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Russell, Daniel Jr. and Judy

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Gullah Project
Daniel Russell, Jr. and Judy Russell
Unknown(s)
July 25, 2012
South Carolina

JR: To start. She just prep...

Unknown (offscreen): Good morning! It is Wednesday, July 25th, 2012. And we are joined with...

DR: Pastor Daniel Russell, Jr.

JR: And my name is Judy Russell. And we have a little one coming on the way (touches stomach). So we're glad to be here! (DR laughs).

Unknown 2 (offscreen): Praise the Lord! We're just going to take this opportunity to talk to you and find out what great things have happened for you, your family and your congregation. Since we spoke to you last you had a possible rec center coming along. Had a school coming along. And you had hoped for a family of your own and we'd like if you could just share what has been going on in your life.

DR: Well, ministry aspect. We have grown considerably with membership. We have a good amount of dedicated members, dedicated workers. And in this day and time, when you can get people to work for free and still smile, that's a good thing. (Laughs). So, we've been able to accomplish that. We have embarked upon educating our community on the secular side with a school, K-5 through twelfth grade, which is now in our third year. (JR nods). And we have added students and more so one at a time. We haven't had a great rush but you know, quantity is not always quality. So we have a graduated since 2011, 2010, we've graduated two students. And it's been wonderful. We have fifth graders, fourth graders, seventh graders and eleventh graders. Yes, we have embarked upon the foundation curriculum has been the affective curriculum. And we have added various components such as the island where we're situated as a Gullah heritage so we've included that component into our curriculum as well as some foreign languages. And one thing that I'm proud about that we've added, we've partnered with Regis Bank. And their manager comes and teaches our children about finances, from checking accounts to credit cards to how to do certain things. So and that's an ongoing... (Nods).

Unknown 2 (offscreen): Outstanding!

DR: And we also have one of our local artists, Mr. Hank. He comes and helps our children with art and very in depth of Gullah culture. So he paints, he draws. He has a studio in Beaufort. So

it's been good. So, hopefully within the next year... You all drove in on a dirt road. When you all return, prayerfully, that road should be paved, not with gold, (chuckles), but it should be paved with asphalt. And we're praying that that will hopefully enhance even more people to come to fellowship at our church.

JR: We're finding out that the community, we're reaching out more to the community with our students. And... because there's so much resource in this area, and a lot of people would like to come to our school, some would like to bring Gullah heritage, but they would like to do it with a cost. And some would just like to do it because they love to see the children learn. So we're finding various things, like Mr. Hank Aaron. He came in and one of our students was interning at his art studio. And after he did the internship and now he has a permanent job there and he is going to school, going to college. And he was a student that was... he was more into himself. He was an introvert and now his personality has come out. And Mr... the artist is coming, he's taught the children and he just loves to do that. And that was a great component that we added. And we didn't know until we went out to the community to find out the richness of the things that are in the community, as far as what was there. And what was happy about it. And you know we have K-5 through twelve, we find in this area, the children are starting middle school at the fifth grade. And some of the parents realize that the children aren't ready to go to middle school at the fifth grade. So we're finding we're getting more fifth graders that are coming to our school instead of the little ones. Which is good because they're coming to us at a good timing and the transitions, sometimes they don't do well. The parents know that they're not ready for middle school. So we're finding that a lot of our children are coming, we're getting a lot of fifth graders. So that's good for our school.

DR: Yeah, we haven't... we're hoping our rec center/building a larger facility. Of course, with the way the economy is, we're trying to maintain what we already have. But we're hoping that we will be able to build that with the acres that we have. We have three acres here and seven acres in town. So we're hoping to maybe transition those seven acres to where it will be financially lucrative. So, because I wanna stay on the island. I don't wanna move into town. I wanna keep our ministry here. We wanna build, you know, some major things here. You know, being off the beaten path, you have to market that much more. And have to have a good spiritual product when they arrive so people can stay and help build. That's catch on to the vision. Cause one thing God has given me is a great vision for this community. Yeah. We partnered with special needs and disability agency. To where they bring the clients to service on Sunday morning. And from that we're hoping to branch off to where they can have their own church service, to where the gospel is presented to where they're understanding is good as well as being a part of it. Because a lot of times, people with special needs, disabilities, they're viewed as not being able to function in ministry, like you and I. But we're hoping to allow them to be able to usher and sing and you know, just have their own little service for maybe 45 minutes. So we're looking to do that.

Unknown 2 (offscreen): Where are they coming from to the church service?

