- last year's inaugural songs festival in Germantown, Philadelphia. This video is our reflection on Black remembrance and Black joy. The full premier of this visual experience will be available to all of you exclusively after the celebration on Dear Nina YouTube channel. And the link will be shared directly with you. The last thing we want to thank is our Schomburg family for welcoming us back and organizing this very special, event in celebration of Juneteenth.

(Music).

>> SPEAKER: I think we all just need a moment to sit with that feeling. Thank you so much, Juliette and Jarvis, and the many members of the Rootstock Republic who made that recording. You can access the visual experience now. If you are watching this program, you can watch — see the link in the chat. Still, every time I hear it, I get choked up and I am greatful to the artists who are often making that. And I'm thankful photographer artists who are here joining us in the space to commune and I'm hopeful that each of you find a way to rest or protest. I hope you do it safely.

I want to say thank you to those who are behind the scene — thank you and immense gratitude to our participants. I'm so sorry, Brittany, that we were not able to bring you back at this time, but I'm sure that we're going to be able to do a special post so that they can hear the beauty of that voice that they already started to hear when we began this segment.

Thank you for spending part of Juneteenth with the Schomburg Center. Thank you for librarians and archivists — the people that help to preserve these Black histories and make it accessible to willing and thankful and empathetic scholars willing to tell these stories out into the world. And we know that there is more one story for each individual in this tapestry.

I won't read all, but simply she knows she writes in the whirlwind is our commonwealth. The easy man riding above