ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	FOOD ON THE MOVE: GENDERED REPRESENTATION, CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY, AND CULINARY PRACTICES OF GULLAH WOMEN.
	Katie M. White, Doctor of Philosophy, 2015
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Food on the Move: Gendered Representation, Cultural Sustainability, and Culinary Practices of Gullah Women connects Gullah women and foodways with processes of migration, cultural heritage, sustainability, and memory. Drawing on women's studies, history, anthropology, literature, film, and food studies, this interdisciplinary project looks at the preparation and presentation of food as an integral part of a sustained Gullah culture. Using Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* alongside contemporary imaginaries of the senses, the work discusses how movement of peoples into and out of the Sea Islands of South Carolina complicates the relationship between the sensory, particularly taste, memory and home. Most importantly, through food-centered stories combined with analyses of cookbooks and other culinary notations, this dissertation examines the vital role women have played in maintaining Gullah culinary history and the dissemination and sustenance of Gullah culture. It enhances not only our understanding of Gullah culture but also of

the processes of social and cultural changes necessary to sustain it. This work argues that the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor is a critical site for cultural sustainability particularly in regard to food. Food becomes a site for mapping the traditions, pressures, changes, adaptations, and resistances within a particular racial-ethnic community as it encounters dominant cultures, as well as a site of creativity, pleasure, and survival.

FOOD ON THE MOVE: GENDERED REPRESENTATION, CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY, AND CULINARY PRACTICES OF GULLAH WOMEN

By

Katie Marie White.

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Advisory Committee:
Professor A. Lynn Bolles, Chair
Professor Elsa Barkley Brown
Professor Deborah Rosenfelt
Professor Tony Whitehead
Professor Psyche Williams-Forson

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Preface

To successfully complete a PhD, "you must fall in love and stay in love with your questions," said a professor in a PhD preparation workshop I attended as a Master's student. Based on experience I would add that behind this love must be a driving passion that keeps the researcher hungry for answers. This researcher is lucky in this regard. Food on the Move is the product of a seven-year relationship with a place, people, culture, and cuisine, and my desires to know the ways in which Gullah food travels as people move into and out of the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor. Although I am not Gullah nor African-American, the Sea Islands of South Carolina and their people and food stirred my senses and left an indelible mark.

I was born and raised in Maryland, a state long-associated with blue crabs, Old Bay seasoning, and a dessert, the multi-layered Smith Island cake. Crabs and fried oysters continue to be staples at family functions. The German influence of Baltimore can be seen on our Thanksgiving tables in the form of sauerkraut. My grandmother's roots in Tidewater, Virginia, shone through in long-gone Sunday dinners complete with greens, stewed tomatoes and okra, country ham, and black-eyed peas piled high on tiny china plates. Yearly vacations to the Grand Strand of South Carolina introduced me to hush puppies, Calabash-style fried seafood, and sweet tea. These experiences, combined with a few trips to Charleston and family in Lexington, South Carolina, who spoke of Beaufort Stew, gave me the false impression that I understood all of the nuances of "southern food" and life on the South Carolina coast. But I wanted to learn more about this specific region.

The familiar, sweet swampy smell that hits your nose about 10 miles out on Highway 17 as you approach any part of the Carolina shore has been familiar to me for over 30 years. However, what I learned in 2008 when I first drove the length of Highway 17 from North Carolina down to St. Helena Island, South Carolina, is that smell deepens and becomes richer the further south you go. No matter how hot and muggy or cold the temperature, when I hit this sweet spot, I roll down my car windows and inhale the Lowcountry. The five senses – hearing, touching, smelling, seeing and taste – inform my experience of the region and are essential to Food on the Move.