JR: They're coming from the community. Some of them are housed in department special needs in homes and some are individual out of their own home. So when we went to the director, he said, "I think that is great!" He said, "Because a lot of churches do not allow them to emerge into their service. And they're not received." And hopefully he would like us to maybe family, some families adopt and we take them home for dinner. Hopefully this will be added into their educational program because this is a part of their weekend life. Whatever they wanna do, they can actually pick and choose whatever church they wanna go to or wherever they wanna go to. But I believe that Pastor Russell, not just because he's my husband, but I do believe that he has a special heart and they actually feel the love. And they actually feel the love of our congregation. And a lot of people would want to put them to the side, but not only put them to the side, but you know, you stay over here. But no, they don't wanna include them. So, I think that this is great. When Pastor Russell had his fiftieth birthday party, a lot of them came. And they partied hard. They danced. (DR chuckles). They loved it. They just surrounded Pastor Russell on the dance floor and it was just a wonderful opportunity. And when we started, we did not know it was going to be that. It was going to turn into maybe a ministry or outreach for the community. And then they also are given us the opportunity, not only to know the clients, which they are not intellectual disabled. Not only to know the clients, but to get to know the parents. Because a lot of times, the parents are not as knowledgeable and educated about the laws and things like that. So sometimes they told us that they had a barrier in that area. And they needed a liaison to speak to the parents regarding the caring of not only the children, but the laws that are out there. And sometimes, so it's a blessing that they have embraced us. So that's another liaison connection that we have made. And we're excited about that. And my girlfriend came from Baltimore, and she said, "You can hop on that right quick!" I said, "Trust me, they're not gonna be a lot of churches that are gonna highlight this right now." And come to find out, they're not. And when we actually went and embraced them, they were like so happy. And they open up so many other doors for us in a lot of areas for us to connect with. They were tellin us a house is needed. So we possibly talked to them about the seven acres that we have. And partnering with them regarding a possible building. So when we did approach them, they said they first startin in Bluffton. They're in Hilton Head, then they're gonna start in Bluffton. So that's an area that they're concentrating on and then they're moving to Beaufort. So that's really exciting. We're really excited about that.

DR: Yes. It's a lot that we have to accomplish, you know, as we reach out more. We are also being affected, like some larger cities, with certain crimes and things of that nature. We're nestled in a very serene community, but nevertheless crime still finds us. And we've had some violence that has taken place that we're, we were able to preach at a funeral of a young man who was shot and killed. And there was a lot of people, specially a lot of persons who are in certain lifestyles. You know, you and I may frown upon. But what it did, it gave me an end road to a lot of persons who may not go to church. And with me not being just your normal, average, you

know, intro, three points and a outro sermon. (Chuckles). I laid it to where they were like, “Wow, we’ve never heard it like this before.” So you know, hopefully, with that, you know, they’ll come into the church. Cause the young man who was killed, he... you know, lived a life that may be questionable to others. However, he did come to church and respected the gospel that we had here. And he would share with his other guys. “You need to go check that church out.” You know.

Unknown 2 (offscreen): So now, you see your life before as a law enforcement officer, delivered the ministry as almost as him. Your life has come full circle.

DR: I feel... Yes, it’s excellent. I’ve always utilized my law enforcement career. I never changed faces, you know. Change hats, but I never change faces. So I kept the same face. And with me still being in law enforcement, it still gives me an opportunity. I don’t have much as an opportunity as I had in the past cause I worked the street in the past. So now with me just investigating cases, I’m not on the street. But I see the experience and wisdom that I learned while I was out there. It definitely enhances my ministry because, you know, I’m able to see things sometimes your normal preacher can’t see. And say things that sometimes your normal preacher can’t say. And get the right response from. So it’s good. I, you know, I shared a story with... I don’t know if I shared it last time where a young man was shot in Winston Salem. And I shared that at the funeral. And to kinda let them know all police officers aren’t bad. You know, cause right now, police officers get a bad rep. There are some that you know, cast a dark shadow sometime on this career, as well as any other career. I mean, you got preachers castin bad shadows on us so. Teachers, right! Yes, but nevertheless, those of us who hold integrity and character to the utmost. I believe that will come to the forefront.

Unknown 2 (offscreen): I’d like to go back and talk a little bit about school. One of the things that we were looking at last year and they’re looking at more this year is that young people don’t seem to be as interested in their heritage. But you’re introducing it into your school. So how successful do you see the school and how much more are you going to introduce the Gullah into your school?

JR: I think they’re excited because the teacher is excited. And because the atmosphere is conducive and it’s a good blend. When not only a teacher is really from the island. She’s from the island. One of our teachers is actually from the island. So we start bringing in not only family members but people that are from here, that they can identify with. Maybe a person that is a fisherman and a person that actually makes nets. Makes the shrimping nets. So they just have not seen the beginning of the shrimping net; they’ve just seen the “getting the shrimp” and that’s it. So taking them back to the beginning and actually doing a lot of hands on. And that’s a great thing about our school is we’re able to transition into different things without having any strings attached. A person say you can’t do this, you can’t do this, you can’t do that. No. If we need to actually go to the river and have someone meet us there, that’s a field trip. All kinds go to

different people's establishment. The shrimp shack, going to different things. Actually going there, hands on. The children love it, the children love it. And because the teacher loves it, and we not so much enforce. "This is what we're gonna do." We say, "Well..." And then for Black History Month, they did not know how many inventors were in South Carolina. So when they found out just about South Carolina by itself. Because of course, Black History Month, you always hear the same ones, so what about some new ones? So this past year, we focused on South Carolina. And they did not know how many inventors and how many great people were here in South Carolina. So what we did, they just sparked. They just sparked. So I just think it's how you present it to them. How you present it and they'll embrace it. And a lot of times, and you tell them a lot of times, they're great. Not only their heritage is great, they're great. And a lot of them are bilingual and they don't even know that they're bilingual. So we tease them and we tell 'em, "You just said something in Gullah. Did you know that?" "No!" But then you actually get them to write a report, and they do it in proper English and they're fine. And they don't even realize how much they have. So we're parting to them how much they have as well so I think. And it all depends on the teacher. It all depend on the atmosphere, our principal (touches DR). He allows us to do all kind of things. All kind of things. (DR laughs). Principal, Pastor, straight up. All that.

