

TRANSCRIPT– JOHN WRIGHT

Interviewee: JOHN WRIGHT

Interviewer: TIMOTHY ST. PIERRE

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Location: Charleston SC by Zoom

Length: 51 minutes

TIMOTHY ST. PIERRE: Mr. Wright, do you consent to being recorded for this oral history interview?

JOHN WRIGHT: Yes.

TS: All right. Uh, my name is Timothy St. Pierre. I am conducting this interview for the Charleston Oral History Project with the Citadel. It is 5:06 PM, April 14th, 2021. Mr. Wright, can you state your name and any title or address you prefer?

JW: My name is John F. Wright. I'm retired US Army. I am president of the African American Historic Settlement Community Commission Incorporated.

TS: Okay. So how we'll start. This is, I'm going to ask you some more questions about yourself and then we'll expand to bigger and better-- bigger questions like the settlement communities, and then the other things that we're doing with our society today. So could you tell me about how your family came to this area?

JW: It's believed that, as I know of in my family originated in, the Phillips community, right after Reconstruction, but as, as noted, I mean, 1619 is when our ancestors really arrived here. So, as far as family history and limits, I'm by no means a historian, more of an advocate for those that are less able-- don't have the ability to

John Wright

advocate for themselves. But from the historical standpoint, I, you know, I'd say it was 1619 is when our ancestors originally arrived. Now, as far as areas here in Mount Pleasant, Charleston, folk communities, were a family, when my father's, my mother's family, I'm sorry, my grandfather's family originated in the Phillips community, but it was the Hamlin community where my mom is from. So two settlement communities, north end.

TS: So the AAFC website, it, mentions the Gullah community as the center of its attentions, would you consider yourself part of the Gullah community?

JW: That is the culture, Gullah-Geechee culture here in the, in the Lowcountry. And as I know, from what I've been told that-- that derived from the language and culture came from, from West Africa. And, when they arrived, it was a means of authenticating, you know, a means of identifying the problem based on the [00:02:57] the dialect, all those customs came along with them.

TS: Okay. So growing up in, did you grow up in the Mount Pleasant community yourself, or did you say--

JW: I grew up in Mount Pleasant.

TS: All right. And did you experience that type of, unique Gullah culture as you were growing up? Did it affect you living in that type of community?

JW: Oh, yeah. By all means, you know, the things that, the things that they did-- it's amazing as the things that they did as a kid, the, the generation before me, we still do today. Whether it's how they gathered to socialize, what are the foods they eat, those same foods that I can remember being in, on demand then they're on demand today. And

John Wright

so, yes, the cultural tradition, then nothing more than just repeating itself after year after year.

TS: What were some of the social activities or foods that you mentioned that-- it's worth exploring this for our listeners.

JW: Certainly. Foods would be, would be okra, okra and shrimp. Um, that's a big deal for me. I loved it. And not only is that a big deal, but it's also the, the seafood. Seafood is a major part of social life. For example crabs, the blue crabs. Crabs was then, and is now today, a social opportunity. It was called a crab crack and where a hundred, well, not a hundred, but, you know, however many people there standing around a table and they eat these blue crabs after they've been boiled for a little while. And that was a big, big tradition. And it's still a part of who we are today. You know, unique. I, I spent 29 years away from home, traveling and serving the country. And when I got back-- I left at 17-- so when I got back 29 years later, I didn't think that the Crab Crack would still exist or [oyster licks] where they roast these oysters and everybody's standing around and, and in pop these shells, and that's festive and not only festive, but it's a big means of socializing. And, so, you know, little things such as, such as okra and, our seafood, you know, those are, those are primarily customs that I saw as a kid that still exist today.

TS: Okay. I appreciate that. You said you left at 17 for the military.

JW: That's correct.

TS: How much of the community life, how affected would you say you were by the Gullah community before you went to join the Army? For example, did you take your culture or this unique community with you in any way? Did you carry it with you overseas?