This is a truly interdisciplinary project, combining literary and film criticism, narrative, history, and cultural and food studies to tell stories of Gullah people and food. This project is what the field of women's studies is at its core and why I chose this career path, when a move toward a traditional discipline may have been the more prudent choice. "Knowledge worlds," "transdisciplinary," "not knowing" are terms that I have encountered as a graduate student in Women's Studies and may make the work of feminist inquiry seem wishy washy, too lofty, or even unnecessary. This project pushes back at those potential critiques and argues the opposite, that feminist inquiry, using a variety of methods and modes of knowing, can be all at once a concrete, crucial, and necessary force in producing, preserving, and transforming knowledge. "Food on the Move" was born out of my "not knowing." It draws from theories of affect, diasporic theories, and feminist cultural criticism. It signifies the storytelling power of cookbooks, novels, and film and argues for the narratives included in these texts to be considered alongside conventional ethnographic sources.

And finally, it offers a critique of the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor as conceived by government institutions.

The theme of travel and movement is central to "Food on the Move" for a few reasons. 1) Gullah cuisine was created as a result of the movement, whether forced or voluntary, of people and ideas. 2) Scholarship on Gullah people and culture was produced because anthropologists such as Kay Day (1982), Josephine Beoku-Betts (1995), and Patricia Guthrie (1996), historians such as Daniel Littlefield (1981) and Judith Carney (2002), and linguists such as Lorenzo Dow Turner (1930) traveled to the Lowcountry for research. Artists such as authors Ntozake Shange (1982) and Gloria Naylor (1988), photographers Greg Day (1977) and Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe (1982), and present day- painters, Jonathan Green, Amiri Geuka Farris, and Alan Fireall, have leant their words and pictures to the telling of Gullah history. I stand on their shoulders. 3) Food and scholarship are both dynamic. Food trends ebb and flow with environmental, social, and cultural changes, and migration. The same can be said for scholarship; it can always be built upon. "Food on the Move" adds the unforgettable work done by filmmaker Julie Dash (1991), as well as food scholars such as David Sutton (2001), Doris Witt (2004), and Psyche Williams-Forson (2006), to the conversation begun by historians, anthropologists, and linguists to demonstrate that art is part of a dynamic cultural system. For these reasons, I traveled to the Lowcountry[1] many times for research and continue to love my questions.

[1] "It is literally low country: flat, semitropical, studded with live oaks, cypress, and pines, supple jack, smilax, and fragrant vines. It's a land crisscrossed by meandering rivers, by salt marshes teeming with wildlife, and now—since the building boom that followed Hurricane Hugo—crosshatched by mile upon mile of suburban sprawl belching forth the occasional town or multimillion-dollar resort development, all in a headlong march to the sea." – Kendra Hamilton, p. 75-76, *Callaloo*

I am indebted to many people for playing host to me along the journey. At the Penn Center, Rosalyn Brown, former Director of History and Culture, and Barbara McCrudden, Conference Center Coordinator, welcomed me in 2008 and facilitated my first interviews when I returned in 2009. Victoria Smalls, current Director of History and Culture, provided tremendous insight on her experience growing up on St. Helena Island, as well as a long list of interview contacts and photographic permissions. Robert Middleton, a volunteer docent at the Penn Center, gave me a guided tour of St. Helena Island with personal annotations that made old places come to life. Grace Morris Cordial and Charmaine Seabrook in the Beaufort District Collection at the Beaufort County Library were generous with their time and gave me a quiet, supportive place to work. Jane Aldrich of the Lowcountry Rice Culture Project graciously provided contacts and support.

In 2008, The Gullah Studies Institute provided an intensive week of courses on Gullah history and culture and afforded me the opportunity to meet vibrant teachers and scholars from South Carolina, Colorado, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Kentucky, many of whom I am still in contact with today. Melba and Paul Cooper continue to be supporters of my work and were instrumental in helping me secure housing for my trips. Many thanks go to Ann Courmouzis, who opened up her home on Cat Island, South Carolina, to me on two occasions. It was such a beautiful place to think and work (and eat!). Thanks also to Ifetayo White for hosting me and welcoming me to a meeting of the Birth Network of the Lowcountry.

