Growth hems in family of basket makers

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Snype, moved down from a community called Cooshaw near Georgetown to work the farm of Alfred Jennette on Rifle Range Road. "People were wondering how that old house was standing after Hugo, and then all these other houses blew

down," she said. "Yessir." Making lunch in her kitchen while her sister Ethel Coakley, 71, sews a basket, "Alice" as her vast family knows her, recalls her childhood in the heavy African patois that most in the Lowcountry would consider Gullah. But she doesn't consider herself Gullah. To her, Gullah folk lived around Hamlin Plantation, "but maybe some word I speak soundin' Gullah," she said.

Squeezed by development

Bostic moves slowly, hobbled by a bad heart, shortness of breath and failed kidneys that send her and Ethel to dialysis treatment twice a week. Relatives, including her 11 children and many more grandchildren, visit often, she says, but it's not like it was when she was young.

"No, no. Used to be, in days past and gone, you get up in the morning, wash the clothes, lay 'em on the line, clean your house and then you could go walk around from neighbor to neighbor and talk. In the evening time, all the neighbor chirren' would get together and play hopscotch and all kind of things. Can't do that no more."

According to county records, Bostic lives in an Awendaw tax district. Though she gets her water from Mount Pleasant, the toilets empty to a septic tank and the family pays a private company to collect garbage. "Funny thing though," she said, "when we pay tax, it says that we are also paying for garbage, but we don't get no service."

Bostic says she was asked several years ago by Mount Pleasant to annex into the city, but she declined because her yearly tax payments might have climbed from \$579 to \$2,500. She has also received sales queries from developers. But so many family members could have potential claims to a portion of the ancestral land, settling title to the land could leave her with very little compensation. She finds herself at the same difficult intersection with the state DOT.

Heirs property

Because the Bostic parcel was built by Mary Alice's late grandfather and remains in his name, this becomes a classic heirs property dispute case. In thousands of instances across South Carolina, blacks in particular have deliberately not transferred land title relocation funds is not a proper use through generations on the belief of taxpayer funds when Bostic's that if a title were difficult to trace, home does not lie in the right-ofit would be more difficult to break way of the actual road. The right up long-held parcels of land.

generations of relatives can lay saying she's in an ideal situation," claim to a portion of the two re-11 siblings and 11 children. Thus, securing clear title could involve contacting and financially settling the property was divided among with scores of relatives, including many who may not even live in the little money to settle elsewhere. area or know Bostic at all.

And if one family member decides to initiate an action to claim his or her share, it could mean dissolution of the entire property.

hardly get nothing for it because so meetings of a task force that has much would want it," Bostic said.

Offers declined

According to DOT Attorney sive growth along Highway 17. Chris Murphy, Bostic and her heirs were offered \$101,603 for the taking of land in front of her home and \$65,528 for the loss of the land where her basket stand is located. If the case settles, a Master-In-Equity or circuit court judge will decide how to divide the money among Bostic's heirs, and Bostic will not be required to vacate her home, which still stands on family land.

But Bostic has not accepted the money, and according to her attorney, Faith Rivers, she does not intend to settle until she is moved. She has a piece of property near two sisters on Venning Road where she would be glad to resettle.

A distant niece of Bostic's and a lawyer for the Center for Heirs' Property Preservation, Rivers said the Snype family has endured a history of difficult change at the hands of the DOT. Generations ago, Highway 17 originally followed a right of way that took it behind the house where Mary Alice was born. When 17 came through on its current route as a two-lane road, the DOT rotated the house 180 degrees to face the new road and split the family property in half. "Through a series of condemnations," Rivers said, "they have basically destroyed this piece of property. And they don't even want to compensate them for it."

Rivers recently moved to Vermont to teach at the Vermont Law School. She said she was prepared to argue the case, but the DOT filed a motion and made an offer and then waited over a year before settling on a final court date. With too short a notice, she was unable to return to South Carolina to argue on behalf of Bostic.

She has asked that the court reconsider a relocation on the grounds that the noise and exhaust-racked home is essentially unlivable. "Relocation is a federally funded program," she said.

