AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

FREEDMEN'S BUREAU PRESERVATION ACT: ARE THESE RECONSTRUCTION ERA RECORDS BEING PROTECTED

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

OCTOBER 18, 2000

Serial No. 106–277

Printed for the use of the Committee on Government Reform

Available via the World Wide Web: http://www.gpo.gov/congress/house
http://www.house.gov/reform

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

75–060 PDF WASHINGTON : 2001

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
Fax: (202) 512–2250 Mail: Stop SSOP, Washington, DC 20402–0001

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

DAN BURTON, Indiana, *Chairman*

BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, New York
CONSTANCE A. MORELLA, Maryland
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, Connecticut
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, Florida
JOHN M. MCHUGH, New York
STEPHEN HORN, California
JOHN L. MICA, Florida
THOMAS M. DAVIS, Virginia
DAVID M. MCINTOSH, Indiana
MARK E. SOUDER, Indiana
JOE SCARBOROUGH, Florida
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, Ohio
MARSHALL "MARK" SANFORD, South Carolina
BOB BARR, Georgia
DAN MILLER, Florida
ASA HUTCHINSON, Arkansas
LEE TERRY, Nebraska
JUDY BIGGERT, Illinois
GREG WALDEN, Oregon
DOUG OSE, California
PAUL RYAN, Wisconsin
HELEN CHENOWETH-HAGE, Idaho
DAVID VITTER, Louisiana

HENRY A. WAXMAN, California
TOM LANTOS, California
ROBERT E. WISE, JR., West Virginia
MAJOR R. OWENS, New York
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, New York
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, Pennsylvania
PATSY T. MINK, Hawaii
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, New York
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, Washington, DC
CHAKA FATTAH, Pennsylvania
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, Maryland
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, Ohio
ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH, Illinois
DANNY K. DAVIS, Illinois
JOHN F. TIERNEY, Massachusetts
JIM TURNER, Texas
THOMAS H. ALLEN, Maine
HAROLD E. FORD, JR., Tennessee
JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY, Illinois

BERNARD SANDERS, Vermont (Independent)

KEVIN BINGER, *Staff Director*
DANIEL R. MOLL, *Deputy Staff Director*
JAMES C. WILSON, *Chief Counsel*
ROBERT A. BRIGGS, *Chief Clerk*
PHIL SCHILIRO, *Minority Staff Director*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

STEPHEN HORN, California, *Chairman*

JUDY BIGGERT, Illinois
THOMAS M. DAVIS, Virginia
GREG WALDEN, Oregon
DOUG OSE, California
PAUL RYAN, Wisconsin

JIM TURNER, Texas
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, Pennsylvania
MAJOR R. OWENS, New York
PATSY T. MINK, Hawaii
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, New York

EX OFFICIO

DAN BURTON, Indiana
HENRY A. WAXMAN, California

J. RUSSELL GEORGE, *Staff Director and Chief Counsel*
EARL PIERCE, *Professional Staff Member*
ELIZABETH SEONG, *Clerk*
TREY HENDERSON, *Minority Counsel*

CONTENTS

	Page
Hearing held on October 18, 2000	1
Statement of:	
Millender-McDonald, Hon. Juanita, a Representative in Congress from the State of California	4
Swygert, H. Patrick, president, Howard University, accompanied by Dr. Thomas C. Battle, director, the Howard University Mooreland-Spingarn Research Center; and Dr. Elizabeth Clarke Lewis, director of the public history project, Howard University	8
Washington, Reginald, African American Genealogy Subject Area Specialist, National Archives and Records Administration; Michael Kurtz, Assistant Archivist of the United States for Records Services, National Archives and Records Administration; Professor Tony Burroughs, adjunct professor of genealogy, Chicago State University; and Henry Wiencek, resident fellow, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities	24
Letters, statements, etc., submitted for the record by:	
Burroughs, Professor Tony, adjunct professor of genealogy, Chicago State University, prepared statement of	36
Horn, Hon. Stephen, a Representative in Congress from the State of California, prepared statement of	3
Kurtz, Michael, Assistant Archivist of the United States for Records Services, National Archives and Records Administration, prepared statement of	31
Swygert, H. Patrick, president, Howard University, prepared statement of	12
Turner, Hon. Jim, a Representative in Congress from the State of Texas, prepared statement of	7
Washington, Reginald, African American Genealogy Subject Area Specialist, National Archives and Records Administration, prepared statement of	26
Wiencek, Henry, resident fellow, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, prepared statement of	49

FREEDMEN'S BUREAU PRESERVATION ACT: ARE THESE RECONSTRUCTION ERA RECORDS BEING PROTECTED

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2000

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Stephen Horn (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Horn and Kanjorski.

Also present: Representative Millender-McDonald.

Staff present: J. Russell George, staff director and chief counsel; Earl Pierce, professional staff member; Bonnie Heald, director of communications; Elizabeth Seong, clerk; George Frazer, intern; Pearl-Alice Marsh, senior policy advisor for Representative Millender-McDonald; Trey Henderson, minority counsel; and Jean Gosa, minority clerk.

Mr. HORN. A quorum being present, the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology will come to order.

135 years ago yesterday, 40-year-old former slave George Mason died in City Point, VA. His official death certificate is one simple line in a ledger book so tattered by age that a ribbon holds its fading pages together. If there are other records about Mr. Mason's life, they are likely buried somewhere in the millions of pages of deteriorating documents from the former Freedmen's Bureau.

We are here today to examine H.R. 5157, the "Freedmen's Bureau Records Preservation Act of 2000," introduced by Representatives Juanita Millender-McDonald of California and J.C. Watts of Oklahoma. This bill requires the Archivist of the United States to use all available technology to preserve and catalog the records of the Freedmen's Bureau.

On March 3, 1865, the 38th Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, known as the Freedmen's Bureau. This bureau was given the authority to supervise and manage activities relating to the newly emancipated African Americans. Following the bureau's closure on June 30, 1872, the records from its regional offices were sent to the National Archives for storage where, to this day, these vital links to history languish in their original state, due to lack of attention and funding.

Today, we will examine the condition of these records. We will also discuss how these records could be maintained and preserved to help millions of Americans—now and in future generations—better understand their heritage.

We welcome our witnesses, and look forward to their testimony. I am glad to see my neighbor from southern California, Juanita Millender-McDonald, and we would be glad to listen to your testimony on this.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Stephen Horn follows:]

DAN BURTON, INDIANA,
CHAIRMAN
BENJAMIN A. GILMAN, NEW YORK
CONSTANCE A. MORELLA, MARYLAND
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, FLORIDA
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK
STEPHEN HORN, CALIFORNIA
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
THOMAS M. DAVIS III, VIRGINIA
DAVID M. McINTOSH, INDIANA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
JOE SCARBOROUGH, FLORIDA
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE, OHIO
MARSHALL "MARK" SANFORD, SOUTH CAROLINA
BOB BARR, GEORGIA
DAN MILLER, FLORIDA
ASA HUTCHINSON, ARKANSAS
LEE TERRY, NEBRASKA
JUDY BIGGERT, ILLINOIS
GREG WALDEN, OREGON
DOUG OSE, CALIFORNIA
PAUL RYAN, WISCONSIN
JOHN T. DOOLITTLE, CALIFORNIA
HELEN CHENOWETH, IDAHO

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515–6143

MAJORITY (202) 225–5074
MINORITY (202) 225–5051
TTY (202) 225–6852

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
ROBERT E. WISE, Jr., WEST VIRGINIA
MAJOR R. OWENS, NEW YORK
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
GARY A. CONDIT, CALIFORNIA
PATSY T. MINK, HAWAII
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CHAKA FATTAH, PENNSYLVANIA
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH, ILLINOIS
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS
JIM TURNER, TEXAS
THOMAS H. ALLEN, MAINE
HAROLD E. FORD, JR., TENNESSEE

BERNARD SANDERS, VERMONT,
INDEPENDENT

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 5751, the "Freedmen's Bureau Records Preservation Act of 2000"

OPENING STATEMENT
Chairmen Stephen Horn, R-CA
October 18, 2000

A quorum being present, the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology will come to order.

One hundred and thirty-five years ago yesterday, 40-year-old former slave George Mason died in City Point, Virginia. His official death certificate is one simple line in a ledger book so tattered by age that a ribbon holds its fading pages together. If there are other records about Mr. Mason's life, they are likely buried somewhere in the millions of pages of deteriorating documents from the former Freedmen's Bureau.

We are here today to examine H.R. 5157, the "Freedmen's Bureau Records Preservation Act of 2000," introduced by Representatives Juanita Millender-McDonald of California and J.C. Watts of Oklahoma. This bill requires the Archivist of the United States to use all available technology to preserve and catalog the records of the Freedmen's Bureau.

On March 3, 1865, the 38th Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and abandoned lands, known as the "Freedmen's Bureau." This bureau was given the authority to supervise and manage activities relating to the newly emancipated African-Americans. Following the bureau's closure on June 30, 1872, the records from its regional offices were sent to the National Archives for storage where, to this day, these vital links to history languish in their original state, due to the lack of attention and funding.

Today, we will examine the condition of these records. We will also discuss how these records could be maintained and preserved to help millions of Americans -- now and in future generations -- better understand their heritage.

We welcome our witnesses, and look forward to their testimony.

STATEMENT OF HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you for your sensitivity to this issue. Good morning to Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. I am very pleased to come before you this morning, and I am sure to be joined by Representative J.C. Watts, my colleague that is cosponsoring this piece of legislation. We come to you this morning to share the reasons why we have proposed the Freedmen's Bureau Preservation Act of 2000. The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, properly called the Freedmen's Bureau, was established in the War Department by an act of this government on March 3, 1865. This act was the culmination of several years of efforts as the U.S. Government, embroiled in Civil War, sought to settle the slave problem for the United States.

From 1619 to 1800, more than 660,000 African men, women, and children were torn from their homelands in West Africa, herded onto ships and brought to North America as slaves. While the southern economy was flourishing from slave labor, the country simultaneously was building a new democracy based on the principles of liberty and individual freedom. As the democracy debate clarified issues of government and citizenship, grave contradictions were drawn between slavery and our Nation's first principle of individual freedom. As President Lincoln said, the government could not endure permanently half slave and half free.

On July 4, 1861, President Lincoln in a speech to Congress said that the war was "a People's contest . . . a struggle for maintaining in the world, that form and substance of government, whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men . . .." and this War Between the States was, among other things, a war about the condition of the slaves.

This very body was engaged in the overwhelming challenge of moving millions of slaves from bondage to freedom. In March 1864, the House passed a bill by a slender majority of two that established a bureau for freed men in the War Department. The Senate reported a substitute bill to the House too late for action attaching the Bureau to the Treasury Department.

After the 1864 elections, the House and Senate conferred and proposed a bureau independent of either War or Treasury. In the political machinations between these elected Representatives, the Senate could not agree with the House. A new conference committee was appointed which finally in 1865 established in the War Department a Bureau of Refugees, Freed Men and Abandoned Lands. Thus, the War Department set about the enormous task of documenting, supervising and managing the transition of slaves from bondage to freedom.

The Bureau deployed field offices in Alabama, Arkansas, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Delaware, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. These offices were responsible for all relief and educational activities relating to refugees and freed men, including issuing rations, clothing, and medicine. The Bureau also assumed custody of confiscated lands or property in

the former Confederate States, border States, District of Columbia, and Indian territory. The Bureau records that were created and maintained became the documented history of the greatest social undertaking in this country's history.

During this tumultuous period of transformation between 1865 and 1872, the Freedmen's Bureau recorded the movements of slaves from community to community and State to State. For historians and genealogists these records provide the critical link between the Civil War and the 1870 census, the first one to list African Americans by name. Former slaves, recognized formerly in government records only by sex, age and color, were named in the Bureau records as individuals in marriage, government rations lists, lists of colored persons, labor contracts, indentured contracts for minors, medical records, and as victims of violence.

Many historical and genealogical associations like the African American Historical and Genealogical Society, the African American Research Project, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the Internet-based Afrigeneas, and annual gatherings like the family reunion have popularized African American genealogy and historical research. African Americans, like many other Americans, look to official records for their ancestors. As ship manifests are the vital link between European Americans and their European ancestors, the Freedmen's Bureau records are the link for African Americans to their slave and African ancestors.

The original Freedmen's Bureau records are presently preserved at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC. Greater access to these records is a high priority for millions of Americans interested in Civil War and post-Civil War history and millions of African Americans interested in their family genealogy. There are many historians, genealogists, and family researchers interested in exploring the vast contents of these records.

H.R. 5157 calls on the Archivist to microfilm the Freedmen's Bureau records, create a surname index, and put this index on-line. Innovative imaging and indexing technologies can make these records easily accessible to the public, including historians, genealogists, novice genealogy enthusiasts, and students.

In fact, the Internet has transformed genealogy research. The research word "genealogy" lists 2,367,600 matches on-line and is growing daily. I took the liberty of a quick search for the chairman and ranking member's family names and came up with the following results, Mr. Chairman. The search string "Horn Genealogy" results in over 16,600 matches on-line and the search string "Turner Genealogy" resulted in 34,900 matches.

