



Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Awareness Month

October 21, 2022 by Educator Barnes

Come and let's play together in the bright sunny weather.

Lets all go to Gullah, Gullah Island. Gullah, Gullah, Gullah, Gullah.

If you sang instead of read these lines, you might have been a child who watched "Gullah Gullah Island." The show featured a Black family who lived in a fictional place called Gullah

Gullah Island. The husband and wife team, Ron and Natalie Daise, depicted the parents and their actual kids Simeon and Sara were part of the cast of children. We also can't forget Binyah Binyah, a full-body puppet polliwog. Each episode involved a lesson, singing, and the uplifting of the Gullah culture. The show aired for four seasons from 1994-1998.

This show gave many children across the United States insight into the Gullah culture. This insight and knowledge should continue.

In 2014, October was declared Gullah Geechee Awareness Month and Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Month. Some people combine the two and simply say Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Awareness Month. According to the National Park Service:

The Gullah Geechee people are the descendants of West and Central Africans who were enslaved and bought to the lower Atlantic states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia to work on the coastal rice, Sea Island cotton and indigo plantations. Because their enslavement was on isolated coastal plantations, sea and barrier islands, they were able to retain many of their indigenous African traditions. These traditions are reflected in their foodways, arts and crafts, and spiritual traditions. They also created a new language, Gullah, a creole language spoken nowhere else in the world.

Additionally, the words Gullah Geechee are typically used together; however, National Geographic noted that "Gullah tends to be the preferred name in North and South Carolina, Geechee in Georgia and Florida."

An act of Congress in October 2006 established the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, which is tasked with preserving and sharing the history and culture of the Gullah Geechee people who live in the coastal areas and islands of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The Gullah Geechee people came together on July 2, 2000 and declared itself a nation. Marquettea Goodwine, known as Queen Quet, has been the chieftess of the nation since 2000.

After answering a question about Hispanic Heritage Month for my column Hey Shawnta at Education Post, I saw a comment under the video on TikTok that goes with the column. TikTok user @sayhitoyourmama said, "That is the job of the parent. School is for math, English, and other subjects. Not bs heritage months. Vets get one day and have done more than all." After sharing that my dad was a veteran, I learned more about this person's perspective. However, the events and people students learn about in school center various cultures. It is important that there is information, especially positive, about people from all walks of life.

If you don't know about the Gullah Geechee culture, I encourage you to check out the resources below. Also, check out the 2022 interview with "Gullah Gullah Island" stars Ron and Natalie Daise where they sing the "Gullah Gullah Island" theme song, which they also sang for the show.

Resources

[Being Gullah or Geechee, Once Looked Down On, Now a Treasured Heritage](#)

[Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor: North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida](#)

[Gullah Geechee nation strives to survive](#)

[Preserving the Gullah Geechee culture in the US: 'There is nothing like being Gullah in the world'](#)

[Reminiscences of Sea Island Heritage by Ron Daise](#)