The incorporation of Gullah voices was a goal for the project that did not waiver. A history of a people can be chronicled in statistics, dates, and other facts, but

this account is invested in the voices of those who grew up living, breathing, and literally eating Gullah culture. Anita Singleton-Prather and Ervena Faulkner's voices will be heard throughout "Food on the Move," for good reason. Both women continue to be champions and sponsors of this work. Their words, calls, and suggestions have opened doors for me in the community that I may not have been able to enter on my own. I am grateful to Mark Mack, Romeater Anderson, Sara Bush, Emory Campbell, David Young, Sallie Ann Robinson, Valerie Erwin, and Charlotte Jenkins for sharing their memories, history and culinary knowledge. All interviewees granted permission and in some cases encouraged me to use their real name, illustrating the commitment they feel to having Gullah stories heard widely.

"Food on the Move" is a story, rooted in rich and tenuous history, of Gullah culture on the Sea Islands of South Carolina. I have learned from interviews and research that Gullah people are experts in "making something out of nothing." What follows is a series of examples that prove but also deepen that claim.

Dedication

To the women who taught me that I had something to say – My Great Aunts: Ellen Handley, Dorothy J. White, and Sara Ruschaupt; my grandmother, Marie L. White; and my mentor and friend, Mary E. Quinn.

To one of the women who encouraged the words - Ervena Faulkner

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Many incredible people have helped this dissertation take shape. I owe many thanks to my friends, colleagues, and professors in the Women's Studies Department. I am especially grateful to my dissertation chair, Dr. A. Lynn Bolles whose constant encouragement, inspiring mentorship, and thoughtful suggestions made this dissertation possible. Thank you to my committee for pushing me to think in new directions and pull together the multiple disciplinary approaches I use in this project. Thank you to Cliffornia Royals Howard, Annie Carter, Laura Nichols, and JV Sapinoso for administrative and moral support.

I am thankful for the people who balanced and enriched my life during this process, especially Lara Torsky for perspective, Renina Jarmon for inspiration and always checking in, Jessica Walker for being a generous fellow food scholar and friend, and my dear friend, Cristina Perez, for the endless encouragement and laughs. I am better for walking this path with all of you. Thank you, Amber Guthrie, for cheering me on through another finish line. Thank you to my family for unwavering support: my sister, Laurie White, for being there always and showing me what can happen when you let go and believe; my mother, Anne White, for the TJ care, the research assistance, and for encouraging me to celebrate every step; my father, Joe White, for being silently proud of me and being my favorite champion of Women's Studies. My grandparents nurtured my early love of food and education, and their collective memory touches each of these pages. Thank you also to my extended White and Every families for your support, patience, and love. Thanks, especially to my uncle, Jimmy White for the rides to and from the airport that started it all. Finally, to Thomas Joseph, one day I promise you will know how important you were to this process. You all at once expanded my world and helped me focus. You are my heart. And, endless gratitude goes to Tom Every. Love means taking turns riding shotgun. You know when to take the wheel or hand me the keys. I am grateful to share this ride with you.

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Introduction: Gullah Women, Foodways, and Feminism

A Moveable Feast

"These perusals of history, literature, vernacular, culture, and philosophy, 'long with absolutely fabulous receipts (Charlestonian for recipes), are meant to open our hearts and minds to what it means for black folks in the Western Hemisphere to be full."[2]
- Ntozake Shange, *If I Can Cook/You Know God Can*

Food on the Move reflects on the ways that foods, like people, tell stories "of migration, assimilation or resistance, changes over time, and personal and group identity."[3] It shows how fiction and a connection to the sensory and memory retell those stories; how senses are conveyed on page and film. Drawing on novels, cookbooks, migration histories, interviews with family cooks and chefs, gardeners, and cultural heritage experts, this interdisciplinary project examines the preparation and presentation of food by women as purveyors of a sustained Gullah culture. This interdisciplinary study ultimately suggests that work at the intersections of women's studies and food studies can illuminate these larger social issues in particularly effective ways. By highlighting the importance of meaning-making in cultural production, *Food on the Move* connects Gullah women and foodways with migration, cultural heritage, sustainability[4] and memory. A goal of this dissertation is to make

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[2] Shange 3.