John Wright

JW: Of course I did. And it helped me along the way. As I navigated another countries and other cities, I more than more than, the most effective, characteristics that I took with me was mannerism that Southern charm. And also that, that, that level of, "Yes, sir. Yes ma'am." So that part of me did really well in other cities and other states, and other countries. So that Southern charm and then mannerism, took me a long way. And I think that was, of all the things that I think, I learned as a kid was by far one of the most effective, you know, when you talk about, as a kid, for me going out and delivering a newspaper to all the neighbors and over a hundred or something houses every day. Well, [inaudible] at age 12, I started reading this paper, and my views on essentially everything changed by the time I was 14. Just simply based on my ability to, to look at what's happening elsewhere and find a need to leave a comment on it, or "you can't get away with it." So, so my travel-- in essence, when I traveled in other cities and states, unlike most military guys who go to a military base and they're there, I, I would more, I was always most intrigued by, by the environment of where I lived, and the culture of where I live and the people. And, so that I took with me, and, so I've been-- that was, that served me well.

TS: All right, this is a bit of a digression, but what places did you see while you were out and about, for example, your bio on the website, they just list that you served elsewhere, but is there any unique places?

JW: Well, I served, eight years in Europe, and I served in Fort Stewart, Georgia, served in Fort Gordon, Georgia. I served in Fort Leavenworth, Missouri. I served in Fort Hood, Texas, and I served in two conflicts. I served in Desert Storm as well as in Bosnia. So serving in those two conflicts, of course. Then I served some time in-- one year in

John Wright

Korean and some time out in, out of Wisconsin is where I spent a lot of my- late into my military career.

TS: Okay. I respect that. I come from a military family myself, so I'm used to hearing-- you know, my brother's in Korea currently, stuff like that. But one thing worth asking is: you talked about how you were reading a lot already by the age of 14. Were you aware, were you conscious of the difficulties your community was facing as you were growing up?

JW: Well, that was not, that was not an, a child's thing it's really an adult thing to be aware of, however not under-- not fully understanding and/or, um, embracing my culture and where we live and the geographical location. But there was one thing I wish I had done better. And it was just that: understanding that the geographical, cultural perspective of these communities, I wish I had learned that. But I was not aware of the value of where we live and the landscape and how we were duly located, not duly located-- centrally located for survivability, near water lines and things such as that. I wasn't aware why we lived in this geographical location, these communities, but I'm now, I'm now far more educated [inaudible]--

TS: Well when you returned, I think it was 2013, you returned from service in this area.

JW: That's correct.

TS: Did you immediately-- you said that you were surprised at the continuity in your community, that there were things that you remembered. Were you struck also by the difficulties? Is that, is this how you began to confront, the problem with your community and get engaged as you currently are?

John Wright

JW: Exactly in 2013, I came home and I left home in '84 to, roughly [2015?]. And then I came home for about [inaudible] growth had happened; development had happened, and, um, and, and when I say growth and development uniquely in my case up and traveling and living in other cities and other states and other countries growth was good in a lot of cases because we needed to grow. I would not have wanted to come back here had we-- had we, if we were still living by a fishing hole on the way to the beach. I just wouldn't have been intrigued. You know, the idea that as a kid, everything that we essentially had to do, we had to go to Charleston, South Carolina, we had to cross the bridge to do it living here in Mount Pleasant. Well, fast forward to 2013, when I returned home, there was really no need to go across the bridge to Charleston, for anything. Mount Pleasant had now developed and blossomed to a community where that that became-- where we now had everything you had hospitals. And we have all, all facilities that a growing, city or community would have. But what I did know this was, that a lot of the communities, the African-American settlement communities had been compromised. They'd been encroached on, and the character, they were losing their distinct character. So I then, in 2013, the current mayor at the time when I came home, Billy Swails he literally raised me up as a kid. I spent nights at his house, and I played baseball for him. And you know, he was a big part of my family essentially, I then told Billy that I thought there was a need for change. And I thought we were-- our local government had become quite antiquated and an outdated system. So I've been lobbying. I then started with a conversation with the need to change our local government. And that's grown to a petition that garnered 86,000 signatures-- I'm sorry, 8,600 signatures--

TS: Still impressive.