Unknown 2 (offscreen): Are you also teaching in the school, Ms. Judy?

JR: I teach as far as when we go out to with the children, as far as a lot of mannerisms and as far as etiquette with the kids. And when we go to different places and we eat and I impart different things. So mines is a little different. I'm kind of behind the scene, to the point. I go in and if it's a problem with the children and they just need somebody to talk to, mines is in a different style.

DR: She's the Operations Director. (JR chuckles). She keeps the money, the bills, you know. She keeps the good temperament of the school.

JR: I keep the records, I do registration. I do marketing. We do one-on-one when a child is interested or parent is interested in coming to our school with the children. We do prospective student evaluation. And we ask them, you know, "How do you feel?" Because a parent can make a decision for a child, but if a child is not happy about coming here, then we have to deal with their attitude. So we talk to the parents and then we talk to the children. And then we let them visit. So it's a whole process because it's just not, you fill out all the paperwork. You do everything and then you come to the school. No! We let the children visit the school, we let the children see how they feel about us. And what's going on in your school, what activities are you in already. Because that transition will be very different to them because they're coming from a public school to a private school that's smaller. And some of 'em say, "Well, we don't see this. We don't see that." And that's what they're used to seeing. But when they actually come and they actually are embraced with the other kids and they're doing things, they're like, "This is alright. This is alright." (Nods head). And then we tell 'em, "It is a tuition. It's not a free school.

We have tuition.” And then we try to make it as easy on the parents as possible. So I think it’s... it’s a great opportunity. We’re learning. I’m happy how we’re growing because I believe our foundation is real strong. And that’s important. It’s not important for us to have 50-100 students. Right away. Not yet. He... (points to DR). He’s a visionary and you know. We’re gonna get there and I do believe that. But we have not even done a lot of marketing. It’s a lot by mouth. “Oh, y’all have a school?” “Yes, we do have a school.” And we may get one or two children here. And that is fine. That is fine.

DR: We try to maintain, especially the biblical principles. The head chapel and they can express in chapel. Things of that nature. They kind of dress up sometimes for chapel so... it’s good. I mean, I think that’s what helps maintain it, the atmosphere. You know, we haven’t had any fights, you know. Nobody’s disrespecting students. The students aren’t disrespecting the teachers. And that’s what... that’s the main thing because it’ll carry over. What we’re trying to do is prepare them for life. And respect often takes you a long way. You know, you may not have the ‘know how,’ but you have respect, the ‘know how’ will come. (JR nods).

JR: That’s right. And our principal (touches DR) here teaches. He’s gonna be teaching...

DR: Apologetic.

JR: (Chuckles). I’m sorry. Apologetic class.

JR: Yeah, I’mma try to do the religion cause a lot of children are not strong in their biblical knowledge when it comes to going from Genesis to, you know, certain themes in the bible. So it’s just covering certain themes so that they’ll have them, and understand them. And be able to write and divide things, so yeah. Tryna make my degree work at the school, you know. (JR chuckles). So I’m in my third year.

JR: He’s very modest. He’s very modest.

DR: Tryna work my dissertation. That’s something. I gotta graduate... graduation date of May 2013. Yes, God willing.

JR: And that’s exciting. As far as community, God has opened the door for the Pastor since he’s working on his Doctorate. He goes into St. Peter’s, which is a Catholic school here. And God has opened the door in that area. God has opened the door for him to be on the Board of Directors at the charter school here, Riverview. God has opened the door for him to be the Vice President of Senior Services.

DR: Yeah, of Beaufort.

JR: Of Beaufort. So community wise, a lot of things have opened up. In a lot of areas and I see a lot more richness coming back to our school.

DR: Yeah, we were able to complete... They have, I call it a fake tank, but leadership of Beaufort. And it was a nine month program and we were able to submerge ourselves into different agencies, responsibilities, different heads of programs came to talk to us and things of that nature. And it was real real informative, so we will graduate from that. So, it's been a busy year. And then, boom! (Points to JR's stomach). (JR chuckles). Here we are. (Laughs).

Unknown 2 (offscreen): How did you feel when you found out?

DR: Wow, I was... No, it's not personal.

Unknown 2 (offscreen): I remember the hope that you had and the tremendous amount of faith that you had concerning that. And the patience. Would you share that with us?

JR: Being here in the community, even though this is a private issue, a lot of people tell us, this is their baby. This is the community baby. (DR chuckles). This is Beaufort's baby. This is, wherever Pastor goes as far as wherever he ministers, as far as in church, this is our baby! The whole congregation embraces him because in the beginning, I think we started in November. And then we started our process in February. And in starting our process, a lot of times, I would not be there because I would be, maybe home recuperating from a procedure or any things like that. And so he was so excited. And he was telling the congregation, "Pray for my wife! Pray for my wife!"

DR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JR: "She... We're working on a baby." So it didn't matter what store I went to. Whether I went to Wal-Mart, Max Ray, Piggly Wiggly. Any store. "How you doin'? How you comin along?" And I would just say, "Pray for me." And some days, I would just like stay in so nobody would see me. But we started and we're gonna be writing a book on this process. And the book is gonna be titled "The Miracle of Sharing." Because God opened the door for us to do in vitro. And to share with another couple and I was not able to produce my own eggs so God opened the door for me to find a wonderful donor that I did not know. But God connected us. And we actually share it with another couple. So it's another couple that is happy as we are.