[3] Jeff Miller and Jonathan Deutsch, *Food Studies: An Introduction to Research Methods* (New York: Berg, 2009) 8.

[4] The most popular definition of sustainability can be traced to a 1987 UN conference. It defined sustainable developments as those that "meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs"(WCED 1987) http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-ov.htm. At its core, sustainability means "the capacity for being continued; to endure; renewable" which ties directly into the theoretical fourth pillar of sustainability – cultural vitality. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO 2001) states, "cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature…one of the roots of development understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but

suggestions for how the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor can be a site for cultural sustainability.

This dissertation brings to the fore cultural sustainability as a concept that is emblematic in food and food practices. To define culture sustainability, I call upon the statements made by the United Cities and Local Governments and UNESCO to recognize culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. The fourth pillar of culture adds to a three-dimensional approach to sustainable development established in the 1980s, which includes, economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental balance.[5] In the wake of the Rio +20 conference in 2012, where the fourth pillar was established, UNESCO has offered the following statement on the importance of including culture in discussions of sustainability:

> If achieving sustainability is first and foremost about making an appropriate use of the planet's resources, then culture must be at the centre of our development strategies, since cultures frame people's relationship to others in their society and the world around them, including the natural environment, and condition their behaviours. Development initiatives and approaches which take local conditions and cultures into account are likely to result in more context-sensitive and equitable outcomes, whilst also enhancing ownership by target beneficiaries. Integrating culture into development policies and programmes, therefore, fundamentally contributes to their effectiveness and sustainability.[6]

Food has been included in the discussion of cultural sustainability primarily in regard to access to food and water and the important role of indigenous practices, such as

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also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral, and physical existence" (Articles 1 and 3).

[5] *Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable* Development. United Cities and Local Governments. 2011-2013. http://www.agenda21culture.net/index.php/docman/-1/393-zzculture4pillarsden/file

[6] "Culture for Sustainable Development." UNESCO. http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/culture-and-development/the-future-we-want-the-role-of-culture/measuring-the-immeasurable/.

irrigation. Foodways, such as the Gullah cuisine at the heart of this dissertation, are beginning to be recognized by UNESCO as intangible world heritage sites. The current list of intangible sites includes Turkish coffee, Viennese coffee culture, traditional Mexican cuisine (tamales, guava paste, and cotija cheese), and the Mediterranean diet. The Mediterranean includes Morocco, which is the only reference to African cuisine on the list. French cuisine has been rejected twice as of 2010, and Mexican cuisine was rejected once before its acceptance. While issues concerning economics, social structures, and the environment can often be quantified, the impact and importance of culture is difficult to measure. UNESCO is working on measures to provide an evidence-based picture of culture's role in development. My goal for this dissertation is to provide such evidence about the import of sustaining Gullah culture, particularly foodways, within the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor (hereafter, GGNHC).

My dissertation's main question is, how has and does Gullah food and its various representations travel across time and geographic space? To answer this question I base my dissertation around what anthropologist and food scholar Carole Counihan has termed "food-centered life stories."[7] Much like the work of David Sutton on the anthropology of the senses, this project is not meant "to provide an extensive ethnographic picture…but to suggest some useful avenues to explore in the study of food's relation to memory practices."[8] My contribution focuses on how food travels via in-and-out migration, particularly how it is claimed and manipulated in

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[7] Miller and Deutsch 173.

[8] David Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford: Berg, 2001) 74.

new cities outside of the Sea Islands of South Carolina, as well as how Gullah culture is sustained in the process. Other scholars (Carney 2002; Morgan, 2004; and Fields-Black, 2008) have explored connections between gender and rice production in West Africa and the Sea Islands of the southeastern United States. This significant literature still lacks extensive discussion connecting foodways, producers, migration of people, culinary food memories, and cultural heritage, beyond the important study by anthropologist Josephine Beoku-Betts on Sea Island women and culinary practices (1995). I move beyond rice to study the role of women in Gullah culinary history in the larger context of Gullah cuisine– how it originated, how it is now, where it is going, and how, when, and by whom its stories of are told. My research contributes to the current scholarly conversation about how culture travels via migration, specifically out of the Carolinas.