Some major Internet efforts include: The Mormon's Family History Center has on-line resources that serve all ethnic groups.

The USGenWeb project consists of volunteers who provide Internet Web sites for genealogical research in every county and every State of the United States.

Afrigeneas is the on-line African American genealogy research group.

JewishGen is the premier source of Jewish genealogy worldwide.

And these are just a few. The Internet abounds with Web sites and resources for every identity group and family name imaginable.

As a member of the House of Representatives, descendant of slaves and a genealogy enthusiast, I urge the subcommittee to recommend passage of this bill to the Committee on Government Reform. I look forward to H.R. 5157 passing the House and Senate and becoming law so this period in our history can become known even further to the American citizens interested in our past.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HORN. We thank you for that very good overview. I think you have time to sit with the panel this morning.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Yes.

Mr. HORN. We are delighted to have you. There is unanimous consent.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Jim Turner follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JIM TURNER
GMIT HEARING: H.R. 5157, the Freedmen's Bureau Records Preservation Act of 2000
10/18/00

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to begin by welcoming my colleagues, Rep. Millender-McDonald and Rep. Watts, to this hearing and thanking them for introducing, H.R. 5157, the Freedmen's Bureau Records Preservation Act of 2000. Additionally, I would like to welcome the National Archives and compliment them on the outstanding work they have presented to this Subcommittee over the session.

Established after the Civil War by an act of Congress, the Freedmen's Bureau was created to supervise abandoned and confiscated property, but more importantly, to provide relief to freedmen and refugees. These records contain a wide range of useful information on the African-American experience after the Civil War and are a vital source of information for historians, genealogists, and individuals seeking to trace their family heritage. They are among the most important primary resources documenting the African-American experience. However, time has taken its toll on these historical treasures and many of these documents are deteriorating and require immediate attention.

H.R. 5157 is an important step toward achieving our goal of preserving these records for future generations by instructing the Archives, who currently serve as the stewards of these papers, to use current restoration and indexing technology so that they will be available and easily accessible to all who wish to use them. Additionally, I understand that there is a funding issue which this Subcommittee will address. Again, I commend Rep. Millender-McDonald and Rep. Watts for their leadership on this bill and commend the Chairman for calling this hearing.

Mr. HORN. I have one question. The Archives has a pilot project with a school, the University of Florida, to preserve and index a few of the Freedmen's Bureau records. That is one possibility of sub possibilities. The other is the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, which is part of the Archives and makes grants.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Right.

Mr. HORN. What do you feel would be the best approach from the research you've done on this? Would it go directly to the Archives? Would it go to a private sector, public sector pilot project, as apparently the University of Florida is, or work through the National Historical Publications and Records Commission?

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Thank you for that question. As I have pondered this, I would like to see extended pilot programs in a lot of the HBCUs, or at least some of them where the States that I have listed have, I guess, the wherewithal to provide this pilot program. And given that there are States that currently have access to this, we should extend those pilot programs. I cannot but think of the history in the years that I talked with my grandmother and others and they said if you don't know your history, you are damned to repeat it, and if you don't know where you have come from you don't know where you are going, and I think our younger generation need to get some insight as to the historical perspective that these records can afford.

Mr. HORN. You are absolutely right on that. I go into 50 to 100 classrooms a year and I am a little disappointed sometimes about the lack of knowledge of history of the United States.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Absolutely.

Mr. HORN. We are glad that you will stay with us. Mr. Kanjorski has joined us as the ranking member, and we will call up panel two. President Swygert of Howard University is accompanied by Dr. Thomas C. Battle, the Director of the Howard University Mooreland-Spingarn Research Center and Dr. Elizabeth Clarke Lewis, Director of the Public History Project, Howard University. We have a rule in the committees of Government Reform that we swear all witnesses except Members of Congress.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. HORN. The clerk will note that three of you have affirmed. We will begin with President Swygert. We are delighted to have you here. You run a very distinguished university.

STATEMENTS OF H. PATRICK SWYGERT, PRESIDENT, HOWARD UNIVERSITY, ACCOMPANIED BY DR. THOMAS C. BATTLE, DIRECTOR, THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY MOORELAND-SPINGARN RESEARCH CENTER; AND DR. ELIZABETH CLARKE LEWIS, DIRECTOR OF THE PUBLIC HISTORY PROJECT, HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Mr. SWYGERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to testify on behalf of this incredibly important piece of legislation. Mr. Chairman, as you noted, I am accompanied today by Dr. Elizabeth Clarke Lewis and Dr. Thomas Battle, who is director of the Mooreland-Spingarn Research Center, the largest collection of African American materials outside of the Library of Congress. I am

also accompanied by Ms. Donna Brock, who is the assistant vice president of University Communications.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to especially acknowledge and thank the gentleman to your left, Mr. Russell George, who is a great son of Howard University. We very much appreciate his enthusiasm for this piece of important legislation and his alma mater.

Mr. HORN. We appreciate that. We keep Russell George very busy. You have taught him how to think well and how to get moving. When this came up, we didn't have to take 2 seconds to know this is what we wanted to do.

Mr. SWYGERT. Thank you very much.

If I may, I would like to extend on behalf of the entire Howard University family our special thanks to Representative Juanita Millender-McDonald, and our thanks as well to Representative J.C. Watts. Congressman Watts has been a frequent visitor to our campus. We very much appreciate his initiative as well.

Mr. Chairman, when I was invited to appear here today, I felt privileged to know that I would be a key spokesperson on behalf of the University's student body, alumni, faculty, and extended family on an issue that deeply touches the hearts of all of us, as well as the hearts of those generations of individuals whose lives have been so significantly impacted by the Freedmen's Bureau. Indeed, its historical and emotional aspects are significant.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, in 1866, Howard University was named after General Oliver Otis Howard, who was the Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. Since its inception, Howard University's historical relationship with the U.S. Congress has traversed 134 years; and we continue to enjoy this relationship, a relationship that began and grew out of the Freedmen's Bureau. So, in some larger sense, Mr. Chairman, you are seeing a product, live and in person, of the continuing and enduring legacy of the Freedmen's Bureau itself.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to accomplish three things. I would like to first speak to the immediacy, the impact of the records themselves as it relates to the African American community and its definition of self. Second, as you have already heard and will continue to hear as this continues, these are primary documents that are irreplaceable.

Third, Mr. Chairman, I am here to assure you that African Americans and all Americans celebrate and cheer this effort. As to the definition of self and as to the definition of people, as the Congresswoman has already indicated, if you don't know where you've come from, you certainly will not be able to figure out where you are headed. These documents, Mr. Chairman, help with that issue and more. They give proof positive of the vitality, of the energy, of the hopes, and prayers, and aspirations of people who have recently been enslaved. They continue to speak with relevance and passion to issues of today.

It is, therefore, a matter of both great emotional concern to us, historical importance and, most importantly perhaps as well, Mr. Chairman, they confirm and reaffirm that persons who were only recently freed were persons who were freed and continued to maintain a whole human spirit.

The second issue I would like to share with you, Mr. Chairman, is based upon my experience as a Howard University history student. Like Mr. George, I too am a graduate of Howard University, and an alumnus of the undergraduate school and the School of Law. It was my privilege to be a history major at Howard University, and in that capacity we were taught a number of principles. A number of principles were shared with us.

One of the first principles of course was to distinguish secondary from primary sources. And primary sources, as you know, Mr. Chairman, tend to be closer to the historical truth than not. When one surveys the documents that are found within the collection known as the Freedmen's Bureau Collection, one sees primary sources in the form of letters and testimonials and first person narratives that ring true. They rang true more than 100 years ago and they continue to ring true today. These documents are irreplaceable. But, there is an urgency, Mr. Chairman, an urgency that we get about the very serious business of preservation of these documents.

Mr. Chairman, I said a moment ago that the African American community, and indeed all Americans, will celebrate and are cheering this effort. I mean that in all sincerity. This is about African American history and American history. I think sometimes, Mr. Chairman, our focus is too narrow and our definition too narrow as well. This is American history. It is a history that we can all look back upon and celebrate because it tells us where we have been as a people, as a nation, and where we have come from, and we have come a mighty long way. I think there is cause to celebrate and I think it will be celebrated and cheered by us all.

Before I conclude my formal remarks, and I have submitted my remarks for the record, I would like to speak to one issue in particular in terms of the way and the manner in which the records continue to be maintained and handled. The records have been safeguarded by the National Archives and Records Administration and generally made available to the American people. However, Mr. Chairman, I am concerned that people who want access to these records encounter undue difficulties in getting to the information that they seek. The records are too complex if one seeks to identify names and locations of people. The guides for accessing the levels of records and the variety of information embedded in the records need improvement to become more user friendly.

The Congresswoman spoke to this issue in the context of the Internet. I see three areas of improvement. First, put all available inventories on-line in the NARA Web site. Currently there are four inventories that describe these records, an inventory for the headquarters of Washington and three volumes for the field offices which cover the former Confederate and border States. I have been informed that the latter three volumes can only be found with the main NARA office in Washington, DC, although some efforts have been made to send them to the regional archives offices.

Second, the microfilming needs to be continued with a selective process in place. Currently records that pertain to education for some States and records of the assistant commissioner for a few States are microfilmed. I have been informed that the Freedmen's Bureau records are voluminous, and some of the more bureaucratic

records may not need microfilming. However, these records which contain information on people and events should receive high priority.

Last, there needs to be a comprehensive name and subject index for the entire record group. There are many small indices that pertain to individual record series, and these are helpful. For example, in the headquarters records of Washington, DC, there are several indices and registers of letters, but in the field offices there are too few indices to assist people in their research process. Reports often come with no indices, and the volume of records precludes any systematic searches. I believe comprehensive index systems for each State where Bureau officials operate can provide directions for individuals to search names and subject.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I speak with enthusiasm for this legislation. I celebrate with you. I applaud you and your colleagues for this initiative, and if I may respond in part to the last question posed to the Congresswoman, I think the HBCU community has the capacity today, certainly Howard University has the capacity to participate in appropriate pilot programs with appropriate oversight and assessment, and we would be prepared to do so with enthusiasm.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Swygert follows:]

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

H. Patrick Swygert, Esq.
President

Accompanied by

Dr. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, Professor, Department of History, Howard University

Dr. Thomas Battle, Director, Moorland-Spingarn Center

Ms. Donna Brock, Assistant Vice President of University Communications

Dr. Walter B. Hill Jr., Adjunct Faculty, Department of History, Howard University

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Statement By

H. Patrick Swygert
President

on

Bill H.R. 5157 in the House of Representatives

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Good morning. My name is H. Patrick Swygert and as the 15th president of Howard University, I am delighted to be here in support of this critical legislation introduced by Representatives Juanita Millender-McDonald and J. C. Watts.

I would like to start by thanking the Chairman and the other members of the Committee on Government Reform for this opportunity to be heard.

As some of you may well know, in 1867, Howard University was named after General Oliver Otis Howard, who was the first commissioner of the Freedmens Bureau. When I was invited to appear here today, I felt privileged to know that I would be a key spokesperson on behalf of the University's student body and alumni/ae on an issue that so deeply touches our hearts, as well as the hearts of those generations of individuals whose lives have been so significantly impacted by the Freedmens Bureau. Indeed, its historical and emotional aspects are significant.

I believe these records have been safeguarded by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and made available to the American people. But, more, much more needs to be done to preserve and disseminate these important and precious documents for future generations of citizens and scholars. I believe that the U.S. Archivist and the National Archives and Records Administration have sought to preserve and protect these records. I strongly and unequivocally, therefore, support the Subcommittee's passage of this important legislation.

The conclusion of the Civil War meant the emancipation of more than four million slaves. In the post Civil War era, the federal government established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands to provide a social welfare net to support the emancipated slaves and the white dislocated Southerners of the war.

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands was established by an Act of Congress on March 3, 1865.

The Bureau was a unit of the War Department and had a commissioner as its head. Its field offices were located in the border states and the headquarters in the District of Columbia. The duties of the Bureau included issuing rationing and clothing to destitute Freedmen operating in hospitals and Freedmen camps, providing transportation for Freedmen and refugees returning home, relocating the homeless, finding employment for Freedmen, establishing schools for adults and children and helping African American soldiers and sailors to collect monetary claims. In addition, the Bureau supervised the cultivation of abandoned or confiscated land and acted upon applications for the restoration of property.

Universal Significance

Conceived as a government response to the massive social and economic dislocation created by the Civil War, the Freedmen's Bureau directed to provide relief to white and African American refugees from the war. While best known as the agency that addressed the political, social, legal, economic, and educational issues of African Americans arising from emancipation, it was also an agency that provided assistance to all persons in the war ravaged South.

In Savannah, Georgia, the Freedmen's Bureau gave relief to more than six thousand poor white refugee families that had been in the path of General Sherman's march to the sea. In Western Arkansas and the Eastern Indian Territory extensive assistance was given to destitute white refugees who lost homes and property during the Civil War. The Educational Division of the Freedmen's Bureau provided support to nascent African American schools; however, in areas all over the South it enhanced education for people of all races. An important example, while the Freedmen's Bureau established Howard University in Washington, D.C. to help educate newly freed slaves, it has been coeducational as well as multiracial from its first year of operation. Most importantly, it must be noted that among Howard University's first graduates in 1870 were four white women.