John Wright

JW: Yeah, to get a question on the ballot to determine whether or not we go to, go from, at large to, to single-member district system, or at least more than anything else, give the voters a sense of an opportunity to decide. What I learned during that, during that campaign, that six month campaign of collecting signatures, we get that question on the ballot to look at possibly changing up in the government. I learned that Mount Pleasant had become two cities: the South End and the North End. And what I learned about folks in the North End, a lot of them were, had had to come here from big cities and new, Upstate New York and in the Midwest, like where I came from. And they had come here, they had left cities that were already in districts. So they came here with the assumption that as large as Mount Pleasant was, that we were broken into districts, but-- so it also kind of gave me the idea that they were also not following, following, local, local government and how it was formed. And for that matter, even local affairs so that they knew they lived here for years, two years, three years, and to not know that we weren't districts, then said, we just had some folks that came here that just came to Charleston, came to Mount Pleasant to live in what we know is a very comfortable, safe place to live. And you can come here and live, and it's safe, and it's comfortable and never have to really get involved in local government because, it's just the entire community more than anything else.

TS: Well, I spoke with Fred Lincoln recently, especially about the Cainhoy community. And he liked to say that there was-- he had this saying that the Cainhoy people "they're "not transit people." And he was trying to make this comparison between what's happening in the Cainhoy community and other settlement communities, that there

John Wright

was, even if they don't all fall under the Gullah description, that there's some type of unity there. Would you agree with Mr. Lincoln?

JW: I would certainly agree one hundred percent. Essentially, settlement communities are not communities where, we're, we're-- that's transit. Typically those are communities where you have folks that are four or five generations. So you got in communities where, for example, in Hamlin, where my family had had property, they have my great-great-grandfather, Tom Bennett, purchased a 10 acre tract. That 10 acre tract to this day is, has family. And he purchased that back in 1910, 1912. And to this day, in 2021, it has at least four or five family members on it. So typically, the settlement communities and the people within them are not transit. What you find is structures that are not, that don't consistently conform with- with the neighborhood, Those are what you'd find with new residents, and, new development. But structures that conformed were primarily pretty much all the same.

TS: Well, I have a brief aside real quick. Um, you mentioned that there was a North end, the South end in the Mount Pleasant community. Is that related to-- in Cainhoj, they described as actually an ethnic division. You have your African-American community or white. Is there anything like that in Mount Pleasant? Is "gentrification" involved at all?

JW: Well, gentrification is always involved. You-- of course, a hundred years ago, these were not popular areas to live. Whites had no desires to live here, and in and around the waterways, but primarily blacks did. There was no need to live-- they didn't want to live in them because of the infestation of mosquitoes and the marshland and things such as that, but what the blacks lived for was survival. It was ideal for blacks' survivability.



John Wright

We can crab and we can fish and we can eat off the water. They live off the waters for food; agriculture was a big deal. So we had, we would be able to farm and continue to farm, as we did on plantations. So, that exists; now, now the gentrification is really more about, folks that have come here and move into these communities, and have made them, have created a tax based issue, with the property value. So that, that itself has been, been a major problem. Now, when I say North End and South End of town, North End would be beyond the IOP Connect here in Mount Pleasant. Growing up as a kid, anything beyond Bowman Road, we considered the country. But today Bowman Road is in the heart of the town. In fact, there's a Midtown coming up in and around where Bowman Road is. Never heard of this before, but, these, this North End of town now where, where 30-- 40, 40% of the population of the town now resides.

TS: What other types of encroachments do you think are worth discussing? For example, the Clements Ferry Road widening project is the big example that John Sanders, Fred Lincoln mentioned Cainhoy. What kind of things was Mount Pleasant experiencing? You've already listed quite a few. Is there anything more?

JW: Well, we, we're experiencing some road, growth issues as well, in the Phillips community just recently, there was an issue about five lanes wide in, that community, five lanes. There's ongoing issues in the Seven Mile community and the Four Mile community there's-- um, literally, literally I left home and there was a two lane highway on Highway 17, but now it's four, five lanes, and it has, destroyed, essentially that community for what we know from what I know, and it's happening along the 17, Highway 17 corridor from the foot of the bridge all the way out to, to the clinical area. And so that's-- that, that highway is it's, it's, it's a major highway now. It's a major

John Wright

doorway to get to Myrtle Beach and get to Georgetown. So, it's being used constantly, but what has happened as a result of it is the more traffic we get, the more new, the bigger the need is to get them toward those destinations and as fast as possible. So then, what then happens is these little communities that were alive, that were right along, Highway 17 have, have become affected.