DR: I mean, we don't know them. The connections was just through the selection process.

JR: Right, right. (Nods). So they didn't know us and we didn't know them. But it's all well. It's all well. I started in February. Mr. Russell (touches DR) was my doctor. And he gave me shots that I had to take.

DR: After, yeah cause we had to... we went through the procedure and I did what I did. And then... (DR and JR laugh). This is G-rated so... (Everyone laughs). So April the 4th, they combined the seed with the embryo and planted it in Judy. March 30th, they combined it. Planted embryo in Judy. And April the 13th, I was at a leadership of Beaufort meeting at City Hall and I had to be at that function. And she went to the doctor with another member to find out if the pregnancy had caught. And um... so I'm sitting there. Phone rings and I just look at the people and I say, "I gotta take this call." And so she says, "You outside?" I say, "Yeah, I'm outside." I say, "What happened?" She said, "I'm pregnant!" So, um... and what I'm doing now is what I did then.

JR: And he... I was at IHOP and so I was crying on the phone. He was trying to get to me so all of a sudden I look up at IHOP and there's this big man coming. (Unknown laughs). And I'm in the little seat.

DR: Tears in my eyes.

JR: Tears in my eyes. Tears in the eyes. The young lady was with me, I didn't tell her anything. I just started crying. So she didn't know whether it was yes or no. So she was not sure what to do so he came in. And it was just and in the beginning, it's a process. And it's a process that can take you up and down emotionally on a roller coaster. But it seem like God just kept us at this steady pace. At an even kill and God directed us to the right doctor because he told me, I'm 51 years old. He told me he said, "Mrs. Russell, it doesn't happen by May of this year, I don't do people that's 52." He said, "But it's just something about you and your husband. That when you guys came and met us when I was 48." He said, "It was just something about you." And then the doctor called me that day, which is very rare that the doctor call.

DR: Sorry, I don't mean to mess y'all up. (Chuckles).

JR: So when the doctor called, he said, "Okay Mrs. Russell, I'm going to call you myself because you heard so much at people at 51 years old. They threaten miscarriage. They got to do this. They got to do that." He said, "Your numbers are so high." He said, "You will be fine." He said, "I do not detect you have a miscarriage and I think you will be fine." And I just was... just was in tears because all that... the whole office had called me and it was just like a miracle. And it was like.... I just, I couldn't believe it. And everybody else says, "Are you excited?" I said, "I was so worried about making sure everything, I do everything right that I couldn't think about it." So when I saw my husband cry, so every time...

DR: (Stands up). 'Scuse me. Tissue over there.

JR: Okay. So every time he goes to the doctor, we always say, the first thing he says, “Do you have any tissues?” (Unknown laughs). “Do you have any tissues?” So, “Do you have any tissues? Do you have any tissues?” So this has been a long time coming. People have been praying and we’ve been waiting for...

DR: Thirty years.

JR: For thirty years!

Unknown 2 (offscreen): Thirty years?!

DR: We been married thirty years.

JR: And he has christened so many babies and it was very hard for him to christen babies knowing that I wanted a baby. So God fortified him in a lot of areas. God... and at one point I told him, I said, “I can’t stand up there right now. Let me just sit.” Because it was too emotional. And it was just too emotional. But we just kept going. We kept going. And all of a sudden, we just said we’re gonna believe God. We don’t know how God is gonna do it. Anytime he (points to DR) went to a church and I had to introduce him, “This is the father of my children.” And they would just... “She don’t... you don’t have children.” But by faith, I believe that God and a miracle and I just believe that this is our season. This is my season. And I would not... I’m so happy that he brought me back to Beaufort. Because I don’t think this was to happen in Winston Salem. I believe this is the season and timing of God and I believe that every connection that we make, it seems like it’s a season and the timing of God. And if you just wait on God, things will begin to happen. And so we just said okay.

DR: I mean, with our second time back here. And God has just done some great things. I mean, when we thought when we were here from ‘90 to ‘97, that you know, things were really going strong for us. But I guess the older you get, the more appreciative you become with what your life is mapped out to do. And this second time, being back here with ministry, you know we had transitions had issues just like any church. You know, but I’m focused with regards to what God has for my life. And then from that, everything sorta kinda mushrooms out. And when Judy shared that day and I said, “Wow!” I said, “You’re the first woman who’s ever told me you were carryin my child.” (Everyone laughs). So that was a wonderful... that was wonderful to hear. She had to take Progesterone shots. She gave herself first the shots for her lining and uterus. She had to strengthen that. She gave herself those shots. But then when we went back, after they said, “Okay, they embryo’s taken. It’s took.” They said, “Okay, you’re gonna have to give her you know, her Progesterone shots.” Now mind you, I’ve been a police officer over twenty years. I’ve seen some of the most gruesome things you would ever wanna see as a police officer. But when they told me that I was gonna have to give her a shot, I said, “Really?” I said, “Ain’t there another way we can do that?” (Unknown laughs). I was kinda punkin out a little bit. I didn’t