Because the dilemmas of white refugees were resolved relatively quickly after the end of hostilities and because, after a series of Presidential pardons, there was little abandoned property to control, freedmen's affairs became the Freedmen's primary obligation, focused on labor, justice, moral reform, and education. There is scarcely a single facet of the southern historical experience that goes unexplored in the Freedmen's Bureau records. While the records vary in quantity from state to state and over time, they are windows into a society in the midst of profound social revolution. They also open up a vast

storehouse of primary source materials and allow for the reexamination of broader issues in the nation's history.

National Policy Significance

Slavery and emancipation, arguably the central and determining phenomena shaping the life of the United States during its first nine decades, have a profound impact on our understanding of the role and importance of African Americans in United States society. Freedmen's Bureau records, when integrated into a coherent overview, help researchers at all levels rethink post Civil War history and create vigorous new discussions on national policy and regional history.

The records of the Freedmen's Bureau, covering the period from 1865 to 1872, to a large extent, derive their richness from the fact that its Congressional mandate gave it sweeping jurisdiction over freedpeople's lives in the former Confederate states. The records paint a portrait of astonishing richness and complexity, showing how a national policy for compensated labor and political equality emerged following the war. Given the Bureau's increasingly limited reach over time, surviving records tell a tale of the struggle.

Historians of the post Civil War era have taken for granted that freedpeople desired land. The Freedmen's Bureau records reveal the intensity and longevity of the desire in stunning letters and petitions by former slaves to government officials. Freedpeople who had benefitted from the distribution of abandoned land and persons desiring property awards wrote letters expressing yearning to acquire land and the government's obligation to honor its pledges. For example, in an emotional series of letters during October 1865, General O. O. Howard himself ordered that a group of South Carolina freedpeople return the land to its former owners in compliance with President Andrew Johnson's wishes. After listening to Howard's case, a committee of freedmen petitioned him and President Johnson for redress. Without General Howard's assistance they had no hope for protection, equal rights, or the provision for "every colored man to purchase, hold, and own land...if it be but a few acres." Although the petitions were not supported, freedmen throughout the South agitated again and again for land at opportune moments. And slowly but steadily, they and their descendants accumulated hundreds of thousands of acres between Reconstruction and World War I.

For the period 1865-1868, there are very detailed documents on labor contracts and case files of contract disputes. Although these records suggest a degree of standardization of contract terms over time, they demonstrate even more vividly the contingent nature of early postwar labor arrangements. Simply put, employers and employees bargained fiercely with each other over their labor contractual obligations and prerogatives. Over time, sharecropping did indeed emerge but Bureau records outline the range and complexity of the new labor system of the South. Freedmen's Bureau records are invaluable as a tool for reassessing the political aspects of Reconstruction in the South. The records present complex details on political organization during the early postwar years. The records give exemplary data on the political, economic, moral, and humanitarian arguments African Americans fused with Christian theology. Also

included are the names of politically active individuals, organizations created by newly emancipated persons, and the elaborate political plans of these organizations to resist physical violence and employers' abuse while securing social and political justice.

Gender questions, family-based survival strategies, and volunteerism are embedded in the Freedmen's Bureau records. In civil organizations and community-based support systems, African American men developed institutions to protect and defend the women and children of their family. Strategies for reconnecting families separated during slavery, reforming extended family connections, rebuilding community foundations, and reframing economic development have special poignancy in Freedmen's Bureau records.

The pension records of African American Civil War veterans (and their eligible dependents) include affidavits, depositions, letters, and memorabilia that document an immense scope of family history, medical data, occupational networks, and benevolent societies. The records offer infinite possibilities for comprehending African American history. New insights are offered on local newspapers being established, military pacification, social control, and homesteading. Venerable organizations with firm ecclesiastical groundings were the first to send aid to the newly freed slaves. The relations between voluntary organizations like the American Missionary Association, the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Methodist Episcopal Freedmen's Aid Society, the Presbyterian Committee on Missions for Freedmen's, and the Roman Catholic Church and the Freedmen's Bureau demonstrate how private secular and government organizations coordinated efforts to confront, challenge, and conquer post Civil War adversities.

Local Significance

The Freedmen's Bureau records illustrate how they were crucial in building and supporting the institutions that would become indispensable to the century long struggle to protect and extend African American rights. The Freedmen's Bureau is considered the first social welfare agency in American history. The vital element in the work of the Freedmen's Bureau was the manner in which it executed local projects that enriched the community's educational, cultural, political, economic, and social environment. The local Freedmen's Bureau records reflect the work of determined and cohesive groups, offering outreach and volunteer programs to help people in need while always agitating for freedom and equality.

Freedmen's Bureau agents often labored in a hostile environment with limited staff and sparse financial resources; nevertheless, they encouraged the establishment of schools, guarded the freedmen and women against racial violence, arranged labor contracts, and enhanced the day-to-day life of African Americans. These records provide the best available assessment of the responsibilities of assistant commissioners as well as agents on the district and subdistrict level. Fascinating stories of great human interest illustrate both the need for and the effectiveness of a person such as William G. Kirkman, a conscientious agent who was assassinated for his efforts to help African American workers. The episode was a minor tragedy, not an event that changed the course of

history. Yet it, and the other similar episodes help us explain how local agents were able to deal with new responsibilities, new advantages, and altered relationships. The Bureau was an important catalyst for change as it attempted to reunite families sold apart during slavery, support families as they fought against claims for custody of family members, and assist the efforts of husbands and wives—employed by different employers—attempting to modify labor contracts in the interest of co-residence. Afflicted with a myriad of problems, the national government's representatives assisted communities recovering from the devastating legacy of slavery.

While some older studies often argued that the Freedmen's Bureau ultimately did not achieve any lasting success, the Bureau records show how it helped many individual former slaves and provided a forum where African Americans could assert their legal rights as citizens and free laborers. Important new works find that the Freedmen's Bureau did not hinder the cause of freed people, as some critics have claimed. The records present valuable detail for comprehensive studies showing how the Bureau worked on the local level. The day-by-day activities of the local representatives of the Freedmen's Bureau, show how these persons, with a skeleton staff of civilians and a handful of Union soldiers, attempted to keep order while facing insuperable problems. The Freedmen's Bureau records help every investigator comprehend how, with self-pride and group cohesion, the local agents worked to protect persons vulnerable to the vicissitudes of life. The good works of the Freedmen's Bureau, as reflected in its records, strengthened newly freed slaves as they strove to become choosers, makers, and doers; people active in overcoming the barriers faced by African Americans in the United States. The local agents persevered during Reconstruction and its aftermath, in different regions with distinct social and political conditions, but did not always fully ensure equal treatment for African Americans. The records of the Freedmen's Bureau bring the voices of ordinary people from the margins to the center. These records illustrate a dynamic and significant narrative that enhances our appreciation of the ways a community, denied the full rights of citizenship granted to all whites, forged ahead.

*Another institution of enduring significance and whose records form an invaluable source of material documenting the post-Civil War struggle for financial independence is to be found in the records of the Freedmen's Savings Bank. Remarkable reconstructions of life histories emerge from the data the Freedmen's Bureau created on its depositors in all cities of the South. The problems of scores of individuals, educational, and social organizations were eased by the actions and activities of the Freedmen's Savings Bank. The historical studies of the bank tend to ignore its good works and to magnify its shortcomings. The Freedmen's Savings Bank contributed to the healthy advancement of the economic life of many local communities.

Conclusion

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to propose some ideas that should allow better access to these wonderful records. The records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands offer a wealth of information about people and events not usually found in official published sources. I believe these records have been safeguarded by the

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and made available to the American people. However, I am concerned that people who want to access these records encounter difficulties in getting to the information they seek. The records are too complex if one seeks to identify names and locations of people. The reference tools, such as guides and inventories for accessing the many levels of records and the variety of information embedded in these records, need improvement to become more user friendly.

I see three areas for improvement. The first area is the need to put all available inventories on line in the NARA website. Currently, there are four inventories that describe these records: an inventory for the headquarters in Washington, D.C. and three volumes for the field offices covering the former Confederate and border states. I have been informed that the latter three volumes can only be found with the main NARA offices in Washington, D.C., and some efforts have been made to send them to the various regional NARA archives.

Secondly, the microfilming of these records needs to be continued with a selective process in place. Currently, letters received for some states, records that pertain to education for some states, and records of the Assistant Commissioner for a few states, are microfilmed. I have been informed that the Freedmen's Bureau records are voluminous and some of the more bureaucratic records may not need microfilming. However, these records, which contain information on people and events, should receive high priority.

Lastly, there needs to be a comprehensive name and subject index for the entire record group. There are many small indexes that pertain to individual record series, and these are helpful. For example, in the headquarter records of Washington, D.C., there are several indexes and registers of letters. But in the field offices, there are too few indexes and registers to assist people in their research process. Correspondence and reports often come with no indexes and registers and the volume of records preclude any systematic searches. I believe comprehensive index systems for each state where Bureau officials and offices operate can provide directions for individuals to search names and subjects.

I would like to close by stating that these records truly need better research tools for people to use. They are extremely valuable records and have been with the National Archives for decades. Now that lay people are discovering them, it becomes incumbent upon the government not only to continue safeguarding the nation's documentary heritage, but also provide the needed tools to use these records. If used, we learn more about history and ourselves.

Thank you.

Mr. HORN. We thank you, and I might add when I introduce you, your full statement is put in the record. The staff and we, when we get back to town, we read them all prior to the—in this day and age prior to the hearing starting, and we have fine testimony from all of you on such short notice. Next is Dr. Thomas C. Battle.

Mr. BATTLE. Mr. Chairman, I don't have any prepared records, but I would like to speak to the importance of preserving primary documents. These are the kinds of materials which are essential to research of all kinds. The Nation has recently undertaken legislation to celebrate, to document, and to preserve those issues related to the Underground Railroad. That was a very important effort.

I would think that looking at the transition into freedom, sort of a domestic Marshal Plan, which the Freedmen's Bureau was about, that preserving these records and offering them for research to scholars is vitally important to understanding all of the American experience. The Civil War continues to be a subject of very major interest throughout our Nation. And as we have looked at the Underground Railroad and looked at the Civil War, it is important for us to preserve these records that are important to the reconstruction of our Nation, and I would urge in continuing the efforts of the National Archives that we provide whatever support is necessary to ensure that these records are preserved for the future.

Mr. HORN. What has been your experience with various libraries in the States, with the National Archives, etc? How do you feel about where the possibility should be to use these? It is probably going to be a mix of all sorts of things.

Mr. BATTLE. It is going to be a mix. The interest in this research and genealogy is a nationwide interest. Certainly there is detrimental effect when scholars have to travel to a sole source when the opportunity exists to distribute them to a wider audience. I think we could benefit from scholarship pursued in that manner. Certainly a centralized location is beneficial, but the distribution of materials is what we should be about today.

Mr. HORN. I think with the Internet they are right at our fingertips, if we can get it into a data form that any citizen could get in their home or library, or even their high school libraries, would be important. And, of course, we do have Federal depositories, as we all know, in almost every congressional district in the land and that would be another possibility to put it in. Sometimes even though they are Federal depositories, they are under city or county or State and some of them are much better put to use than some of the others. So, if we want to have this, I think the Internet is one solution; but we have to get to the raw data before they expire. When I heard what our staff found, and some of the records really were pitiful, we need to deal with that.

So, I thank you, Dr. Battle, for your insight. We now go to the next witness, Elizabeth Clarke Lewis, Director of the Public History Project at Howard University.

Ms. LEWIS. Good morning. Very briefly, I would like to say we thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. In addition, I would like to remind all of us as a historian that there is a world of history to be discovered in these records. This was a moment in time in which people were walking out of slavery and into new opportunities, and their voices moved from the margins to the center

in these records, and it is critical for us to put into place the apparatus, for us to not only hear these voices but understand the words that they were saying.

I would like to add that this was a time when people were also walking into history, that the Federal Government was interceding to help former slaves as well as non-former slaves acquire land and move forward and modernize the Nation.

We understand without question that the textures of the interior worlds of people are very important. These records allow us to create linkages between those internal worlds and the external developments and movements of the larger world. These records are significant because they create without question a strong foundation for us to understand families, local history, regional changes, as well as the apparatus of a Nation put into place for lands that were given to individuals of non-African descent, free lands that were made available to them as refugees also.

As has been stated, these records truly are American history and they reflect the history of this country in a manner that is very, very unusual and important. Thank you very much.

Mr. HORN. Well, thank you very much.

We have a few questions for this panel before we move to the third panel, and I take it by my previous question to you, Dr. Swygert, that Howard University would be interested in participating in——

Mr. SWYGERT. Yes, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, if I may, in terms of capacity to participate in a pilot program, we have invested a significant amount of resources in the past several years to build up our IT, or information technology infrastructure, both in terms of hardware, software, wiring the campus, and in terms of recruitment and retention of both faculty and staff who can manage the technology.

We think we are suited for this purpose for three relevant reasons. The first is that when you look at Howard University, as I said in my opening remarks, Mr. Chairman, you are literally viewing the progeny of the Freedmen's Bureau itself. We think, to the extent that there should be some consideration given in terms of the historical relationship, that pertains.