This dissertation argues that food practices map the traditions, pressures, changes, adaptations, and resistances within a particular racial-ethnic community as it encounters dominant cultures, and that food is a site of creativity, pleasure, and survival. It takes as an object of analysis Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*, a fictive filmic account of Gullah culture rooted in decades of research and personal experience, alongside contemporary anthropologies and imaginaries of the senses, and discusses how the movement of people complicates the relationship between the sensory, particularly taste, memory, and home. Again, Sutton's work on food, the sensory, and memory is important here. Through food-centered interviews and analysis of cookbooks and other culinary notations, this dissertation examines the vital role women have played in maintaining Gullah culinary history and in the

dissemination and sustenance of Gullah culture through the sharing of practices for growing and preparing food. It enhances not only our understanding of Gullah culture but also the process of social and cultural change necessary to sustain it, with institutions such as the GGNHC at the fore of sustainability efforts.

Setting the Table: A Discussion of Methods and Theoretical Approaches

> *"I need to understand how a place on a map is also a place in history."*
> - Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry*[9]

Implied in my title, *Food on the Move*, travel and location are important aspects of this project. In 1984, Adrienne Rich was talking about the politics and importance of acknowledging one's social location, particularly in context of the women's movement, but like place, food and food practices also have a social location. They have history, gender, and heritage. Knowledge of foodways moves with people into and out of the terrain of the GGNHC via narrative and memory. These people and these foods, recipes, and culinary memories are mobile. In a discussion of Rich's "Notes on a Politics of Location," anthropologist James Clifford offers this:

> "Location," here, is not a matter of finding a stable "home" or of discovering a common experience. Rather it is a matter of being aware of the difference that makes a difference in concrete situations, of recognizing the various inscriptions, "places," or "histories" that both empower and inhibit the construction of theoretical categories like "Woman," "Patriarchy," or "colonization," categories essential to political action as well as to serious comparative knowledge. "Location" is thus, concretely, a series of locations and encounters, travel within diverse, but limited spaces."

[9] Rich 213.

Clifford suggests that location is not a matter of finding a common experience. In the context of cultural sustainability and Gullah foodways, I argue that location is a matter of celebrating common experience, and recognizing the differences between the varied culinary histories, places, and people that comprise the larger African-American cuisine. Gullah cuisine does not hold more value than the creole offerings of New Orleans or North Carolina barbecue. It is simply distinct, with a history and Lowcountry location all its own, a distinction that is worth sustaining and celebrating within and beyond the GGNHC.

My fieldwork methodologies draw on feminist anthropologist Kamala Visweswaran's contention that qualitative research has a connection to imaginative literature. This dissertation assumes that fiction and long-term relationships and discussions are shaped by and imbued with the social investments of their authors and the social and political contexts of their historical moment.[10] I employ as methods participant observation, structured formal interviews, archival research, and analyses of cookbooks, life stories, and the film *Daughters of the Dust* as repositories and interpretations of Gullah culture.[11] According to *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research* (2012), three key elements are considered in participant observation study:

[10] Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

[11] Historians, linguists and anthropologists have worked in this region for nearly 100 years. Notably, Lorenzo Down Turner, discussed in the next chapter, studied Gullah language in the 1930s. More recently, anthropologist Kay Young Day conducted fieldwork in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina and published her findings in "Kinship in a Changing Economy: A View from the Sea Islands" in 1982. In 1995, anthropologist Josephine Beoku-Betts published "We Got our Way of Cooking Things: Women, Food, and Preservation of Cultural Identity among the Gullah," about her field work on the Sea Islands. 1996, anthropologist Patricia Guthrie published *Catching Sense: African American Communities on a South Carolina Sea Island* based on her fieldwork on St. Helena Island.