wanna do that. I just wasn't into that. Lady took my hands. I saw her do it. Judy was like, "Just have her lay hands on your hands and pray." I said, "Please." So for almost a month and a half, I gave her her shots. We missed maybe one day if I had to be out of town. But I gave her shot each hip. And it worked like clockwork. And I was just proud of how she received that because she... she went through a lot, you know to get this child. And this child is gone know all of what we went through to bring this child into the world. And you know, like all of us in the 70s and the 80s, our TV dad as he was called, Sherman Hemsley, you know passed away. And his favorite phrase was, "I brought you into this world and I'll take you out." (Everyone laughs). So um, but I am ecstatic that Judy, after thirty years, you know, being 51, you know, being able to conceive as well as carry this child so gracefully. I mean, she doesn't have to work. She doesn't have to do anything. She can sleep day, you know, if she wants to. She doesn't have to go anywhere. She doesn't have to travel. All she has to do is just take care of our child. But that's it. And our due date is 12/21/12.

Unknown 2 (offscreen): Wow! (JR laughs).

DR: 12/21/12. And beginning of the year, the theme of our ministry was Romans 12:12, which deals with... we have some cards which deals with, you know stay prayed up. Stay encouraged. And then we have Revelations 21:12, where it talks about the twelve gates to the city. We were sorta comparing that to how God is gonna allow you to bless. Be able to go through different gates in life and to be prosperous. And little did we know that this child was going to be conceived in this year. We were working on. But then when Judy said, "You not gone believe what's the due date. 12/21/12." Every number that I gave for our theme for this year is in the birth of this child. So I told Judy yesterday, when that child was born, if it's born 'round Christmas time, we gone sit out in the front yard like Mary and Joseph and put that child in a manger. (Everyone laughs). And have the wise men and bring him some gifts.

JR: The doctor said that I'm doing very well. They said for a 51 year old, you're doing good. They normally say that older women have to have cesareans. My doctor says, "No, we're gonna believe that you gonna have a normal delivery. And we're gonna make you as comfortable as possible." And he says that's what we're gonna do. I said, "Okay." We have ultrasounds and you know, this is all new to me. This ultrasound, that ultrasound, that child was just like the matrix. Just floating around. I said, "Look at my kid up in there." And then yesterday, the heartbeat... they checked her for the heartbeat and the heartbeat was do-do--do-do. And then boom! And the doctor said, "That child is kicking up there in your wife belly!" I said, "Well if he got feet like mine then he tryna get some room up in there. That's what he tryna do." (Everyone laughs). But in two more weeks, she'll have a full anatomy work done. And we'll find out a hundred percent what our child, what the sex is gone be. So next year if y'all come back, something'll be on her lap. (Laughs).

Unknown (offscreen): Has it been easy for you having your child here as opposed to...?

DR: Anywhere else?

JR: (Shakes head). That question, I... all the places that he's taken us to and we were here in Beaufort before. But this time, it's something very different. And something very special because this is now our home. We feel like this is our home. Even though we're from Washington, we've been living in various places, I told my family back at home. I told 'em, "I will not be home until after I have the baby. Because now this is my home." So I have a whole new family here and because of how God planted us here, and because of not only the community has embraced us, so many people have embraced us. And they are like my family. They're like my family. They're like my blood family. I have older women from different churches that come up and give me anecdotes and tell me, "Baby, you do this." I say, "Yes ma'am. Yes ma'am." So I'm almost like their daughter in a sense. And it's just, and this is a very peaceful place. This a very peaceful place. It's very... anytime I have a problem or anything, he knows exactly where to find me. By the water. I'm sitting by the water doing something so this place. And this was is first pastorship many years ago and we decided to come back. So meaning to us.

DR: Yeah, these people... these wonderful people Gullah and then our church is just not Gullah but we have people that come here from New York, come here from the North and they blend right in. And it makes us one big, strong family. You know, you got some folk down fighting against the church when changes are being made, things like that. But overall, these people that God has assigned us to. They really love us and we really love them. And for God to send us back here and to have the success that we're having in ministry, it's just unbelievable. So when I think of my wonderful saints here at this church, you know, my heart gets full. Because you know, yeah... Two things bring a lot of emotion to me is my church and my wife and child. You know, they're one. So when I think about this church and I think about the pain that I went through to become a better pastor. I value this ministry, you know. I wanna make sure I dot every "i" and cross every "t." Even though sometimes it's kinda not realistic in every sense. But when God gives you a second, it's like a second opportunity of life. When God gives you another opportunity to live again, you know, you wanna value that. And that's what He did with regards to this ministry. And to see this ministry from five years ago where it was almost lifeless. And now God has breathed life and resurrection of power. Into this, it's important that my family here enjoy what's about to happen. We have a baby shower date of November the third. Normally you send out invitations to people you invite. We can't do that. Because...

JR: It's too many.

