

Public Comment: Texas Historical Commission 2/2/22 Quarterly Meeting

(Live Streamed) from Austin Hilton, Room 400/402

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RJASDzMm_Q

(Rosalind Alexander-Kasparik Public Comment Begins at 39:00)

Prepared Comments:

Good morning, everyone. You, Texas Historical Commissioners, save real places. I'm Rosalind Alexander Kasparik, a 6th-generation descendant of Daniel Alexander and his mother Ceney. Daniel Alexander's farm—THE ALEXANDER FARM, just over a mile outside the Austin city limits—on which he bred and trained champion Thoroughbred and Quarter horses has been lived on, worked, and died upon by our Alexander family since at least 1847. We are used to making a way out of no way. We are proud, resilient, and humbled to know the tenacity and strength of our once-enslaved forebears.

We are Black history. We have stood as Black history in Texas for more than 175 years now. We've been featured in the museums and cited in historical references since at least 1973, when Ada DeBlanc Simond asked my grandfather Milton Everett Alexander to tell her what he knew of his storied family and our landed legacy. Our very real place. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Mrs. Simond told him, should have prevented the taking by the agency that we now call TxDOT. And, she counseled him, preservation laws would help his descendants keep THE ALEXANDER FARM. Having just lost some of his forefathers' farm in a then-Texas Highway Department's eminent domain taking, M.E. Alexander—a man who rarely spoke, who had built a state-of-the-art Central Texas dairy from the land his fathers' blood had sustained despite slavery, a man who did not suffer fools lightly, shared the truths that he knew.

During this month in which we honor our history as African Americans, I stand on the shoulders of my ancestors and too many descendants and supporters to name. I'm here in royal Ghanaian kente silk that reminds me of Ebbo, a woman who was enslaved alongside my Great-Great-Grandfather Daniel and his mother Ceney. I can go to our cemetery that has always been a part of THE ALEXANDER FARM upon whose acres Daniel Alexander remains, along with his sons and daughters.

I can glory in its beauty—until I remember the ancient headstones were flooded just after my parents both passed due to developers whose drainage plan for their new development dumped into our cemetery.

The jewelry I wear is an Akan West African symbol that means, "Love Shows the Way Home." My siblings and I were raised on the ALEXANDER FARM. My brothers still work it. It has been a

demonstration site for farming best practice in animal husbandry since World War II.

Once again, as my grandfather and Mrs. Simond predicted, we are in the crosshairs of TxDOT roadway expansion. Their plan would obliterate our farm. We're standing with our friends at the National Trust for Historic Preservation to protect our farm. As a family of educators, we're buoyed by the gifted students at UT, HT, and A&M who've studied our land legacy and worked to shine a light on its significance. We've partnered with Where Is My Land, a national entity charged with restoring Black lands to their rightful owners. We're asking that you think of our US-183 threat just as preservationists rallied around and stopped the I-30 expansion in Fort Worth that would have destroyed that city's historic downtown.

We ask that you support us and the Commissioners at Travis County as we seek to rename Colton Road—the road adjacent to our historic farm—a road first laid by my ancestors—Daniel Alexander Way. We ask that you work with us to stop the encroachment of developers who neither understand nor believe in African American resilience and perseverance. We ask that you see the Alexander Family and the ALEXANDER FARM as an endemic and integral part of Black Texas History.

And again, we're counting on a productive Black History month set of celebrations and reparations at all real places like ours in 2022.

Thank you.