"There is no reason to deny this." But Murphy said that granting of way, he said, could even have While this has certainly come taken out Bostic's porch without to pass, it also means at least two requiring a relocation. "I'm not

did not commit to a drawdown of

American forces. "There's going to be more tough fighting ahead in

Iraq and there'll be more days of

As the political developments here were unfolding, U.S. military

officials announced that five U.S.

soldiers were killed. The military

released few details but four died

when their vehicle was hit in a

roadside bombing Saturday south of Baghdad. The fifth soldier also

Since Iraqis voted in parliamen-

tary elections Dec. 15, the process of forming a government has been

stalled by charges of election fraud

and a debate over incumbent Prime

The Associated Press contrib-

Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari.

uted to this report.

died in a roadside bombing.

sacrifice and struggle," he said.

he said. "She's got 50,000 cars a maining family parcels. Bostic has day, but her property has dramatically increased in value."

Yet he did concede that once Bostic's heirs, she could be left with

Plea for federal help

It's precisely this sort of situation and fears for the future of basket making culture that has brought "The property goes and we don't scores of black residents to recent formed to help steer growth and find solutions for basket makers and others impacted by the explo-

son. A retired U.S. Customs Agent, Jefferson took a seat on the task force to push for the preservation of basket making culture and to ensure that if Hungryneck Boulevard is extended from the Isle of Palms Connector to Porcher's Bluff Road, the impacts are low and residents are properly compensated. He is also among several now advocating that a federally protected basket making corridor be declared along Highway 17.

Jefferson said his cousin has been squeezed out of her livelihood and made a prisoner of her own home by the state's intractability and the difficulty of dealing with her heirs property dispute. He said that were the compensation money ear-

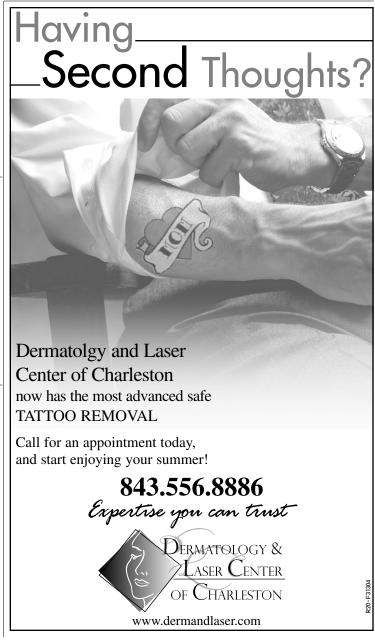
One member of that task force is marked to move Bostic rather than thing you could do to a person." Mary Alice's cousin Louis Jeffer- to be distributed among the heirs, Mary Alice could have moved to her property on Venning Road.

"They could have very easily relocated her," he said, "It impacts her and reduces her quality of life to almost being homeless. What's she going to do other than get bitter and die that way? It's about the worst or cdixon@postandcourier.com.

But Bostic says she'll persevere. 'The Lord will make a way somehow," she said. "Oh yes. And I'm not going to let it bother me. Because if I let it bother me, I'll have to go home before I'm ready to go."

Reach Chris Dixon at 745-5855





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Iraqi parliament picks leaders for securing the country, but he

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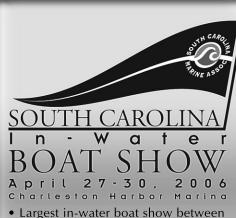
speaker, Mahmoud al-Meshhedani, in a government that reflects a lengthy debate over how power would be divided between the ethnic and sectarian groups that make up Iraq's population.

"We have been able to accomplish several things today, and with these accomplishments we shall complete the building of the new Iraq on the basis of freedom, equality, plurality for all," al-Maliki said at a news conference after the parliament's meeting in Baghdad.

U.S. officials hope a government that fairly shares power between Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds will help reduce violence, in turn allowing some of the 125,000 U.S. troops in Iraq to go home. It is still unclear, however, if the situation can be resolved quite so neatly. Al-Maliki has been given a month to form a Cabinet of officials who will run key ministries controlling the army, police and oil sector.

President Bush said Saturday that the new political leadership in Iraq will shoulder the burden





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