DR: It's too many people! As well as, how can I say you can come but you can't come. So we've gotta find large enough venue to... (Chuckles). Yeah, we gotta find a large enough venue to do this because even though Judy kinda barks at this, thirty years ago when we got married, her dad had a heart attack. He had a heart attack during that week, he still alive. You know, he's slowing

down, he's doing well. But he didn't give her away. So we had a mock wedding in front of him at the hospital. You know, in the back of my mind I'm like, "Man, if you don't want me to marry your daughter, we ain't have to go through all this. Just tell me." (Chuckles). But you know, I'm just... (Laughs). So all these thirty years, I was like you know, you never gave her away. I said, "It was her brother that gave her away." So this is my joke to them. I said you know, I says, "I want him to be able to walk her down the aisle." I say, "Cause I always feel like since her brother gave her to me, that she like on loan." (Everyone laughs). Like I can kinda give her back if I wanted to. But they look at me like... she (points to JR) lookin at me like, "You crazy." But we're gonna have a... she barks at this but I wanna do a wedding with her dad just walking her down the aisle. And how momentous will that be with a baby in her stomach. And her dad, you know. She's a baby girl outta six.

JR: It ain't a shotgun.

DR: It ain't a shotgun. I'mma treat it like a shotgun! "Like you got my daughter pregnant, you gotta marry her now." (Everyone laughs).

JR: No, I told him the reason why I was not sure because I'll be eight months pregnant. And because I'll be eight months pregnant, I'm not sure how I'm gonna feel.

DR: You gone feel just fine.

JR: And I know... (DR laughs). I know I get over... This whole everything has just been overwhelming. It's been overwhelming. And my... (Chuckles). He thinks it's just as easy. "Oh you can do this. You can do that." And he's Mr. Superman.

DR: It's just one day. Just one day.

JR: Okay.

DR: So, y'all pray with me. Pray my strength in the Lord on that.

JR: So I'm hoping that God's wisdom how to handle that. It's gonna be so many people. And not only so many people...

DR: Y'all invited. I mean, if y'all wanna come back. I mean, that's like a week before the Heritage Festival. Gullah Festival. But you know, y'all invited. We... All you gotta do is bring a gift. We gone have the food and everything else. (JR laughs). But you know, I want those that have prayed with us. We talked to a couple last week that when Judy and I got married, the Marine Corp sent me to Okinawa, Japan right after I got married. And I didn't think I'd see her for a year. But it worked out well. With her dad and my dad bought her a ticket, she flew over

and we were only... this was 1981. We got married September '81. I was Okinawa October '81. But the door opened the way she came, December '81. So we're still in contact with people that we met when we were only three or four months married. So there's a couple lives in North Carolina and they sorta helped mentor us in ministry and marriage. Cause I mean, we were young. First time ever together. And we in Okinawa, Japan. So, you know, that was kinda... I'm the oldest out of two so I'm spoiled. She the baby outta six so she spoiled. So here we got two spoiled people tryna work it out. And uh... but this couple, you know, they've been a wonderful couple and we talked to them last week. And we just reaching out to people that have been connected to us for all these years. People have always prayed for us to have a child. And you know, prayers become the past.

JR: And the children in the school we talked about, children in the school are excited.

Unknown 2 (offscreen): Are they?

JR: Oh, they're excited! They come up, some of 'em praying for a boy. Some of 'em praying for a girl. They come up and name the baby. And they talk to me, just and so they've already embraced it. The children have embraced it, the baby as well. So not only the community but it's a...

DR: My job, you know I work for SLED, my major wrote a prayer out for me cause he's a Christian so we prayed that prayer amongst other prayers. And my captain, they all been praying for triplets and things like that. (JR shakes her head). I said, "Yeah okay. Well make sure your money right." Cause triplets, we gone need some help. But I mean it's amazing and that's nothing but the Christian. We think, people can say, okay you got good personality, you know things like that. But I just believe it's the Christ that lives within us. You know, that that's... we try to portray. Cause all of us have our perks. All of us have our quirks and idiocracies and things like that. You know, when you try to allow what you believe in to sort of permeate into your social being, you know people kinda take hold to you. So it's been good. I mean, strangers and you know, I'll tell people, strangers. You know, I was in the store and he's like "Oh wow, really? Well keep me informed!" You know, just people I meet for the very first time.

JR: People from different religions have been praying for us in a lot of areas. (DR nods). Well the God that you serve has got to give you that baby you been praying for. So when we go back and we give them the testimony that God has blessed me. And they're like "Wow!" So it doesn't matter. We just have embraced so many different people. You know, cross the lines and so many different areas. Which I believe that that's how it's supposed to be.

DR: It's a never give up modality for me. For both of us. I mean, cause lot of people lose a lot of hope on a lot of things. And you know, when I say... when I tell people you know, we're pregnant and we're 51. People are like, "Really?! That old?" And I'm like I can understand your

response, you done had 12 or 16 children. You don't want no more. (Laughs). So I understand but for somebody who's never had, I mean, Judy's never had a miscarriage. Never had anything. You know, for thirty years. And for God to... you know, it's like being at the carnival with the sledgehammer and boom! You hit the thing and it goes all the way up just that one time. You know, and that's what we hit it one time. And the baby took. You know, and that's a miracle within itself.