TS: Okay. How did you find yourself going from lobbying for a single district to being involved with the AASC and, like, confronting all these various types of encroachment?

JW: All along, all along I single-member district was an issue. I felt that it would be a way to press the government to understand, how we could-- fair and balanced representation. What was ultimately my ultimate goal, my ultimate goal was fair and balanced representation. Now it was perceived that, because we had only had one black council member in the entire history of the town of Mount Pleasant, I'm a young black male at home, and, you know, some people could experience this as well. And it's perceived that I'm, I am coming home to demand representation on council. That's not-- that wasn't the case at all. And so to me, it has never mattered, and it will never matter who you the elected officials are; it's about accountability to me. So, um, it doesn't matter what you look like. I'm gonna hold him accountable. But what, what, what I pointed out at the time as well, was that town of Mount Pleasant, when I left home, we were about 22% black or about 22% of the population, and when I came home, we're less than 5%. So therefore, there's no justification to, to have a black representative for the 4% population. But uniquely, what made me realize the value in all these historic settlement communities were that all these settlement communities, primarily, we're all in-- in

John Wright

Charleston County, and they were detached from the town of Mount Pleasant. So when you look at that, um, you're looking at about 99,000 residents in those settlement communities that does not ever vote or know a voice in the town of Mount Pleasant. The only-- the number one economy that they support, um, when they leave their communities and go to the left or to the right, and they go spend money, they spend the money to boost the economy in the town of Mount Pleasant, but they don't have a vote nor a voice. Um, now, and most practically, those, those communities were part of the town of Mount Pleasant and rightfully so and justified. And so we could, we could, I would then maybe, to lobby, to have a representation on the council that reflects those communities, but because they were not, um, could not go by the way of Charleston, the city of Charleston, North Charleston, when both of those federal, federal suits to create districts for representation. But we did not have those same set of dynamics. But what I did know-- this as well, is that in my activity with the local government and council meetings and the committees and the commissions that were formed, voluntary commissions that were formed by the Town of Mount Pleasant, and also the town of Mount Pleasant had an historic commission. And I also noticed that an Old Village Historic Commission, there was no one advocating for the settlement communities. They were, and not only were they not [inaudible] advocate for the settlement communities, I then took it upon myself to demand that Charleston County, as well as the town of Mount Pleasant adopt the language of calling these communities "settlement communities" versus "unincorporated" or "donut holes," as those terms were being used. I and my military methods and ways, demanded on-the-spot correction and that they not be called "unincorporated" and they not be called "donut holes" because they were symbolic of

John Wright

something, and they were settlement communities, and these people settled after Reconstruction and bought the land-- not given the land, but bought the land. And that's where they settled. So uniquely, maybe to this day, there was, you know-- Charleston: we're the hub for this, for this whole slave, experience, and descendants of slaves, and so on and so forth. But it just seems that history generally stops right at the plantation. It does not go beyond Reconstruction, where these descendants went and lived after they were free.

TS: Yeah [inaudible]--

JW: So from that, I-- we, demanded the historical survey of these communities by Charleston County, which then went to demand to use the term "settlement" for these communities so that they would have the historical significance.

TS: Alright, that seems to be very successful, at least, you know, from my end, new to the area. I've only heard of these as Settlement Communities. You can't look it up without being reminded of how important they are, you know, as historic representations of the story from slavery to Reconstruction and to the present.

JW: Well, that's very, that's, that's, that's very humbling to hear you say that. And you've been here, how long, may I ask?

TS: I'm here-- I've been here about eight months, which doesn't mean I'm a local yet.

JW: Okay, good. But in eight months, if you-- if the term that you become most familiar with is "settlement," then you understand that this is-- this has historical significance.

