

Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials Resolution

Harris Neck Land Trust The Fight for Land and Justice

WHEREAS, the Harris Neck Justice Movement is an effort to reclaim the 2,687 acres of Harris Neck land taken by the federal government in 1942; and

WHEREAS, legal ownership of the Harris Neck land was held by 75 African American families who lived on the land from 1865 - 1942; and

WHEREAS, from the end of the Civil War until 1942, the people of Harris Neck, located along the coast in the northeast corner of McIntosh County, Georgia, lived off the land, creeks, rivers and ocean, and they took their crops, wild game and seafood to market in Savannah and Darien in small sailboats; and

WHEREAS, they relied on the outside world for very little and preserved much of their African heritage – a culture that came to be known as Gullah or Gullah-Geechie – and were a hard working, resourceful people, who owned their own seafood processing plants, schoolhouse, general store and firehouse; and

WHEREAS, in 1942, the federal government, via Eminent Domain, confiscated the 2687 acres of Harris Neck for the stated purpose of national security to build an Army airfield during WWII; and

WHEREAS, the people were given three weeks to move off their land and crops, houses and other buildings owned by African Americans were bulldozed and burned; and

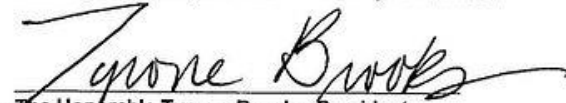
WHEREAS, none of the people were paid for their houses, businesses, other buildings or any "improvements"; and

WHEREAS, the stunningly beautiful acres of meadows, woodlands, freshwater ponds and marsh, which was once home to a prosperous and self-reliant community, has been a national wildlife refuge since 1961; and

WHEREAS, the Harris Neck Land Trust, officially established in 2006, is the organization that represents all the surviving African American families who lived on Harris Neck until 1942, as well as the few white families who owned property but did not live on the land located in northeast McIntosh County, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, the Trust was created by, and is comprised of, former Harris Neck community members and their descendants.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS that the members of this body expresses support for the Harris Neck Land Trust and the Harris Neck Justice Movement in their efforts to reclaim the 2,687 acres of Harris Neck taken by the federal government, and return it to its rightful owners.



The Honorable Tyrone Brooks, President
Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials
State Representative, District 63

GABEO Summer Convention 2010