JR: It is. Because as I read before when people were doing in vitro, so many people have... they had to do it like three and four times. And the... and I didn't read this until afterwards. I studied about in vitro and different things and I guess I studied what I needed to study and stayed in that lane. I think if I would've read some other things and talked to some other people, I probably would've gotten discouraged. And I didn't need any of that. I didn't need any negativity. I didn't need any of that. And later on, you know, people told me, "Well I had triplets. Two of 'em passed. And I tried five times." And I'm like, "Woah!" I said, "That is a lot. That is a lot." And I said this happened the first time. The doctor was gonna put two embryos in me the first time. That's the most he puts in. And he told me as I got closer to my age, he said, "I think I'm only gonna put one in." I said, "I agree with you." God had already prepared me and let me know that He was only going to put one in. He said, "I think because of your age, I'm only gonna put one." He said, "Because I don't want you to go through too much stress," he said. So I believe that all things work together for the good for those that love God and for those that are called to according to his purpose. So I do believe that our life has a purpose. And not only our lives, but we've seen other lives blessed because of it. Because, you know, they wanted excel in various things. I do this. This gives people hope. In a lot of areas, not just having a child. But a lot of hope in a lot of other things. That they can accomplish, and God can work through them. And God can connect them with the right people. Sometimes, I mean, I would've never met you guys (to Unknown(s)). If I hadn't... if Alfreda wasn't at our church. If she was somewhere else, I wouldn't have never. So, it's a blessing how people are planted in different places. For purposes and to make connections. To make connections. So I always tell people, you know, stay where you're supposed to be. Because if you don't stay there long enough, you gone miss your connection.

JR: We are grateful for Alfreda. She is a blessing to this ministry. And I know cause when we moved back. I never forgot, we were down at a function and she was sitting there and I asked her about coming back to the church. "Well, I gotta pray about it." You know how she is. "I'll pray about it." So I was like, "Oh okay. Well, you pray about it." Shortly thereafter, you know, she came and started checkin us out. And she knew us from the past. But this is the first time we've ever, you know, close proximity, I'm her pastor. But she's such a good elder. You know, and I appreciate her.

JR: And she has so many concerns because so many men are dominant and so many men are territorial.

DR: Yeah, preachers that is.

JR: Preachers that is. And they will not allow the gift that God. It's so many gifts within the body. And they will not allow the gifts to grow. They will not allow the gifts to take leadership. They will not allow the gifts... But Pastor Russell, I know you will... he will give you opportunity. And he will allow the gift that God has placed inside you for you to be a blessing. To grow. And I think that was one of her concerns. Because where she had been, she had been stifled in a lot of areas. And when you are in a place and you're stifled, you're very despondent. You're very discouraged. And you easily would wanna give up. But I said, "Well, you come, you check Pastor Russell out for yourself. You get to know him yourself. You watch him. You observe him. See how he handles himself. See how he deals with people. See what he says. See what his personality is about." I said, "You do it for yourself." I said, "I can sit up here and tell you all the things that I've experienced with him. Not only as him being my pastor but my husband." Cause I slip into an area where I'm... I become a member. I become a member. And I look...

DR: Yeah, I have to put her in check sometimes.

JR: He have to put me in check. (Everyone laughs). Right and he does! If I'm working on something and if I'm in a group, and the group is supposed to have proposals ready, and you know, I'm going with him all over the place, I don't have my proposals ready. I get fussed at just like everybody else.

DR: No excuse. (Laughs).

JR: No excuse. And they need to see that. When it comes down to ministry, he has no respect or person just because I'm his wife and when I get home, I don't say, "You do that again."
(Everyone laughs).

DR: Really? (Laughs).

JR: (Laughs). I don't! I don't!

DR: Really? Okay. (Laughs).

JR: They need to see that but because this is how we are all the time. They need to see that. They need to see if I'm upset with him about something or whatever, I can switch. And I'm a member and I say, "Pastor Russell, can you explain this to us?" I said, "I'm not sure. I'm not clear." And I respect him in that vain. And then I say... well he'll say, "Honey didn't we talk about this at home?" "Yes we did. But I just want some clarification. For everyone." (Everyone chuckles).

And so he's... Alfreda has been a blessing to us and her leadership. She is just as respected as her pastor is.

DR: Yeah, she is.

JR: And that is a blessing, when you can not so much reproduce yourself. But when people come and they see the vision already. And that's what God is doing to this particular ministry. He's sending people already ready in a lot of areas. So it's not gonna take us like years and years and years to do a lot of great things. I believe it's gonna happen just like that. (Snaps fingers). In a lotta areas.

DR: That's our goal. We really wanna impact, you know, this community, holistically. You know, body, mind and soul. You know, if a ministry's not doing that, then you know, they're one-dimensional. You don't have to be one-dimensional. And I don't want our church to be one-dimensional. I want us to be able to reach out. You know, the older people who are at home can't get out. You know, I wanna be able to have vans and buses, pick 'em up. Let 'em come play pinochle, whatever they do. You know, to make connections. And you know, young people, we don't have a strong after-school program for our kids on this island. So you know, and there are churches that's on this island that are sitting with wonderful, lucrative bank accounts. But that's all they're somewhat concerned about. You know, if we had those type of bank accounts, they would be emptied out every time. Because I'd be figuring out. Okay, we need to do something. We need to make something happen. To keep our youth busy. Yessir?

Unknown (offscreen): Mind if I ask you a question?

DR: Sir? No problem.

Unknown (offscreen): To continue, are there ways that you can connect to Gullah traditions? As a modern church?

DR: Yes. (Nods). You mean on a... on what, a spiritual level?

Unknown (offscreen): Spiritual level. Cultural level.