John Wright

TS: Alright, and I appreciate what you've done so far, and I apologize if I'm bouncing all over with my questions. That's just my style.

JW: That's not a problem at all.

TS: Oh, one thing I would like to clear up for our listeners is that the AASC: were you involved in its foundation, or did it already exist when you came back from the service?

JW: No, I was, I was a part of the co-founders that founded the AASC. And we started this dialogue and this conversation around 2015 we adopted the [inaudible] the bylaws from what-- from the Mount Pleasant Historic Commission. And we use their bylaws to create our bylaws. And, we formed this group right around in the end of 2015, but in 2016, we kind of kicked it in high gear. We had, we found a headquarters or a site that we would use that would serve as our headquarters. It is, it is the Marguerite and Peter Johnson Center, which the 440 Benning Street. And, that building, and that house is very significant to me as a kid, that is up here in the Old Village simply because it was the first black business in the town of Mount Pleasant, and dating back to 1929. And the fact that our headquarters and our commission is using that building for our office and our headquarters adds significant value. Peter Johnson, was the first black NAACP president East of the Cooper, while Marguerite Johnson was the first black female mortician. So a lot of history, a lot of significance in that. And what we did was as soon as we were able to come to an agreement with the priory of the Johnson Hall Funeral Home today to use that building. We then named the building, "Peter and Marguerite Johnson Center," and we had a naming dedication ceremony, and we named that building after those two. But, without the permission of the town, without the permission of the

John Wright

county, we didn't, to bring back-- at least I didn't feel like we needed permission to honor those two ambassadors that had never previously been honored, and no one, knew their story until we kind of brought this, who they were back to life, essentially.

TS: Okay. Good to hear. Were you the president at the foundation of the ASC? Have you been president throughout?

JW: Yes. I've been president from the time we started to today.

TS: What's your role as president?

JW: Well, I am the president over the African-American Settlement Community Commission that's comprised of seven communities and presidents of the other prospective communities. My role primarily is to grow the settlement commission, to attend and act as a layer between local governance and the communities themselves. We don't operate, we don't do day-to-day operations of the respective communities. But what we do is, we serve as a layer between the communities and [inaudible] and their advocacy in issues that arise, so that when an issue does arise, we're able to bring some strong resources to whatever the issue may be, by having all the community, as well as our commission, [inaudible].

TS: Okay. What strategies does the AASC use? You've mentioned lobbying and the, uh, general organization from what I've heard from different groups, simply making people act in concert for the benefit of the community. Are there any strategies or tactics that you've used successfully?

JW: Yeah. Strong tactics is simply a matter of, using cultural and racial sensitivity and empathy to ensure that we don't ask for equality; we demand it. And in doing so, it's been extremely effective. Um, we're now listed, and as a consultant party for the National

John Wright

Alliance for Clean Water and Sewer. We're also listed as a consultant party for the Corps of Engineers, as well as Department of Transportation. We're listed as a consultant party for the Highway 41 Widening and Improvement Project. We're listed as a consultant party as well for, um, for the town of Mount Pleasant as well as Charleston County as a local resource.

TS: All right. In your biography, it says that you've participated-- maybe it's not you specifically, but they say that you've actually participated with the Citadel Oral History Program before. Do you recall anything about that?

JW: We have, -- in fact, we've been privileged to have members from-- members from the Citadel Oral History Alliance: Kerry, Kerry--, what was his last name? The name escapes me, but, uh-- and then there's also the female; her name [inaudible], but those guys have used our building, our headquarters to hold, oral history workshops. So, not only have we worked with the Citadel and it's oral history, but it literally used our building to host workshops.

TS: Okay. Do the names Kieran Taylor or Marina Lopez ring a bell?

JW: Absolutely. That's [inaudible].

TS: Yeah. I had to think for a moment. Those are the directors of my program. They'd be happy to hear themselves referenced. I'm sure.

JW: Yeah. That's alright! [inaudible].