Second, we have many, many decades of management of very, very sensitive, fragile, irreplaceable documents in the form of the Mooreland-Spingarn collection that Dr. Battle heads at the university, and we take that charge very seriously.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we are a research university. Howard University, under the old Carnegie classification system, was known as a research 1 university. In the new Carnegie classification system, we are known as a doctoral intensive university, which is the highest ranking for these purposes that a university might obtain. We have the doctoral programs, we have the faculty, the students, and the physical facilities, and now we have the technology to participate.

Mr. Chairman, if I may, I would urge if at all possible, that you find some way and some opportunity to further encourage us to pursue this pilot program idea initiative. We very much appreciate that.

Mr. HORN. Well, I think, as you heard me ask the author of the legislation, you have got choices here of the archives itself, the archives pilot projects, and here we have the example of the University of Florida, which had a grant to preserve and index a few of the Freedmen's Bureau records, but it isn't a very total approach. Then of course, the money that goes to, and we have expanded that hopefully with the Appropriation Committees, is the National Historical Public Records Commission, which has worked on this type of pilot throughout the United States in the preservation of records.

I am just fishing for what is out there and what are the possibilities when you write legislation so that we don't exclude or overly include. That is what I am looking at.

I might ask you, Dr. Battle, what type of records are in the Spingarn collection?

Mr. BATTLE. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to share this with you. We were founded in 1914. We celebrate more than 85 years of service in documenting Black history and culture. We consider ourselves the largest and most comprehensive repository of this kind in the world. We are generally considered the library of last resort. Roughly that means when you can't find it at the Library of Congress, you come to us. We are one of the largest manuscript archivals of this kind.

We tend not to enumerate the quantities in the collection, but our library collections are well over 200,000 volumes, there are well over 100,000 images in our photographic collections, our manuscript and archival collections would extend some 30 miles or so if we were to try to articulate materials in that way. We are one of the most comprehensive centers of documenting all aspects of the Black experience in this Nation. We sometimes say that we predate Black History Month and the organization that founded it. Howard University has collected such historical information since the first days of its existence. Our library collection is based upon the Louis Tachnach slavery collection, which documents the experiences of African people during that turbulent period in our history.

We, in addition to the range of resources that we have, you may also be interested in knowing that for the last year, in our second year of publication of what we call HUarchives.net, this is undertaken to provide us with the opportunity to share in a broader fashion the vast resources of Mooreland-Spingarn Research Center. We have done so while trying to address the needs not simply of university level and scholars, but students and teachers in the K-through–12 range as well. We think that we are very qualified in the field that we endeavor in terms of preservation of Black history.

Mr. SWYGERT. HUarchives.net is a pilot, Mr. Chairman, if you will, that is funded in part by MCI WorldCom, and it is a reflection of that partnership between private sector and a research university to accomplish a public good, and we are very proud of that relationship and the work that has been done over the past year or so.

Second, Mr. Chairman, I would respectfully request an opportunity to supplement my written testimony with a written response to your inquiry regarding ways and means of effectuating the purposes of the legislation.

Mr. HORN. Without objection, that will be put at this point in the hearing record.

Mr. SWYGERT. Thank you, sir.

Mr. HORN. You are quite welcome. Remind me who Spingarn was?

Mr. BATTLE. He was an attorney, a bibliophile. It was his life's passion, and he set out in a worldwide search to find and to collect every volume written by a person of African descent. To the extent that he was successful, his collection is one of the major collections of such rarities that is in existence. Jesse Mooreland was a graduate and alumnus of Howard whose collection was donated in 1914 with the intention that Howard University would be the foundation of the study of Black life, and history, and culture in the United States, throughout the Americas and throughout the African diaspore, including Africa itself.

Mr. SWYGERT. Mr. Chairman, just as another point regarding the Mooreland-Spingarn collection, a significant amount of the research that preceded the Steven Spielberg "Amistad" story took place at the Mooreland-Spingarn collection. So, when Dr. Battle speaks of documentation and records, he speaks with real authority among his peers and scholars. It is a great, great respository that is part of the definition of Howard University.

I am often asked, Mr. Chairman, how do you define the university? Well, you begin in two places. Your faculty and your library. We have a great faculty and a great library and a great collection at Mooreland-Spingarn.

Mr. HORN. What is that Website address?

Mr. SWYGERT. It is www.howarduniversity.edu for the university.

Mr. BATTLE. And Mooreland-Spingarn would simply precede Howard University.

Mr. HORN. I want to make sure.

Mr. BATTLE. It is HUarchives.net, that is one word, although separation in spacing, dot Howard.edu.

Mr. HORN. Do you have any questions?

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Chairman, I simply want to thank the president of Howard University and these other two fine professors and persons who have come from that very distinguished university to really give us a further insight as to what the depth of Howard University's research department is.

Mr. HORN. It is. It seems too natural that you would have a pilot program of the Freedmen's Bureau records. You certainly are located here in Washington, DC. Folks come to your university to get that kind of research, and to have this type of historical perspective and material is just natural. I would like to pitch for a pilot program to be there.

I agree with you, Doctor, that your historical background, given that General Howard himself, who the university is named after, and the whole notion of Dr. Battle and his research program, Dr. Lewis, I guess I feel so overwhelmed this morning to know that we have such great experts out there who are willing to help us further this whole project of getting this information out to our younger kids, and I call them kids because I am so much older, but the folks in colleges and universities across this Nation. I would simply

say thank you for your input. I have noted those things of importance that you have said today.

Dr. Swygert, I want to ask, on your campus do you have genealogy research groups or student groups that would be interested in a such a pilot program?

Mr. SWYGERT. Oh, yes. Many, both State-related groups at Howard University. We have a history of students, undergraduate and graduate who identify by State, so there is a Georgia society on campus, there is a Texas society on campus, a Florida society and our largest—California is our largest. We also, of course, have faculty and staff who, in addition to Dr. Battle, both the department of history and elsewhere have demonstrated expertise, and I think would welcome this with enthusiasm. At Howard University it is personal. This is a definition of the very institution that I am privileged to represent. So, to say that there would be enthusiasm on our campus would be a gross understatement. There would be a tremendous celebration.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. I can certainly attest to that. Dr. Swygert, if you would help me to get this word across to other presidents and to carry this throughout the Nation, that indeed we have something that is important to America and to African Americans. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HORN. Thank you. We thank you for all of the work that you have put into this. Did any of you have a chance to look through the actual draft, H.R. 5157, and do you have any suggestions to make to that because we are going to move this very rapidly?

Mr. SWYGERT. We have no suggestions this morning, but we will be working up some comments, Mr. Chairman, in addition to the supplement that I mentioned a moment ago. But the outline of the legislation is right on target and well drafted and very well focused.

Mr. HORN. Could you draft it by the end of the day?

Mr. SWYGERT. We will have something for you——

Mr. HORN. On the bill?

Mr. SWYGERT. Absolutely.

Mr. HORN. We will move this tomorrow morning and hopefully the full committee and move it to the floor.

Mr. SWYGERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HORN. The only other one that I have moved this fast was when I was trying to save the National Academy of Sciences.

Mr. SWYGERT. Thank you. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to speak before you today.

Mr. HORN. Thank you very much. We now will go to the third panel. The third panel is Reginald Washington, African American genealogy subject area specialist, National Archives and Records Administration, Mr. Michael Kurtz, Assistant Archivist of the United States for Records Services, National Archives and Records Administration; Professor Tony Burroughs, adjunct professor of genealogy Chicago State University, and Henry Wiencek, resident fellow, Virginia foundation for the humanities. If you will stand to be sworn.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. HORN. We will start with Reginald Washington.

STATEMENTS OF REGINALD WASHINGTON, AFRICAN AMERICAN GENEALOGY SUBJECT AREA SPECIALIST, NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION; MICHAEL KURTZ, ASSISTANT ARCHIVIST OF THE UNITED STATES FOR RECORDS SERVICES, NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION; PROFESSOR TONY BURROUGHS, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF GENEALOGY, CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY; AND HENRY WIENCEK, RESIDENT FELLOW, VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR THE HUMANITIES

Mr. WASHINGTON. I would like to begin, Mr. Chairman, by thanking you for inviting me this morning to testify on the need to preserve and increase the accessibility of the records of Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. As the subject area expert in African American genealogy for the Office of Records Services, Washington, DC, I fully recognize the importance of the Bureau's records, and I appreciate the committee's interest in them. I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the hearings today.

The records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, are among the most important primary resources for the study of the African American experience during slavery and freedom. The Freedmen's Bureau records document the African American community's struggle for freedom and equality, and provide insight into the Federal Government's policies toward the nearly 4 million Blacks released from bondage at the close of the American Civil War.

While a major part of the Bureau's early activities include the supervision of abandoned and confiscated property, its mission was to provide relief and to help freedmen to become self sufficient. To accomplish these goals, the Bureau issued rations and clothing, operated hospitals and refugee camps and supervised labor contracts between planters and freedmen. The Bureau also managed apprenticeship disputes and complaints, assisted benevolent societies, and established schools, helped legalize marriages, and provided transportation to refugees and freedmen who were attempting to reunite with family or relocate to other parts of the country. As Congress extended the life of the Bureau, it added other duties, such as assisting Black soldiers and their heirs in obtaining back pay, bounty payments, and pensions. In carrying out all of these activities, the Bureau collected information about freedmen and their families. I've brought along copies of several examples of Bureau documents that illustrate the types of information collected.

Mr. HORN. We would certainly like you to file them with the record. Go ahead and make a summary and put the rounder part of it in the record at this point.

Mr. WASHINGTON. The documents that I brought today, one is certainly a marriage certificate. I brought along a labor contract agreement and also a marriage register and one other document I brought today was a plantation census.

Mr. Chairman, for decades, historians, social scientists, and other scholars have used Freedmen's Bureau records to study social and economic conditions and the Federal Government's involvement in education in the Black community during reconstruction.

In recent years, however, a growing number of African American genealogists and family historians have discovered the value of Freedmen's Bureau records for family research and have begun wading through them in search of information about ancestors and local history. Some collected records of the Bureau have been microfilmed, but, in general these do not include many records of the local field offices where most individual freedmen came in contact with the Bureau. Many researchers who attempt to use the field office records become frustrated when they discover that they must travel to Washington to use them. Their frustration continues when they find that the records are voluminous and lack useful name indexes.

Fortunately, we have been successful in forming some partnerships that are enabling us to address the frustrations of users of the Freedmen's Bureau field office records. One of these partnerships involves the special collections library of the University of Florida; and we are using it as a pilot to confirm requirements for processing records prior to filming and to examine the feasibility of producing an automated name index. The project involves the filming of some 41 series of records of the Florida field office of the Freedmen's Bureau, totaling more than 12,000 images.

To test the indexing possibilities, NARA has developed a data base to collect index entries and is training members of its volunteer Civil War Conservation Corps to populate the data base by extracting names from the Florida series that are most likely to yield information about individual freedom. The University of Florida is funding the filming and NARA volunteers are doing the indexing, but any number of other divisions of labor are possible, and NARA also envisions partnerships where funds for filming originate with the government and private partners contribute indexing support.

This concludes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman. If you or other members of the subcommittee have any questions, I would be happy to address them.

Mr. HORN. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Washington follows:]

STATEMENT
by Mr. Reginald Washington
Subject Area Expert in African American Genealogy
National Archives and Records Administration
Washington, DC

To the
Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology
Of the Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives
Congress of the United States

17 October 2000

I would like to begin by thanking you Mr. Chairman, Mr. Turner, and the members of the Committee for inviting me here this morning to testify on the need to preserve and increase the accessibility of the records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. As the subject area expert in African American Genealogy for the Office of Records Services - Washington, DC, I fully recognize the importance of the Bureau's records and I appreciate the Committee's interest in them. I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the hearings today.

The records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, are among the most important primary resources for the study of the African American experience during slavery and freedom. Freedmen's Bureau records document the African American community's struggle for freedom and equality and provide insight into the Federal government's policy toward the nearly four million blacks released from bondage at the close of the American Civil War.

Established in the War Department by an act of Congress on March 3, 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau was responsible for the supervision and management of all matters relating to refugees and freedmen, and lands abandoned or seized during the Civil War. President Andrew Johnson appointed Major General Oliver Otis Howard as the Bureau's first Commissioner and Howard established his headquarters in Washington, DC. Assistant commissioners (appointed to serve in the former Confederate States, the border States, and the District of Columbia) conducted the daily operations of the Bureau.

A major part of the Bureau's early activities included the supervision of abandoned and confiscated property, but its mission was also to provide relief and to help freedmen to become self-sufficient. To accomplish these goals the Bureau issued rations and clothing, operated hospitals and refugee camps, and supervised labor contracts between planters and freedmen. The Bureau also managed apprenticeship disputes and complaints, assisted benevolent societies in the establishment of schools, helped freedmen in legalizing marriages entered into during slavery, and provided transportation to refugees and freedmen who were attempting to reunite

with their family or relocate to other parts of the country. As Congress extended the life of the Bureau, it added other duties, such as assisting black soldiers and their heirs in obtaining back pay, bounty payments, and pensions. In carrying out all of these activities the Bureau collected information about freedmen and their families. I've brought along copies of several examples of Bureau documents that illustrate the types of information collected. If time permits, I'd be happy to share these with the Committee at the conclusion of my statement.