1. *Getting into the location of whatever aspect of the human experience you wish to study.* This means going to where the action is—people's communities, homes, workplaces, recreational sites, places of commercial interaction, sacred sites, and the like…
2. *Building rapport with the participants.* The point of participant observation is that you wish to observe and learn about the things people do in the normal course of their lives. That means they have to accept you, to some extent, as someone they can "be themselves" in front of. While you don't necessarily have to be viewed as a complete insider, a successful participant observer has to inspire enough trust and acceptance to enable her research participants to act much as they would if the researcher were not present.
3. *Spending enough time interacting to get the needed data*. The informal, embedded nature of participant observation means that you cannot always just delve straight into all the topics that address your research issues and then leave. You must spend time both building rapport and observing or participating for a long enough period to have a sufficient range of experiences, conversations, and relatively unstructured interviews for your analysis. Depending on the scope of the project and your research questions, this may take anywhere from days to weeks, months, or even years, and it may involve multiple visits to the research site(s).[12]

Being a participant observer means on-the-ground up-close encounters with the activities and people represented in the study, including bearing witness to the preparation of Gullah cuisine and the cultivation of its ingredients, spending time in kitchens, both commercial and home, and other food preparation spaces, restaurants, farmers' markets, grocery stores, shrimp shacks, and farms.[13] A complete list of participant observation sites can be found in Appendix 2. The list details many of the events, locations, and people I met over the course of six years. As the above conditions of participant observation dictate, I returned to many locations and met with the same people on many occasions. Since I was unable to spend a series of months or years in the region, I depended on these repeat visits to build rapport with

[12] Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 76 – 77.

[13] See Appendix 2 for a list of participant observation locations.

my interviewees, as well as with restaurant workers, store clerks, and farmers' market vendors who came to recognize me from repeat visits.

I first traveled to the Beaufort County Sea Islands in the summer of 2008, and over time have gained access to informal conversations, and invitations to people's homes, workplaces, and community events. My research continued via a pilot project in August 2012, where a home on Cat Island, SC, served as a base and allowed me to participate in the daily lives of Gullah people. My opportunities to participate in and observe Gullah culture range from intimate one-on-one conversations with Gullah women at their dining room tables to standing on a dock as shrimp boats come in with their catch to chatting with farmers' market vendors about the state of their crops to eating alone in Lowcountry restaurants simply observing my surroundings, reading menus, and having the occasional conversation. Like the authors of the qualitative data text mentioned above, I have learned that

> "There is a reason that the phrase "you had to be there" is a cliché used by those who feel their verbal descriptions have not fully captured the essence of some scene or event. The phrase encapsulates a genuine truth—there are often important elements of human experience that are only visible to those who are actually there."[14]

Guest, et al., mention visibility, specifically, as something that can be amplified through participant observation. I add that participant observation has the potential to engage all of one's senses, particularly for a project with food at the center. For example, on my most recent research trip, I spent five hours in the Savannah kitchen of noted Gullah cookbook author Sallie Ann Robinson, as she prepared her famous pecan crispies and Daufuskie Deviled Crab while telling me stories of growing up

[14] Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 77.

Gullah on Daufuskie Island. By the time I found my way to Ms. Robinson's table, I had read her two cookbooks, as well as conducted several interviews with her, and had been to and toured her native Daufuskie Island and eaten deviled crab at a restaurant. But the sensory experience I received at Ms. Robinson's home brought new tastes, sights, smells, touch, and sounds to the picture I had begun to paint of this culinary figure in my mind. I could smell the crabs baking, see Ms. Robinson roll out some dough before baking off her famous crispies, hear the rhythms of her kitchen as she moved around preparing food for us while she also readied pots and ingredients for her dinner later that evening. I got to taste the green pepper and onion flavors in the deviled crab, feel the snap of the crispie as it broke in my hands. I was able to watch some of what Ms. Robinson writes in her cookbooks come to life. My experience with Ms. Robinson is indicative of the many experiences I had as a participant observer. Observing is more than watching; rather, it is active sensorial engagement.