TS: All right. Well, that's good to know that there was connection here before me. What are some of the most important accomplishments you've had before? Fred Lincoln was actually positive about your role as consultants for the Cainhoy Community, for example. Were there any places you feel like the AASC-- you know, you've, you know,

John Wright

you've established "settlement community" as the proper term. Are there any other things that you believe you've accomplished that you'd like to put on record?

JW: Well, it's been, um, it's been great to be honest, to have the opportunity to come back home, with my exposure and my experience, and to come back home to be an advocate for these settlement communities. They're all different. They all face, encroachment, and they all face development, and, definitely gentrification. I think it's a very, I think if I have to point to one issue, I think that has been most, that will be the, that will be the brain child, as I would say, of my tenure as president: it would be the saving of the 1904 educational institution. Currently to this day, we have, uh, 1904 educational school that was built in the Snowden community on Long Point Road. It's-- our commission now owns the land. We own the land, and we also own the historical building. That's going to be relocated to back into the Snowden community. It's currently in the Snowden community, but it's going to be located directly in the community very soon. And, um, we raised \$40,000. We're also going to be responsible for raising funds to restore it and preserve it and to use it for public use. I think the greatest achievement that we have in that educational building is that the building from 1904 predates Brown v. Board of Education. It also predates Rosenwald Schools. Rosenwald Schools were built by Rosenwald; they came in and for blacks. They built these schools and, designed them to educate young blacks. Well, there were some architects, some trade labor, gentlemen that in 1904 thought-- knew that education was important and felt the need to build this school for that community. So to take that-- have that school in the community, which served kind of the [inaudible] community school concept. [inaudible] I think, when this school is preserved and restored, I think it will definitely be-- I even think I'm gonna on



John Wright

record and say that it'll be probably bigger than Desert Storm and probably bigger than serving in Bosnia [inaudible] that I've been a part of.

TS: Does that institution have a name-- sorry.

JW: Say again?

TS: I'm sorry. I just asking, do you know the name? Is there a specific name for this institution? The 1904?

JW: Yeah. It's called the Long Point School.

TS: Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt you, please continue.

JW: Okay. Is there a bit of school [inaudible]--

TS: Okay. Um, we're having some audio troubles. Is my voice coming through good to you?

JW: Yes, sir.

TS: Okay. I can only hope the recording is able to capture you pretty well, but, anyway, thank you for speaking so far. I still have a few more questions, and we have about 15 minutes, so you're still good. Um, what other groups and organizations does the AASC work with in Charleston currently?

JW: Well, we worked with [inaudible]--

TS: And Mr. Wright, is there a chance you could hold your phone closer to your voice or to your mouth? Because, I hate to say it, but it seems like your voice is cutting in and out. I can't always follow you.

JW: Okay.

TS: I hear you better. It's a technical thing, but, do you want to repeat what you just said?

John Wright

JW: Primarily [inaudible] primarily with Coastal Community Outreach [inaudible] that are involved in [inaudible].

TS: All right. Thank you. We're going to work through the technical issues. Do you think a disconnecting and reconnecting might help us here? I can pause the recording.

JW: I whichever helps get us, um, best quality for the interview, I'm all for. I don't know. I've come closer to the phone and I'm hoping that that would help.

TS: Yeah. Sometimes I can hear you just fine, like now, but sometimes it just cuts your voice off completely as you're speaking.

JW: Well, I could probably attribute to this iPhone as well. It's probably not the newest iPhone, so I have a case on it. And I think that too sometimes kind of can be a hindrance to that.

TS: Okay. Well, right now I can hear you well, so let's keep going for a few minutes if we can.

JW: Okay, great, great.

TS: Okay. Are there any groups that, uh, you would say you're actively opposed to. I've heard things like the Port Authority to the Cainhoy group, uh, which seems to be responsible for a lot of encroachment there. Are there any groups that you're trying to work not "oppose" in a negative sense, but you know, who are your adversaries in trying to improve your community?