DR: Yeah. And we do. (Nods). We do. We do, at different functions, that comes out indirectly. To say that we have a Gullah service, we haven't really had a strong Gullah service where they come in with all of the past of how certain things done. They do that during like the Gullah Festival, where they go to the praise houses and things like that to recreate that. But that has been somewhat in the back of my mind. To have one of those type of services because at one time during the course of the year, we'll get up and they'll speak Gullah. (Points behind). From scripture. You know, give a Easter story or something like that in Gullah. But to have a, say like

a Sunday where it's straight Gullah cultural, I mean that's something that we would love to visit. And thank you...

JR: [Note: unclear].

DR: Yeah, we used to dress up. When I was here the first time, we used to dress up on fourth Sunday in African attire and sort of lean towards the heritage on that particular Sunday. So that's something that we definitely could revisit. You know, because this is a whole different gamut of people now that we have that I think would love to be introduced and reintroduced and some revisit that culture that is so prevalent in this area. So yeah.

JR: And Pastor Russell's so traditional. Even though he's 21st century, he still enjoys traditions. And I appreciate that about him. A lotta times, he'll go back to the old hymns and every Sunday we sing a hymn. And when you talk about Gullah, they speak it and they do different things in Gullah all the time. On Sundays, it all depends on who's doing what. And so it's a part of them as well. And we've gotten used to it and so it's not sometime a separation. Sometimes it's a blend. Like our assistant pastor, when he's talking, when he's speaking. As he's speaking, we're listening very tentatively because he only speaks Gullah and that's all he speaks. So he is not changing and we're not having a special service. He's just a part of the service and he's speaking Gullah. And it's taken us awhile sometime to under... we understand it more and more.

DR: And our theme is "a little bit of Gullah and a whole lot of God." That's what you get when you come here. You know, because when I first came here, in 1990, I thought I was in Jamaica because of the language. (Chuckles). Like wow! "Is this South Carolina?" But then, you know, I'm straight outta Washington, D.C.. So when I got here, I was like wow. And then when I got invited to this church, when he said somethin bout dirt road, all I knew was concrete asphalt. It was like looking down a dark alley when you looked at 21, you know, once you pass the light there. And I was like, "Wow. I don't know if I wanna go on the other side." But when I came over here, didn't know that God had such a plan for me. That I was gone be so supurged in this culture. It's unbelievable. I mean, there are people that know me, that speak to me, that I don't even know. I mean, especially since the funeral of that young man, you know. Lot of the guys out here, you know, now know, "Wow. That Pastor Russell something else." So, I mean but it's for God. Whatever style I have to utilize to get somebody to understand that Christ is for real then you know, that's me. That's what I do.

JR: And the song's that are sometimes in our service. Sometimes, they'll sing a old Gullah song. And it has a different beat. (Claps hands). And the young people will start on their beat and then before you know it, the congregation is picked up a Gullah beat. And that's because that song is a whole different style, whole different beat, (DR claps) whole different rhythm. And they don't know it and they like, "Oooh! This is good! This is new! Do we...?"

DR: It's not new. A lot of the hip hop derives from a lot of those old African beats and things like that. They really, they think it's new but it ain't new.

JR: It's not new. So did we answer your question? Okay.

Unknown 2 (offscreen): And it is in your school curriculum?

DR: Oh yeah, definitely. Yeah that's definitely. It's more so school curriculum, our Christian school curriculum than... and that's all the time. You know, that's being taught from the outside. Being taught from the inside so you know, but on a church level, we haven't... You know, to say that we don't have it, you know, would be a misnumber because it's every Sunday. Cause you gone hear somebody talkin Gullah. Every Sunday. When they get up behind the mic, you know. And it's just a dialect. You know.

JR: And then... and when they know we don't understand what they're saying, they repeat it and they break it down to us.

DR: Then they laugh at me because I say somethin and I don't even realize I said Gullah. It just comes out some kind of way and I don't know how it happens but...

Unknown 2 (offscreen): You come here... been here.

DR: You come here, yeah. (Chuckles).

JR: (Nods). That's right.

DR: And I told 'em. I said, "I feel like I been here cause y'all who are here treat me like I been here." (JR chuckles). So it's good. It's good.

JR: And before, we didn't... I don't think we never really appreciate the richness until you actually emerge yourself here. You can come here and visit, you guys have been here almost two weeks and the depthness and the greatness of what you have learned and what you've touched, what you've felt... and it's just phenomenal. So actually being here and actually merging your whole life here is just a great experience. It's just great experience.

DR: My dissertation is going to cover a lot of the early 1800s with the school starting at the Penn Center. Because my dissertation is on Christian education. And it's gonna have a strong entrance of the Gullah culture regarding the different schools that evolved from the Penn Center. So, you know, we wanna highlight that in our dissertation to show them what... where the school... how our school sort of evolved and is really not the first Christian school because, even in the 1800s, you know, they had missionaries that founded the school. So it had to have a Christian theme in

it. So we wanna sort of, with that being the first free slave school, you know, we wanna sort of highlight from that tradition. And sorta kinda parallel Christian education versus the public education. And how I feel, you know, without that theme, it sorta you know, minimizes the way the student can really have a good foundation. So we're coming from that aspect there.

Unknown 2 (offscreen): Thank you so much!

DR: Thank y'all!

Unknown 2 (offscreen): We are just always blessed to be here. We appreciate it.

DR: Thank you. (Nods). Thank you all for considering us.

JR: Thank you.

DR: And appreciate it.

[End]