For decades, historians, social scientists, and other scholars have used Freedmen's Bureau records to study social and economic conditions and the Federal government's involvement in education in the black community during Reconstruction. In recent years, however, a growing number of African American genealogists and family historians have discovered the value of the Bureau's records for family research and have begun wading through them in search of information about ancestors and local history.

Some selected records of the Freedmen's Bureau have been microfilmed. But, in general, these do not include many records of the local field offices, where most individual freedmen came into contact with the Bureau. Many researchers who attempt to use the field office records become frustrated when they discover that they must travel to Washington to do so. Their frustration continues when they find that the records are voluminous and lack useful name indexes.

Fortunately we have been successful in forming some partnerships that are enabling us to address the frustrations of users of Freedmen's Bureau field office records. One of these partnerships involves the Special Collections Library of the University of Florida and we are using it as a pilot to confirm requirements for processing records prior to filming and to examine the feasibility of producing an automated name index. The project involves the filming of some forty-one series of records of the Florida field office of the Freedmen's Bureau, totaling more than 12,000 images. To test the indexing possibilities, NARA has developed a database to collect index entries and is training members of its volunteer Civil War Conservation Corps to populate that database by extracting names from those Florida series most likely to yield information about individual freedmen.

Several products will result from the pilot in addition to the set of microfilm of Florida field office records. These include an automated index to the names of individuals cited in the records, an estimate of the time required to complete such an index, a runtime version of the indexing data collection software, and guidelines for indexing and data entry. In this case the University of Florida is funding the filming and NARA volunteers are doing the indexing, but any number of other divisions of labor are possible and NARA also envisions partnerships where funds for filming originate with the government and private partners contribute indexing support.

This concludes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to address any questions that you or the other members of the Committee may have.

Mr. HORN. Our next witness is Michael J. Kurtz.

Mr. KURTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, it is good to be back with this committee.

Among other things, one of my most important jobs is that I am responsible for the custody and use of the Freedmen's Bureau records that my colleague Mr. Washington has just described. When I was a young archivist, one of my first projects was working with Freedmen's Bureau records, so this brings me back around to the beginning.

On behalf of the National Archives, I want to thank Congresswoman Millender-McDonald, and Congressman Watts for introducing the Freedmen's Bureau Preservation Act of 2000. It is very consistent with the mission and goals of the National Archives, and we support the bill very enthusiastically. We always welcome any congressional interest to preserve and make available archival records, particularly these valuable records which Mr. Washington, President Swygert and others have described so well today.

We have the records in a stable environment, but with increasing use, their fragile condition really requires the steps that are called for in this bill. We have prepared—in preparation for this effort, we have identified approximately 1.3 million pages of material that need to be microfilmed. It would cost approximately $1.5 million. All of this of course is beyond the current budget and resource——

Mr. HORN. I want to be very clear. Are those records that you already have or is that an estimate of the records out there in the field?

Mr. KURTZ. These are all Freedmen's Bureau records which have been described at the State and county levels which have the most important genealogical name information. It covers all of that for all 11 states.

Mr. HORN. And you say basically that boils down to 1½ million items?

Mr. KURTZ. 1.3 million pages, $1.5 million.

Mr. HORN. OK.

Mr. KURTZ. We prepared all of this earlier this summer when we were working with Congresswoman Millender-McDonald in preparation for this effort.

A couple of points raised by Dr. Swygert, which I think are very important. The finding aids, we are in the process of putting them up on the NARA Web, and that should be completed soon.

Mr. HORN. What do you mean by "narrow Web"?

Mr. KURTZ. Our Web site. It is the NARA, the National Archives Website.

Also we are very pleased to hear from Dr. Swygert of the interest of Howard University in performing as a potential partner. We think that for the indexing part of this process, it is critical to have partners. As you noted, Mr. Chairman, the NHPRC does do grants. There was a grant made to the Florida State Historical Society which regranted to the University of Florida for the project that we are now engaged in with them for this pilot project. That certainly is one possible way to go.

The pilot project is critical because we really need to understand what standards we need to have, what kind of time and resource constraints. So, forming these pilot projects with the various uni-

versities, particularly Howard University, would be a very important way to go. I would also like to note in closing that we will be working very closely with your staff today on some changes in the bill with regards to funding, I think clarifying the authorization for funding and also putting in—suggesting language to make it clear about the partnerships and the various ways to go about doing that for the indexing and getting the information on the Internet.

Mr. HORN. Let me pursue that point. We have the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Do you think this project here and the $1.5 million in terms of how we would take those partnership suggestions around the country, would that be by a new unit in the archives or would it be left to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission?

Mr. KURTZ. The $1.5 million is required for the microfilming. That is the first step that has to happen. It is the purpose of the pilot project with Florida to come up with what the standards and the costs would be to do name indexing, and from gathering that data, it would enable us to begin working with various university partners in this effort. So, at this point, I don't have a dollar estimate.

Mr. HORN. When will Florida complete the pilot so we can have these figures in a fiscal sense?

Mr. KURTZ. I need to check on that for you. We are ready to begin filming it, and we have developed the data base that we need for the indexing pilot. I need to get the information when that part will be completed.

Mr. HORN. When did that pilot start?

Mr. KURTZ. Our Civil War Conservation Corps that Regie Washington mentioned has completed all of the preparation for the microfilming, so the microfilming is about to begin any day now. That should take about 60 days or so to do the microfilming. We have to get some information for you on exactly when the indexing part of this will be completed, and we will do so.

Mr. HORN. I want to put in the record at this point some of the typical documents that our staff and staff director have from these records. One here is rules on the actual slave at the time and another one is the Amnesty Oath, it would be Mississippi residence, but you can see that in the records. And then from the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, the marriage certificate, and then it tells man and wife and the name children are a legitimate issue of. And then we have a list of the burials for the month of September 1865.

This reminded me, when I started looking at those documents, of the wonderful project that came out of your legislative section of the Archives on Thomas Jefferson where the documents look exactly like it was in Jefferson's day, and also women's suffrage. Now, those are the only two I know of like that. Are there others?

Mr. KURTZ. They are working on one on a history of Congress project. That is our third major one.

Mr. HORN. Good. But it is really wonderful when children in school—elementary, intermediate, high school, universities, colleges, whatever—when you see these documents, the history comes home to you.

Mr. KURTZ. I will be sure to pass that on to the Archivist, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HORN. So these will be put in the record. They can do that at the Government Printing Office. We have a little trouble of what you can do down there or what you can't, so I think those can be easily duplicated in our hearing.

Mr. KURTZ. Just one other point, to pick up on what was previously said. As these records are microfilmed and so forth, we intend to put them in our regional archives. We intend to, I think, followup your idea about the depository library. Also, we have a microfilm rental program. All of this would be in addition to eventually what gets indexed and put on the Internet, other sources of access.

I would like to close, Mr. Chairman, by saying that I believe this will be the final time that, due to the chairman's term limits provisions, that we will have the opportunity to testify before you. We want to thank you for your great help and leadership with the National Archives.

Mr. HORN. Well, thank you very much. We have enjoyed working with you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kurtz follows:]

STATEMENT
By Dr. Michael J. Kurtz
Assistant Archivist for Records Services
National Archives and Records Administration

To the
Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology
Of the Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives
Congress of the United States

17 October 2000

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Turner, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here this morning to present testimony with regard to the Freedmen's Bureau Records Preservation Act of 2000. I am Michael Kurtz, the Assistant Archivist for Records Services in the Washington, DC, area. I am responsible for the custody and use of the Freedmen's Bureau records that Mr. Washington has just described. On behalf of the National Archives and Records Administration and the many members of the public who rely on our holdings to document their heritage and the national experience, I thank Congresswoman Millender-McDonald and Congressman Watts for introducing the Freedmen's Bureau Records Preservation Act of 2000. The bill is consistent in its intent with the mission and goals of the National Archives, and we want to go on record as supporting it.

We welcome congressional interest in our efforts to preserve and make available the archival records of the Federal government. For all the records in our custody, including the Freedmen's Bureau records, these efforts include as a matter of course providing proper housing (such as acid free folders and boxes) and maintaining environmental conditions designed to encourage longevity. Again, as a matter of course, within the limits of our budget, we foster access by preparing and publishing inventories and guides that provide general descriptions of the records. The Freedmen's Bureau Records Preservation Act of 2000 clearly anticipates efforts beyond those we routinely conduct, and we note that those efforts would require additional investment.

Based on our experience, we can make some recommendations about the kind of enhanced preservation and access activities that we believe are intended by HR5157. We know that one of the most effective enhanced preservation actions we can take is to reformat paper records to microfilm. Microfilm is a well-established preservation medium. By microfilming records we are not only able to eliminate the handling of the original paper but also to increase the number of locations at which the records can be viewed. In addition we provide for greater flexibility in improving access, because microfilm can be sent anywhere to be scanned to create digital images and microfilm can easily be shared among organizations and individuals interested in indexing its content. We are currently cooperating with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to microfilm the logs of merchant ships. NOAA is providing the microfilm to an indexing coalition that will extract and index weather information contained in the logs.

Over the years we have made some progress in microfilming the records of the Freedmen's Bureau. In response to scholarly interest, we have filmed several series of records originating in the headquarters of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (nearly 800 rolls of film). With the exception of only a few series, we have not filmed records accumulated by Bureau offices at the State level, where information about individual freedmen and their families is most likely to be found. A recent review of these State level records yielded an estimate of approximately 1.3 million pages to be filmed. We estimate that records preparation and filming costs for this number of pages would be nearly $1.5 million dollars over the course of a multi-year project.

With microfilm of records at the State level in hand we would be in a position to respond to the aspect of HR5157 that promotes improved accessibility. As a first step we would place copies of the film in all of our regional archival facilities and we would enable its loan through our microfilm rental program. In addition we would be able to offer copies of the film to organizations willing to partner with us to build a comprehensive index to the information in the records about individual freedmen. NARA is already engaged in a pilot project involving the State records for Florida that has as one of its goals the development and testing of the architecture and the data entry standards for an indexing database. At the end of this pilot we expect to have a database application and indexing and data entry guidelines that we could share with our partners. NARA will make the results of the Florida indexing project available and would supplement it with other indexing information as it is completed by our partners. We would actively seek these partners and look forward to being able to do so. As the findings of HR5157 emphasize, there is a great deal of interest in the records of the Freedmen's Bureau and we are confident that this interest will translate to willing participation in an indexing effort.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. However, I would be happy to answer any questions you or Members of the Committee may have.

Mr. HORN. Our next presenter is Professor Tony Burroughs, adjunct professor of genealogy, Chicago State University.

Mr. BURROUGHS. Mr. Chairman, Congresswoman McDonald and members of the committee, thank you very, very much for the invitation to say a few words in support of H.R. 5157, the Freedmen's Bureau Record Preservation Act of 2000. I am very honored to be here today.

According to surveys conducted this year by Maritz Marketing, 60 percent of all Americans over the age of 18 are interested in doing genealogical research. Other surveys indicate that genealogy is one of the most popular interests and activities on the Internet. These surveys are consistent with numbers reported by the National Archives indicating that 85 percent of all users of the Archives are researching their family history. Being the only invited full-time, professional genealogist on this witness panel today, I represent those 85 percent of researchers using the National Archives as well as 60 percent of all Americans.

Specifically for African Americans, I have just published this book, Black Roots, a Beginners Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree, which will be Simon & Schusters' lead book in Black History Month, to prepare beginners to get more fundamental background in doing their family history.

I have delivered dozens of lectures at national conferences and local workshops around the United States and Canada in the last 10 years that either instruct researchers on how to use Freedmen's Bureau records or lectures that include Freedmen's Bureau records among other records that I discuss.

Seeing the excitement on genealogists' faces once they learn of these rare records and then their almost immediate frustration when they learn that most have not been microfilmed and they have to travel to Washington to view them is like watching the old commercials on the Wide World of Sports describing "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat," all in a matter of seconds.

Because of the age, the quality and the quantity of these records, they are extremely valuable to both African American and also White genealogists. I have devoted 25 percent of instructional text in this book, the African American Genealogical Sourcebook, to researching records from the Freedmen's Bureau so people know what to do before they come to Washington.

I explain 14 different record series with genealogical and historical value, many of which have already been mentioned, but including apprenticeship records; census lists and registers; marriage records, among the most valuable because they often contain the only record of a slave marriage and sometimes includes the names of children; labor contracts; transportation records; education records, which chronicle the beginning of Black colleges; supervision of 850,000 acres of abandoned land, including leases, sales, and restorations; food rations; and hospital records, which are extremely valuable because they often contain the only record of an ancestor's death—I have seen hundreds of deaths in hospital records due to contagious diseases, epidemics and poor sanitary conditions; complaints, outrages and murders; and the Freedmen's Bureau supervised trials. There was a tremendous amount of cor-

respondence; there are Civil War Veteran Claims; and a few miscellaneous records, including births, deaths, and cemetery records.