Semi-structured interviews, like the one I conducted with Ms. Robinson, are a method used in qualitative research to collect data. In this case, I am collecting stories from Gullah people about food. To borrow from sociologist Catherine Reissman, my interview process and subsequent analysis of the narratives the interviews produce "does not assume objectivity but, instead, positionality and subjectivity. The perspectives of both narrator and analyst can come into play. As the Personal Narrative Group (1989) articulates, "truths" rather than "the truth" of personal narrative is the meaningful semantic distinction."[15] For this project I conducted a total

[15] Reissman 19.

of nine semi-structured interviews. Two of the interviews were with women I interviewed in 2009 for a previous project. Two of the interviews were conducted with people I had met through the Gullah Studies Institute, and I used that connection to initiate contact for the dissertation. The remaining interviews were scheduled via "snowball effect" from contacts of interviewees, of people I met through my participant observations and pilot project, suggestions from the staff of the Penn Center, and in the case of Chef Valerie Erwin, a cold call. In the end, it is of import that the people I interviewed and whose voices are "heard" throughout *Food on the Move* are largely middle-class, college-educated, and committed to using their energies and talents in efforts of cultural sustainability, particularly through food. However, they do not serve as a full representation or voice of Gullah culture.

Although I made initial connections with Gullah people of all ages, my main sponsor in the community is an elder, Ervena Faulkner, to whom I am most grateful. My relationship with Mrs. Faulkner has brought me into places and conversations that otherwise may have been difficult or impossible to find. I made the contact with Sallie Ann Robinson on my own through a chance encounter with her agent and some internet sleuthing, but having Mrs. Faulkner with me for the interview likely made possible certain aspects of the conversation. For example, Mrs. Faulkner's urging led to Ms. Robinson calling to arrange an interview with Sara Bush, a native of St. Helena Island, currently living in Bluffton, SC. Within 48 hours of the phone call, I was collecting Gullah gossip over lima beans at Ms. Bush's table.

A third method used is the analysis of cookbooks and Julie Dash's film, *Daughters of the Dust*, placing them in conversation with the narratives created from

the interviews and participant observations to expand the stories, and therefore our understanding of Gullah culinary history and culture. Cookbooks, like film and people, tell stories. I have chosen four cookbooks written by Gullah women and published between 2003 and 2010 as objects of analysis. I chose these particular texts because they are lesser known than Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor's *Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl*, which was first published in 1970, and they add to the bibliography of cookbooks by black women published in the epilogue of Doris Witt's *Black Hunger* (1999). Three of the cookbooks are by women I also interviewed for the project, adding another layer of information to the narrative. Even though *Daughters* is a work of fiction, I posit that Julie Dash is a storyteller like the cookbook authors; her work is grounded in a decade of research and a lifetime of personal experience as the granddaughter of Gullah people. The cookbooks and the film are examples of what I am calling "affective production," or work produced by affective labor, bridging the work of the body and mind.[16] Claiming these texts as examples of affective production give the authors and director credit as theorists and producers of knowledge.

Through the analyses of cookbooks and the positioning of *Daughters of the Dust* as a food film, I want to continue a discussion begun by Beoku-Betts in 1995 about the critical importance of women and foodways in Gullah cultural sustainability. The cookbooks and film are not presented as authentic representations,

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[16] For further insight into affective labor see Patricia Clough's discussion of the "affective turn" in the introduction to *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) 1-33 and Ben Highmore "Bitter After Taste: Affect, Food, and Social Aesthetics" *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) 118-137.

rather as original interpretations of the authors and director. Meredith Abarca argues for the transition from “authentic” to “original” when discussing foodways, because

