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May 12, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary of the Interior  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C St., N. W.  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

Thank you for approving the funding of projects on the Natchez Trace that include the rehabilitation of the Meriwether Lewis Site and the building of a visitor center. As a collateral descendant of Meriwether Lewis, I welcome this honor being paid to a great American hero.

Since childhood, and I am now seventy-three years old, I have been interested in the truth about Captain Lewis' death. For the past twelve years or so, the family has been seeking scientific evidence to determine the true cause of his death two hundred years ago.

In recent years I have been privileged to meet with many accomplished people at the Department of Interior, beginning with The Honorable Craig Manson in December 2005. In spite of these receptive meetings and a decision by Assistant Secretary Lavery in January 2007 to allow us to go forward with our application to exhume my ancestor, the National Park Service continues to be inflexible and unyielding in our efforts to cooperate with them.

Their attitude is perplexing. This is an opportunity for the National Park Service to gain historical knowledge at no expense to the United States Government. The truth about the death of Meriwether Lewis will be told by the National Park Service to the benefit of all visitors to the park. In addition, all school children across the United States will be able to know the end of the story without relying on conjecture.

Please use your office to remove the policy and bureaucratic hurdles constantly put in front of the Lewis family. We wish to proceed with this scientific study to find the truth, and to be able to give our great ancestor a Christian reburial at the Meriwether Lewis Site.

Thanking you in advance for your assistance,

I am sincerely,

*Donell Lewis Bawa*