Almost all of these records contain names of both African Americans as well as White Americans, many being Bureau agents, teachers, doctors, chaplains, ministers, government employees, laborers, former slave owners, refugees from the Civil War, the sick and the indigent, landowners and Civil War veterans. In addition to the 15 States covered by the Bureau's services, some left home from other States to work for the Bureau, or attend one of the schools. Others received Bureau assistance to return to home and to work outside of Bureau-controlled States, so it covers more than the 15 areas that the Bureau controlled.

The most challenging problem facing African American genealogists is identifying the name of the former slave owner, vital to extend genealogical research prior to 1865. My own unpublished research shows that, out of over 5,000 cases, only 15 percent of former slaves used the name of the last slave owner. Therefore, I instruct researchers to search for records where the former slave indicates the name of his or her former slave owner. Some of the best sources are records from the Freedmen's Bureau that were created during this transition from slavery to freedom.

In addition to discovering their ancestors, some genealogists have made larger contributions to society. Belzora Cheatham, president of the African American Genealogical and Historical Society of Chicago, located letters written to the Freedmen's Bureau in 1868 which assisted her in getting the first State historical marker dedicated to African Americans in Cass County, TX. The unveiling of her historical marker for Whittaker Memorial Cemetery was featured on the CBS Evening News with Dan Rather's Eye on America in 1996.

Some of the Bureau records are now 135 years old and in poor condition. In addition to deteriorating paper, ink is fading from some of the pages and will undoubtedly be a challenge to microfilm.

Of the few records of the Freedmen's Bureau that have been microfilmed, 75 percent were microfilmed prior to the 1977 airing of the television miniseries "Roots" by Alex Haley, which resulted in an explosion of Americans researching their family history. Records from the Bureau that were microfilmed pertained mainly to reports, correspondence, and education items related to the history of the Bureau and to education of African Americans, not to genealogy.

Professor Ira Berlin and his Freedom and Southern Society Project at the University of Maryland was able to select 40,000 documents from the National Archives to transcribe and publish, including some from the Freedmen's Bureau. But he was able to do this because he was only a Metro ride away from the documents. What about those thousands of us that live hundreds and thousands of miles away from Washington, DC? If these records are microfilmed, thousands of genealogists will not only have access to the materials, they can also begin to transcribe records that hold missing puzzles to their ancestors' lives, while other genealogists can begin new studies that will contribute to the humanities.

I have been at the National Archives on many occasions when researchers located their ancestors. The joy and exultation they ex-

hibit is sometimes overwhelming. It is very exciting for me to share in their excitement. It is what keeps me teaching over the years.

Records from the Freedmen's Bureau are unique because they are not only used by academic scholars, they are used by average Americans searching for their roots. The records include African Americans, White Americans, poor Americans, rich Americans—in fact, all Americans. Descendants of people named in the records probably live now in all 50 States.

It was the Congress of the United States that created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands in 1865. Now, 135 years later, we are once again relying on you, the Congress of the United States, to preserve the Bureau's records and its legacy.

I would like to close with two points, one, that I have been working with archivists from the United States in Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia, and Kansas City, and I must say that they do an excellent job, and they are some of the finest civil servants that I have seen. However, they are underutilized, they need more resources to do the job they are doing.

I would also like to say that I have worked with the effort to index the U.S. Colored Troops Project that is now on the Internet that was championed by the National Park Service as well as the Federation of Genealogical Societies where we garnered thousands of genealogists around the country to index these records and make them available to the Internet, and I am willing to offer that service again if it is needed by the committee. Thank you.

Mr. HORN. Thank you. That is very fascinating testimony; and we appreciate you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burroughs follows:]

Freedmen's Bureau Preservation Act

Congressional Testimony by Tony Burroughs - October 17, 2000

Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, thank you very much for the invitation to say a few words in support of H.R. 5157. I am very honored to be here today.

According to surveys conducted this year by Maritz Marketing, 60% of all Americans over age of 18 are interested in genealogical research. Other surveys indicate genealogy is one of the most popular activities on the Internet. These surveys are consistent with numbers reported by the National Archives indicating 85% of users of the archives are researching their family genealogy. Being the only invited genealogist on this witness panel, I represent those 85% of researchers using the National Archives and 60% of all Americans.

I have delivered dozens of lectures at national conferences and workshops throughout the United States and Canada since 1990 that either instruct researchers on how to research Freedmen's Bureau records, or lectures that include Freedmen's Bureau records among others records I discuss.

Seeing the excitement on genealogists' faces once they learn of these rare records, and then their almost immediate frustration when they learn most have not been microfilmed and they must travel to Washington to use them, is like watching the old Wide World of Sports commercials describing "The Thrill of Victory and the Agony of Defeat," all in a matter of seconds.

Because of the age, quality, and quantity of these records, they are extremely valuable to both African American and white genealogists. I devoted twenty-five percent of the instructional text in the *African American Genealogical Sourcebook* to researching records from the Freedmen's Bureau. I explain fourteen record series with genealogical and historical value including:

1. Apprenticeship records
2. Census lists and registers
3. Marriage records, among the most valuable because they often contain the only record of a slave marriage, and sometimes include names of the couple's children.
4. Labor contracts
5. Transportation records
6. Education records, which chronicle the beginning of black colleges.
7. Supervision of 850,000 acres of abandoned lands including leases, sales and restorations.
8. Food rations
9. Hospital records, which are extremely valuable because they are often the only record of an ancestor's death. I've seen hundreds of deaths in hospitals due to contagious diseases, epidemics, and poor sanitary conditions.
10. Complaints, outrages & murders
11. Trials

12. Correspondence

13 Civil War Veteran Claims

14. Miscellaneous records, including a few birth, death & cemetery records

Almost all of these records contain names of both African Americans and white americans, many being Bureau agents, teachers, doctors, chaplains, ministers, government employees, laborers, employers, former slave owners, refugees from the Civil War, the sick and indigent, land owners, and Civil War veterans. In addition to the fifteen states covered by the Bureau's services, some left home from other states to work for the Bureau, or attend one of the schools. Others received Bureau assistance to return home or to work outside Bureau controlled states.

The most challenging problem facing African American genealogists is identifying the name of the last slave owner, vital to extend research beyond 1865. My unpublished research shows, out of 5,000 cases, only 15% of former slaves used the name of the last slave owner. Therefore, I instruct them to search for records where the former slave indicates the name of their last slave owner. Some of the best sources are records from the Freedmen's Bureau which were created during this transition from slavery to freedom.

In addition to discovering their ancestors, some genealogists have made larger contributions to society. Belzora Cheatham located letters written to the Freedmen's Bureau in 1868 which assisted her in getting the first state historical marker dedicated to African

Americans in Cass County, Texas. Her unveiling of the historical marker for Whittaker Memorial Cemetery was featured on the CBS Evening News with Dan Rather's *Eye on America* series in 1996.

Some of the Bureau records are now 135 years old and in poor condition. In addition to deteriorating paper, ink is fading from some of the pages and will undoubtedly be a challenge to microfilm.

Of the few records from the Freedmen's Bureau that have been microfilmed, 75% were filmed prior to the 1977 television mini series *Roots* by Alex Haley which resulted in the explosion of Americans researching their family history. Records from the Bureau that *were* microfilmed pertain mainly to reports, correspondence and education-items related to the history of the Bureau and education of African Americans, not genealogy.

Professor Ira Berlin and the Freedom and Southern Society Project was able to select 40,000 documents from the National archives to transcribe and publish, including some from the Freedmen's Bureau, because he was only a Metro ride away from the documents. What about those of us that live hundreds and thousands of miles away from the Washington, D. C. If these records are microfilmed, thousands of genealogists will not only have access to the materials, many can begin to transcribe records that hold missing puzzles to their ancestors' lives, while other researchers can begin new studies which will contribute to the humanities.

I've been at the National Archives on many occasions when researchers located their ancestors in the records. The joy and exultation they exhibit is sometimes overwhelming, It is very exciting for me to share in their excitement. It's what keeps me teaching over the years.

Records from the Freedmen's Bureau are very unique because they are not only used by academic scholars, they are used by average Americans searching for their roots. The records include African Americans, white Americans, poor Americans, rich Americans-in fact, all Americans. Descendants of people named in the records probably now live in all fifty states.

It was the Congress of the United States that created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands in 1865. Now, 135 years later, we are once again relying on you, the Congress of the United States, to preserve the Bureau's records and it's legacy.

Thank you.

Mr. HORN. Let me ask you, you have heard some of the choices of the pilot projects, the Florida project, do it with the Archives, etc. Do you have any advice for us on that of how this, given the immensity of records in parts of the Nation and how we get microfilm equipment—I have just finished going through about 40 years of a newspaper, and one's eyes do get tired after a while. Then the problem is, when you have delicate, fragile records, that they make sure that they get a good picture of it somehow; and usually the thing is going like this for some archival documents, even after they are on microfilm. They just didn't focus it. They were just rushing through. So what can you tell us about that?

Mr. BURROUGHS. I agree with all of the things that have been previously mentioned. I think that, historically, Black colleges are an excellent source to try to utilize some of this. I would not leave out the Historical Records Preservation Committee and the efforts that they have done. I think they have done a fine job with a lot of the documentary history projects they have done, particularly the one by the Freedom and Southern Society Project, so I would not overlook that in terms of actually transcribing some of the records, in addition to making name indexes. So I don't know if there is time to look into that, but there is a precedent that is set by that, so I would not overlook that. Again, there are thousands and thousands of genealogists around the country that would be very willing to help in this effort.

Mr. HORN. Well, thank you. Do you have a question for this witness, and then we will go to——

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Burroughs, you certainly have given some very interesting and informative information and testimony on your background and how intense you have been in trying to preserve and to recover I suppose more information. It is interesting to know that 60 percent of Americans over the age of 18 are interested in genealogy. It is just amazing. You tend to think you might be one of those who are in just a little hole alone, as I thought I was, just really being interested in this, but it is great to know this as well. I would be interested to know how many of those 60 percent are African Americans, if that is a breakdown that we can get.

Mr. BURROUGHS. I was afraid that question was going to come up. I have not seen statistics on that, and the Maritz Marketing that compiled those statistics, I don't know if they have racial breakdowns of those. I do know that I have seen a growing interest in the numbers of African Americans doing genealogy. I have been tracking, on an informal basis of the numbers of African American genealogical societies that have been growing around the country, and now there are more than 50 genealogical societies spread out throughout the United States, and those numbers are growing.

The 60 percent of all Americans, that number is up from 5 years ago when it was 45 percent of all Americans. So I have talked with representatives from the National Archives, and they do not compile statistics by race either, but they have indicated to me that the numbers of African Americans are growing just like everybody else is growing.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. That is interesting, given the fact that we see more and more in our communities at family reunions

and, in doing so, the family tends to want to now know from whence they have come and whether or not Alabama is really the first, I guess, point of origin of the family or wherever—outside of, of course, Africa. But they want to know whether they have come from the southern part of Africa, the west part or whatever, and it is important that we continue to move the Bureau of Records whereby one can begin to do that.

I did that when I had to speak in front of my family reunions, and I went through the Mormon's records to find that and found that we really—the name Millender, the name McDonald, and we recognize those names and where they have come from, but you just really tend to go as far back. And it went back to Africa and then down to Portugal. So, it is amazing how I came all the way up through all of that area in trying to find, really, my roots. So it was quite interesting.

The other thing I wanted to ask you was——

Mr. BURROUGHS. Excuse me, if I could interrupt you for a brief second to followup on the point that you are making, this book, the African American Genealogical Sourcebook that was published by Gale Research, was the first major publication in 15 years when it came out in 1995. After it has come out, within the last 5 years, several commercial publishers have come out with books on African American genealogy. So, if the commercial publishers are interested and they are publishing books, then obviously there is a tremendous demand and interest there.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Well taken and well said. I would like to get those books that you have displayed today.

Mr. BURROUGHS. Sure.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Did I write it correctly, the National Archives Preservation Committee? What is the——

Mr. BURROUGHS. What is the correct name of the historic preservation committee?

Mr. HORN. It is the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. So that is one that comes through our National Archives and not one that is independent of them; am I correct? Is this an interest——

Mr. HORN. It is in cooperation with the Archives?

Mr. KURTZ. The Archivist is the chair of the Commission, and it is administratively organized and managed by the National Archives.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. OK, fine. I just wanted to get a clear understanding of where they integrate.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HORN. That leads to another question. Besides the Freedmen's records, what are some of the other records that might also be relevant to the emancipation of the slaves? Are they in county courthouses somewhere buried beyond the Freedmen's material that we obviously want? What is out there besides that? If you take a microfilm machine around to a county courthouse, maybe there are also some other records you want.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Well, Mr. Chairman, in terms of Federal records, there is also the Freedmen's Bank records that are available at the National Archives. Freedmen's Bank was established on

the same day that the Bureau was established, although it was established as a private institution. When the bank failed, of course the Federal Government stepped in, the Comptroller of the Currency and so forth, to liquidate the assets and so forth. But the Freedmen's Bank records are also a body of records that are useful for African American family research.

One of the efforts of the officials of the bank was to determine when a person opened up an account, who their family members were. So, you find information about aunts, uncles, fathers, brothers, sisters, and all of that information is in there.