JW: Well, I, I, you know, I-- there's no real adversaries that we don't want to work with. Essentially, we want to work with all groups. There are some groups that I'm adamantly concerned about, um, i.e. Heirs Property, the foundation, Heirs Property

John Wright

Foundation. I think their intent is good to identify these heir's properties and to understand the problem, some of the problems that come with heirs properties. But I also think that it's also somewhat of an advertisement. They advertise [inaudible] in a lot of ways. And, that to me, I think can be problematic. When you do an extensive study on the heir's property and understand why it was established, and then you're promoting it as heir's property and the problems associated with it, I think it only lends as to developers as well as for, those that they're looking to be, you know, to come into this community. So advocacy, some advocacy that can appear to be in the best interest-- sometimes that can reverse itself.

TS: Okay. What you mentioned about the heritage property foundation? What we call that in public history is commodification that they're basically turning it into something to export, uh, you know, for advertising for sale. So I think I get what you're saying there now. Are you tired of me asking questions about the Cainhoy community? I only keep bringing that up, one, because I have other contacts from there, two, because of the Post & Courier likes to exaggerate its importance. That's like the big visual thing, like, John Sanders and the tree. That's what the newspapers go for. Are you as frustrated as that, with that as Mr. Lincoln with that? You know, the settlement communities are more than one tree.

JW: Absolutely. You know, it is always, you know, it's, it's I, myself have been a radio personality. I have been on a talk radio show and, issues like that tree issue-- that is it's almost a shame when a tree gets more, more publicity than that a community has been approached, a community that's being told "You can no longer have the properties one big parcel [inaudible]. They gotta be in parcels. The deed bring these communities into,

John Wright

21st century that were established after Reconstruction. So, yes, that tree, it was a small, small, small-- very small significance to the community. Let's see, probably more, that tree probably [inaudible]. So that's where it's probably [inaudible] the right to gather under that tree. That was the visual that I have. [inaudible].

TS: Okay, thank you. So, uh, when we have a few minutes left, I'm just gonna ask you two or three of the big questions that kind of help summarize what we discussed today. So, real quick, would you say overall, your participation has been the story of success? That you've made a positive difference through what you've done and AASC as accomplished-- not finished its goal; it's like an internal struggle, I know-- but it's making progress or at least it's improving things where we can.

JW: Oh yeah, certainly.

TS: I'm sorry, you've cut out again.

JW: When you hear the term settlement, it has some significance. You- you're at somewhat intrigued to know "What is it? What is this thing?" You're not-- there's nothing intriguing about "unincorporated area". So look at the value of the term "settlement". It has a lot of historical significance. It has, it brings back cultural pride and cultural awareness. So yes, the term "settlement" has been-- it's been one of the major accomplishments, as well as just the ability to bring both generation of folks who are descendants of the slaves that settled in these communities, bringing them to [inaudible] with some of our current issues.

TS: Okay. Just for the fun of it, as the final thing I ask of you: could you, in one paragraph, just describe for the world, you know, give your a bit towards a global understanding of what the settlement communities in Charleston are? "Settlement," does

John Wright

it, invite curiosity? So how would you answer that curiosity? What is a settlement community?

JW: Slave descendants that have managed to maintain these properties for well over hundreds of years since Reconstruction with a sense of pride. These are communities; settlement communities are communities that are not traditional, planned development community. These are communities that have the land is acres. The land was, was established for the use of multiple families to live on the land. So when we look at accomplishments and things that we could do today to bring to-- so that each settlement communities would have its cultural significance: nothing more than just the people, the people that live on the land that are descended from slaves that acquired these land, dating back .

TS: All right. Thank you, Mr. Wright. I think it was very well said. Last things I need to do is just some little business stuff. I-- did I email you a copy of the interview agreement that, uh...

JW: Uh, you did not.

TS: Okay. That's something, um, I'll send that immediately after this discussion here. I believe we've done everything pretty well. The audio, we had a few issues there, but overall, you know, uh, the majority of it I can hear fine, and I'll be the one in charge of editing the transcription. Would you like a copy of that transcription to review?

JW: I certainly would like that.

TS: Yeah. So what I'll do is, as soon as you can get the interview agreement back to me, and as soon as I can edit that transcription, I will send it to you before the Citadel archives it. All right. I very much appreciate it, sir.

John Wright

JW: Thank you.

End of Interview

N. Timothy St. Pierre 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021

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