Again, I should point out that institution was established in 1865, so a lot of the information you find in those bank records are prior to the 1870 census, where all African Americans are initially being documented by name and so forth.

So, they become extremely important records, and they work closely with the Freedmen's Bureau, and many of the people who are depositing money there thought they were a part of the Freedmen's Bureau, but they are a separate body of records.

Also, I have been working a good deal on some records called the Commission of Claims, also known as the Southern Claims Commission. This is a commission that was established in 1871 where persons who had property taken from them by the Union soldiers who, when they moved throughout the areas, had an opportunity to seek compensation from this commission, from the Federal Government. And some of these individuals who were filing for claims were, believe it or not, former slaves and freed Blacks. Not only that, those records, there were some 220,000 witnesses.

In many cases, when you find persons serving as witnesses for Blacks who are filing claims, these witnesses are family members. Also, when you find many of the Whites who made up the majority of the people filing claims, many of the witnesses were their former slaves. And when you ultimately go through those documents, you are finding what these people are saying, this person was my former slave owner. And as Tony pointed out, one of the key efforts in doing African American genealogy is to find out, if your ancestors were former slaves, who the slave owner was. You need to find as much information about the slave-owning family as you do your own family. So these kinds of records, Federal records, provide that kind of information.

On the level of the local level, obviously, at some point, people are going to have to do research. African Americans are going to have to do research at these local levels, look at wills and probate records, deed books where information was created by the slave-owning families. And you can find this information sometimes, where they purchased these individuals, you might find information where slaves have been bequeathed to family members and all sorts of documents. You might find assessment lists in a probate record where they not only list the furniture and the other items that are owned by these individuals but you also find the names of the slaves they owned and certainly the cost and other information about them.

So, certainly African American genealogical research involves using Federal records and also these local records that are created in the States and the county courthouses.

Mr. HORN. Well said.

Dr. Kurtz, I am curious, besides microfilm, do we now have scanning devices that could get some of these records into a computer base?

Mr. KURTZ. Yes, we do, Mr. Chairman. Always we microfilm because that is the long-term preservation medium, but we have been working again with building partnerships with various parts of the private sector to get records scanned and made available through digital imagery.

Mr. HORN. On the scanning from the microfilm then, can you move it onto a disk that preserves it?

Mr. KURTZ. Yes, you can.

Mr. HORN. How long does the standard microfilm tape last?

Mr. KURTZ. Well, actually, the preservation medium is the microfilm. There are really no archival preservation standards at this point for digital imagery. They are still being developed with the technology and the industry. So whenever we use digital imagery and so forth in scanning and images, it is purely for the purposes of access and accessibility. It is really not for preservation. I am sure in the next couple of years this will be settled and the standards will be developed, but they don't exist right now.

Mr. HORN. Well, when we talk about 1.3 million pages and a cost of $1.5 million for the microfilm, do we need to also think about disks that would keep it permanent when the rest of this is either in a vault somewhere in a cave in some States and universities. How much really are we talking about, $3 million basically?

Mr. KURTZ. I am really not able to comment on that.

Mr. HORN. I would think so. Well, we will start with that. We will see if we can get away with $3 million.

Mr. KURTZ. One of the things, too, I would like to supplement a little bit about, what Regie Washington shared in the National Archives here in Washington there are many records, military records that have information about African Americans, Treasury Department records. For instance, I think it is the third auditor of the Treasury Department, you find all of the records related to compensated emancipation here in the District. I used those records many years ago in a publication, and they are a rich source of information.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Chairman, let me just ask Mr. Washington, your comments on the Freedmen's Bank records, the Commission of Claims records and now Dr. Kurtz saying the military Treasury records, that would be quite an integration of records, and it would seem to me like at one time, at one point, we need to look at integrating that and cross-referencing that. Because if you have just one segment of these remarkable records as in the Freedmen Bureau, we certainly need to finish that off with all of the other records that will be a cross-reference to and for cross-purposes, it seems to me. I would like to perhaps have you and Mr. Washington and Mr. Kurtz to look at the cost factor of that. Because that, to me, seems to be the next step, not at this juncture, Mr. Chairman, but perhaps at another one, that we can start looking at an integration of all of those records.

Mr. KURTZ. Congresswoman, I think that you are making a very good point, because I think what we really need to do is, beginning

with what we are planning to do at this point, develop a strategy that kind of moves onward and outward dealing with what is most productive and useful, identifying what is lesser, making those cost-benefit decisions and whether it is worth it and have a strategy that goes beyond the Freedmen's Bureau, that has to be our first step, I think.

Mr. HORN. I would like to now move to our last presenter. His responses will be along the line of a lot of the questions we have already asked, but I wanted to get some of the administrative questions into the record, and then what Mr. Henry Wiencek has done is really quite exciting. He is a resident fellow in the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.

We are glad to have you here. Please give us the answers to some of the ones we have already had answers on, because you have lived through this, so tell us about it.

Mr. WIENCEK. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for inviting me here today to testify on something that is really extremely important. I can testify firsthand as to both the importance of what you are proposing and also to the insane difficulty that descends upon any researcher who tries to use these records. So, anything we can do to ameliorate that will be most welcome.

I would like to address, first of all, a larger question, which is the importance of genealogy. I think that some people have the perspective that it is something almost purely private and almost an avocation. But, as a professional writer and historian, I think I can tell you that we are on the edge of a new era in history where we will make much more extensive use of genealogies than we have in the past.

I am beginning to see how all of these individual strands that families have been laboriously constructing over the last couple of decades can be put together to form tapestries that show us the trajectory of a community, the trajectory of the rise of a race, and we are just now reaching the point where we will have the critical mass of individual family research where we can begin to put it together.

I have been asked to consult with Colonial Williamsburg on a project called Forever Here; where they are trying to get a better view of what slavery was like in Williamsburg. And to whom are they turning? They are looking to genealogists, to family historians among the families of the people who were enslaved there. They are actively seeking out slave descendants to find out: "What have you found out about your family? What can you share with us in terms of oral history, in terms of documentation, in terms of family trees? What happened to these people after they became free? We need to know that."

In my next project, I am doing a book on George Washington. Some of the first people I consulted with were African American genealogists. I got in touch with people, and some of them came to me when they found out what I was working on. I am seeking out descendants of Washington slaves. How can you understand Washington unless you understand his slaves, unless you understand the community in which he lived? He lived in a highly integrated community, and his slaves had an impact on him. I am trying to

get at the larger question of why he didn't finish the revolution when he had a chance and set the slaves free.

I am finding fascinating new information from family historians, people who have been tracing their roots back to Mount Vernon and other Washington and Custis plantations, very quietly gathering up the documents that paint a fascinating picture of what Washington's household was like. We are getting information that we would never find from mainstream historians.

In a similar vein, the Freedmen's Bureau records are an extremely important link in this chain for people doing that kind of research. I am going to use those records even in relation to George Washington. Because at the moment the Civil War ended, there were a great many former Washington slaves at Mount Vernon, and they were—I know that they had almost daily interactions with the Federal army, and I am expecting to find some very interesting information in the Freedmen's Bureau records about conditions at Mount Vernon, and I wouldn't be surprised if some of those slaves have something to say about family relationships that existed then in 1865 that will tell me about family relationships in 1795.

That is the way it works. You take every shard of evidence you can find from those records and then trace it back, and I had a great deal of success with that in my book "The Hairstons."

The other point I would like to make is that I think a lot of people look upon these records and see their importance primarily in terms of African American history, and of course that is supremely important. But, the other thing is, these are some of the best records we have for southern, local and regional history, period.

Now, Tip O'Neill famously said, all politics is local. I have come to believe that, to a great extent, all history is local and that we really cannot hope to begin to understand the history of this country until we understand the history of our communities. It is only when you put a microscope on a region that you begin to see certain things leap out. You begin to see the establishment of businesses and farms and churches and schools, and you begin to see really the deepest fabric of American life, and that is only when you look at these places under a microscope from a local perspective. I know from experience that these Freedmen's Bureau records are, in many cases, the best records we have for local history in that crucial period of emancipation and its aftermath.

Now, as I mentioned, I made extensive use of these records, and it nearly drove me insane. I worked with the records of four States: Virginia, North Carolina, Mississippi and Tennessee. They vary greatly in their organization. In some areas I found records that were very deep, because the local officers were diligent and kept a wide variety of records and were careful about sending them all into headquarters; and in other areas you will just find the most perfunctory monthly records and in order to get additional information you have to dig really deeply.

But, I would make an appeal to you when you are considering how to organize these records to give special attention to indexing them by locality. I think that will be a supremely important element.

I wrote a book on the Hairstons, a family who lived in a certain group of counties, mainly in Virginia and North Carolina; and it drove me crazy to try to isolate the Freedmen's Bureau materials that dealt with those regions. The method I finally came up with is that I went through all of the monthly reports that were filed generically and I made a list of all of the names of the officers and subassistant officers, whoever signed a report having to do with those areas; and then I went back to the so-called registers of letters with that long list of names and copied out all of the index entries for each of those officers and then went back to the letters and read all of those letters and then looked for asterisks on the letters that would indicate that there was another letter somewhere else cross filed.

It went on forever, and there was no central index that would allow me to go and find—if you wanted to find out what happened in Richmond, a very important place, you couldn't do it without laboriously going through this process, which would take you weeks and weeks and weeks. I think that would be a supremely important contribution, if we could index these by locality.

To that end, I think that—you mentioned the partnership with Florida. I think it would be wonderful if the Archives could get in touch with researchers in every State where there was a Freedmen's Bureau in operation, just get in touch with the major universities there and say to them, go into your own archives for the last 50 years and tell us which historians have done dissertations and theses and other kinds of papers on the Freedmen's Bureau. What have they done, what did they find, and send that to us so that we can begin to put together a massive bibliography of research on the Bureau.

The other thing is I would hire local researchers in each State and say, go through the records that are available on microfilm and make us sort of a county by county rough survey. What kind of records did they turn in? How good are they?

I am not talking about doing an index, just a quick survey to let us know what is there in a very preliminary way.

Mr. HORN. Well, a good example are the WPA records of the 1940's. Have they been helpful to you? State by State.

Mr. WIENCEK. Yes. I used the WPA records. Some of the originals are housed at the Library of Virginia in the State archives, and I used some of the records here, in the National Archives. I also made extensive use of the ex-slave interviews that were done during the 1930's and 1940's. See, that material is filed geographically, so it is very easy to get at.

And even though the Freedmen's Bureau records are filed State by State, once you get within boundaries of the State, the ground falls away beneath you. There is just so much material. As I said, if you wanted to find out about what happened in Richmond, you couldn't do it without weeks of research, just to locate where to begin.

Mr. HORN. Well, as I get it, Dr. Kurtz, first we have to get at the records, we have to microfilm them, and then we have to get them in a computer situation where you can have name, locality, and all the rest to solve your problem on weeks going there, Mr. Wiencek. I can suffer with you on a lot of research I have done,

and that takes a long time. So, if we can manipulate it after you get the base record, why, I think that would be very helpful.

Mr. WIENCEK. If I could make one brief comment, the chairman alluded before to education. If these records were more available and indexed in a rational way, they would be a tremendous educational tool for high school and college students across the country who wish to work with primary sources. In studying a period of extreme importance and ambiguity, if you would give advanced high school and college students the chance to work with these original records and say, all right, go in and pick a region, find out everything you can about it and tell me what happened to the Blacks? What happened to the Whites? What experiences did they report? What did the government do? Just based on these primary documents.

And then assign them to go a little bit beyond that, maybe get in touch with the local historical society or assign someone to settle down with a local newspaper and say, well, here we have reports of atrocities committed against the Black people. What did the newspapers say? Did they report it at all? Or how did they slant the news?

Assign someone else to go into a collection of letters from that region and find out, well, what were the planter families saying about conditions? How did their assessments match up with what we are finding in these records?

It would be a tremendous educational resource. It is difficult to teach that period, I think. The Civil War is exciting, and the period right after is hard to get at. I think if you did it through these primary documents, it would really come alive for students.

Mr. HORN. Well, you are absolutely right. The southern revisionists certainly didn't want to talk about reconstruction.

Mr. WIENCEK. No.

Mr. HORN. So, a lot of that just disappeared. It would be fascinating to see if anything was even said in a newspaper that related to activity of jailed slaves or whatever.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wiencek follows:]

HR 5751
The Freedmen's Bureau Record Preservation Act of 2000:
Are These Reconstruction Records Being Protected?

Henry Wiencek

The Freedmen's Bureau papers are one of the great but barely tapped resources for American history and genealogy. These records contain an enormous amount of unique historical information--insights into state, regional, and local history of profound significance. The BRFAL records contain vivid and vital first-person accounts of Emancipation and its aftermath. This, surely, was a pivotal moment in our history. These records remain largely untapped because they are extremely difficult to use. They are still organized according to an arcane 19th-century filing system.

I made extensive use of BRFAL records in researching my 1999 book *The Hairstons--An American Family in Black and White,* which chronicles the story of the black and white Hairstons from the Revolution to the present. The Hairstons lived in remote sections of Virginia, North Carolina, and Mississippi that had not been deeply examined by previous historians. I was extremely eager to recover information about the era of Reconstruction, when the black Hairstons became free, but the standard histories said little about Hairston country--the period was virtually a blank slate except for an overlay of *Gone With the Wind* romance. With some trepidation I plunged into the huge task of decoding the indexes to the Freedmen's Bureau records. It took me a month simply to figure out how to navigate around the records, but a whole world opened up.

Hidden in the nooks and crannies of these reports I found the chronicle of the country's painful recovery from slavery. The officers of the Freedmen's Bureau recorded the birth of black schools, churches, farms, and businesses. They reported the heroism of blacks and whites who defied the prevailing racism. They noted the struggles of white families to hold on to their land amid economic chaos. In mundane and seemingly useless files such as "requests for travel expenses," I found the heart-rending appeals of black women seeking funds to travel in search of lost children and spouses. In the reports of labor agents I found detailed rosters of the migrations that took place from the upper south to the deep south, as blacks in large numbers desperately sought work in more prosperous areas.

The Freedmen's Bureau also chronicled the birth of America's apartheid. To their dismay and disgust, FB agents discovered that, although involuntary servitude was illegal, slavery of African-American children survived in practice. Children who had become separated from their parents for whatever reason were "bound over" as apprentices to farmers, and even when a child's parents appeared and asked for custody they could not obtain it. If parents could not find work they ran the risk of being legally declared vagrants, which made their children subject to the apprenticeship law--any child who *might* become a burden on the county could be indentured to a planter. Black parents begged the army to rescue their children, but the army did nothing. Some desperate parents kidnaped their children from plantations, only to have the sheriff appear at their door to drag the child back to the planter who held the documents of indenture.

Among the most virulently racist whites, the most hateful sight was a school for blacks. Across Virginia, Freedman's Bureau agents reported teachers threatened and beaten, black schoolhouses sacked and burned. Poring over these reports, the bureau's superintendent of education exclaimed that the devil had taken Virginia by the hand, "and is making a regular stamping ground of the state." In Lexington, North Carolina, blacks built a schoolhouse and paid some of the costs for its two white teachers and 88 students. In March 1868 the local Freedman's Bureau agent put a brief note in his monthly report that the freedpeople's school house was "burned by incendiary." It took a year and a half for the community to gather the funds and materials to rebuild it.

We cannot understand modern race relations unless we get some grasp of our racial history. In the standard histories, post-Civil War Virginia is depicted as a place of relative racial calm, but a markedly different image emerges in the Freedman's Bureau records--a private lynching in Nelson County, a black woman murdered and dumped by the tracks in Lynchburg, a black carriage driver shot dead in Lexington for passing a white carriage driver on the road.

In scouring the Freedman's Bureau records, I was amazed to find that they contained a treasure trove of information about the remote town of Martinsville, Virginia, where thousands of Hairstons lived. Martinsville had its own Freedman's Bureau officer, Lt. William Fernald, whose letters yielded a highly detailed account of the origins of separate systems of justice. Fernald reported that for the blacks, "it is almost impossible to obtain justice." Blacks were beaten for being bold enough to make

a complaint to him or to a local magistrate. Even if a magistrate thought that a black man's complaints had merit, he did not dare to act for fear of incurring the wrath of his white neighbors. Lt. Fernald wrote in one of his reports that whenever he confronted a white man with a complaint made by a black, the white would inevitably say that the allegations were fantasies, that blacks simply couldn't be believed under any circumstance.

Fernald's reports of court proceedings were chilling. When a freedman named Garland went to court to testify against a white man who had beaten him, he found that the jury had appointed his assailant as their foreman! Naturally, the jury declined to indict. The same jury on the same day sentenced a black man to three years in the state penitentiary for stealing a bushel of oats. Lt. Fernald took a special interest in the case of a freedman named Caesar, who had received a severe beating at the hands of Colonel P. H. Hairston. When Caesar's complaint against Colonel Hairston was heard by the grand jury, the evidence was so strong that nine of the jurors (all white) were actually inclined to indict the colonel. But then a magistrate made a short speech advancing a new legal doctrine: a white man, he said, ought not to be prosecuted for beating a black "unless in so doing he should disable him." This was food for thought. Caesar had survived the attack and stood before the jury in relatively good shape. Colonel Hairston was not indicted.

It is fitting that African-American genealogists are providing much of the impetus for this project to preserve and index the Freedmen's Bureau records. For many African-Americans, these records hold the best hope for tracing their ancestors into slavery time. African-American genealogists often find that the trail runs cold before 1865 because they cannot discover who owned their ancestors. They hit what is called "The Wall of Slavery." Freedmen's Bureau records breach that wall, revealing the names of slave owners through marriage records such as Cohabitation Registers, which are the Holy Grail of African-American genealogists.

The implications of this family-oriented research go far beyond genealogy. Family historians necessarily delve into obscure corners of history often bypassed by mainstream scholars. In working with sources such as the Freedmen's Bureau records, these researchers--many of them amateurs--uncover aspects of local and regional history

that would otherwise remain unknown.

Tip O'Neil famously remarked that "all politics is local." I have come to believe that, to a great extent, all history is local. We cannot understand this country fully without a grasp of community history. Where did our schools come from? Who built our churches? Who were the shapers of our community? What heroes and heroines have been forgotten? The Freedmen's Bureau records can help to answer those questions, and to cast much-needed light on the crucial years in our past when freedom came to millions of Americans for the first time.

Mr. HORN. Dr. Kurtz, is it possible then where indexing could be helping these researchers in terms of the locality and different things to get at them from—I think it is exciting, if you had students in Richmond, VA, and Long Beach, CA, there would be a lot of things to learn from others. Because, in a lot of our cities in southern California—I have one city that is 85 percent, for example, Hispanic. I have another city where part of it would be about 70 percent African American. And my colleague here who authored this bill, she has a heavy African American population in parts of her district. That would be a very interesting thing on the Internet for high school students to be talking to each other around the country.

Mr. KURTZ. Mr. Chairman, let me ask our expert, and I would like to say that our agency is fortunate to have an expert of the caliber of Regie Washington with us. Regie.

Mr. WASHINGTON. I just want to comment on the university efforts and, just like Howard was saying, if you have universities involved in a project—once you have the material filmed, that is the key, getting the material filmed. Once you have it filmed, if a university purchases the microfilm, they have a huge tool of laborers in students and you can utilize these students in terms of having them go in and do the indexing projects and, at the same time, they are beginning to learn about the Freedmen's Bureau which—I got a call the other day and people hadn't even heard of the Freedmen's Bureau. So, here you have an opportunity of a huge labor pool to go in and do the indexing, identify those series that are conducive to finding information about individuals, utilizing these students to go in. At the same time, they are using primary sources; at the same time, they are learning about the Freedmen's Bureau; and, at the same time, they are doing a good service for the African American community and the genealogical community, historical community as well. So, I am intrigued by the idea of using universities as a pool to get that kind of operation done.

Mr. KURTZ. I think also in the indexing, responding to your question, Mr. Chairman, yes, I think the locality aspect of the information would be very important to capture. I mean, I think it would be essential, actually. It wouldn't make any sense without it.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Chairman, I think as the chairman and I, both representing California, look at the demographics, they change; and it is so important that we do this on a locality basis to see from whence the L.A. County was and now it has grown exponentially, the minority, just to see what happened then, what happened now. I think for students, being a former teacher myself, it would be incredibly important. I think it is intriguing to have students begin this process of look at what happened, whether the newspaper had anything on it, all of those other facets that Dr. Wiencek talked about, because then we will have students becoming more involved in this process, more involved in the historical aspects of not only the African Americans but the American history in general. I think that is when we can then perhaps tap them to become more involved in the political process and what we are doing.

I think all of this has such a revolving interest for all of us. Thank you.

Mr. HORN. Let me ask about another category that comes to mind, and that is the church records of birth, marriage, and the county records of death, etc. To what degree does that apply to a lot of the African mission? I think there were churches strictly African American after the Civil War was over, and I don't know if those records have been looked at, but it seems to me that is another valuable record.

Mr. WIENCEK. Those records are actually very endangered. A lot of them are in private hands. What I have run across is that I will contact a church and they will say we have records going back to the 1940's and we don't know anything before that. And then I will make some phone calls and I will find out that the granddaughter of the church member has the records going back to the 1870's because her grandfather had been entrusted with them by a pastor at some point and took them home, and they never got back to the church. And this happens all the time. So, it takes a lot of detective work to find some of these records, and they are very, very endangered, because no one knows where they are.

Mr. HORN. Yes.

Mr. BURROUGHS. If I could followup on that. Some of the most vital records for doing genealogy are records of birth, marriage, and death—birth certificates, death certificates, marriage licenses and marriage records. For most of the areas that we are talking about, particularly in the south, many of those records didn't exist until the 20th century. So when you look at the 19th century, the records in the Freedmen's Bureau that pertain to marriage and death and birth are some very, very rare records that you just cannot get anywhere else. So you are able to extend your research into the 19th century, because many of those areas didn't have those records until much later.

Mr. HORN. Interesting. How about plantation records? What has happened to them? Do they just get burned or taken north, or what?

Mr. BURROUGHS. Well, fortunately, the University Publications of America have microfilmed 1,500 reels of plantation records. Those have been available to scholars at academic libraries and some public libraries and historical societies around the country. That was a 10-year project that was just concluded this year, so that is a very, very voluminous collection. There are some plantation records within the Freedmen's Bureau on a small basis where the Freedmen's Bureau took over plantations and then took former slaves to work those plantations and were paid for the first time. So, there are huge numbers of plantations records that are available on microfilm.

Mr. WIENCEK. I got a call this week from an architect in central Virginia who said she was working on the renovation of a rural house, an old rural house, and they broke open a wall and out tumbled bundles of records from slavery time. And they said, can you come take a look at these and let us know if there is some importance to them? I said, you bet.

Two weeks ago I was at a plantation that is in the Washington family and they said, oh, you may be interested in seeing this and they pulled out a ledger from the 1850's that listed slaves being paid for certain jobs and the birth of a slave child. I said, does any-

body know about this? And they said, oh, no, it is just in the family. So I have let the University of Virginia know about the existence of that.

There are many, untold thousands of plantation records that are still in private hands and embedded in walls or locked in trunks that no one knows about it.

Mr. HORN. Fascinating. You have to be a detective in this business.

Mr. WASHINGTON. Mr. Chairman, if I could just comment, one of the documents that I brought today that is in one of the bound volumes is a census of plantations from the Freedmen's Bureau of Records where individuals were working on these government plantations and, of course, you can see the names of the individuals and it also lists the names of the former owners. You might want to take a look at that document to get an idea of some of the kinds of plantation types of records you might find in Freedmen's Bureau of Records.

Mr. HORN. I am a book collector and I look at a lot of book catalogs and I see occasionally documents of the 1840's, 1830's, 1810's, slaves and so forth, and there is a price on that when the dealer is selling it. I am curious, when you find a wall of records, does that family want to turn them over to a university or the Archives? What kind of incentives can we put out there to get those materials where scholars can have access to them?

Mr. WIENCEK. My impression is that they want them to end up at a university and to be made available to researchers everywhere. After I look at the records, I am going to see if UVA is interested and then take it from there.

Mr. HORN. Does my colleague have any other questions?

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. I do not. Thank you so much for this hearing.

Mr. HORN. Well, you did a great job of bringing it up to us.

Let me just see the changes in the language, if any. Well, I thought that we did it with everybody. So, just let us know if there is something that we need by the end of today in terms of looking at the legislation and get it in to Mr. George, and we will see if we need to put it in tomorrow with full committee.

Mr. KURTZ. Thank you for that opportunity. We will, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HORN. OK. Thank you.

I think we have covered every question we have here.

So, let me thank the staff that put this together.

The gentleman to my left, that Howard graduate you heard about from the president, he has been anointed now in public as well as going across the stage, J. Russell George, the very distinguished staff director and chief counsel of this subcommittee; and he has also had great help from Earl Pierce, our professional staff member right behind him, who has gone and looked at a lot of these records; our director of communications, Bonnie Heald, is also back there; and then our faithful clerk, Elizabeth Seong; and our intern, George Frazer, they are working somewhere here; and Dr. Pearl-Alice Marsh of Ms. Millender-McDonald's staff, who has done a lot of work on this, and I think she is right back here.

And then the democratic counsel, Trey Henderson, is always helpful and represents the ranking member, whoever it is for the day; and Jean Gosa, minority clerk, who knows everybody and all sorts of things. The court reporters, Doreen Dotzler and Julie Bryan have been with us this morning. So we thank you all for your role in this.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Chairman, just let me say, you can see how thorough he is. He has really included everyone who was a part of this today. Let me just compliment you, Mr. Chairman, on how thorough you were in recognizing all of the folks who have such a critical part in playing a role in this piece of legislation. Again, I thank you for bringing it to your committee, thanking all of the staff persons, especially my senior policy advisor, Dr. Pearl-Alice Marsh, who has done extensive research on this issue. Thank you.

Mr. HORN. Well, I thank the gentlewoman from California; and with those happy words, we will adjourn.

[Whereupon, at 11:50 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]