> Claiming one culinary method as authentic renders other versions as questionable and consequently dismisses them for not providing real ethnic food. Since conceptions of food transfer to attitudes about people, my concern remains that claims of authenticity can essentialize certain ethnic groups by stifling creative growth.[17]

I am not interested in essentializing Gullah food or rendering it more special than other parts of the African-American culinary lexicon, which is why I subscribe to Abarca’s use of “original” in this context. Abarca is drawing from Debra Castillo (1992) who suggests that a recipe “is not a blueprint. It is less a formula than general model; less an axion of unchanging law and more a theory of possibilities.”[18] “In Castillo’s paradigm, a single recipe reflects a diversity of voices within any given ethnic community…The ongoing transformations of a recipe speak to an original moment in the life story of the person preparing a meal.”[19] Abarca goes on:

> I strongly feel that the word original diminishes the possibility for encompassing colonizing attitudes, and therefore for operating under stereotypes. A paradigm that addresses originality rather than the authenticity places the focus on newness. A definition of the word original suggest something that is “an adoption to anything in relation to that which is an [earlier] production of it.” To speak of original rather than authentic, the production always belongs to the person who creates it. Yes, an earlier source is followed, but room for change exists. Alterations to cultural reproductions and creations of new productions do not render them less meaningful. Deviation to a degree from an earlier source allows room for modifications that expand cultural boundaries.[20]

[17] Abarca 18.

[18] Castillo xiii.

[19] Abarca 19.

[20] Abarca 19.

Like Abarca and Castillo, I argue that the recipes and stories shared by Gullah women in cookbooks, in the fictive *Daughters of the Dust*, and in personal narrative, contribute to the larger understanding of Gullah culture. Abarca's emphasis on "newness," in particular speaks to the cross-generational and cross-cultural dialogue around Gullah foodways that can be made possible via the GGNHC.

The final method I employ is archival research, conducted mainly in the Beaufort County Collection of the Beaufort County Library. The data collected contributes to my assertion that food needs to become part of the GGNHC. So what does the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor have to do with foodways and this particular project? Aside from the importance of Gullah culture being recognized as a valuable piece of American history and the subsequent attention the region has received, as a scholar of Gullah foodways, I have concerns about the planned interpretive sites for the GGNHC. My concerns here are threefold: 1) that the National Park Service and planning commission for the corridor are not taking the voices of Gullah people into account when planning for and establishing these sites; 2) that the natural environment is not being considered during the process; and 3) that foodways are not listed in the management plan as being important in terms of preservation. Along with the corridor, another element that threatens Gullah culture in general is the increased migration of northern retirees to the Sea Islands. Land is being bought, often at low prices, from Gullah people, and large vacation homes are being erected. The objective is to outline problems, conflicts, and goals of the GGNHC, including examples of preservation and tourism already in progress, as well as suggest measures that can be taken within the GGNHC to protect Gullah heritage

and land, as well as methods to sustain the culture, especially foodways. The ultimate goal is to urge the Commission to employ an intersectional approach to creating the interpretive sites for the GGNHC to that all aspects of the identities of Gullah people are considered and made visible.

In 2008, when I first learned of the GGNHC at a Gullah Studies Institute, my initial questions about the designation centered on the Gullah people. Who would construct the interpretive sites? Would the Heritage Commission have a final say in all aspects of each site? Will the larger Gullah community be consulted about the sites? What do members of the community see as valuable inclusions? Seven years later, after spending time in the region, interviewing residents and members of the Commission, and reading the Commission's management plan, I am reassured that the environment and impact of tourism and gentrification are being considered and that the voices of ordinary residents are being solicited.[21] I asked when I met with Emory Campbell in February 2014 about the status of interpretive sites along the GGNHC. He replied:

> We just completed the management plan for preservation, which includes land preservation and land use because we got input from public hearings. The people expressed that they want to preserve their family land. Some of them, including some young people, they'd like to produce food from the land, so all of that is laid out, the goals and objectives, we call it, you know like a 3-legged stool because we have preservation, education, which means education about the culture and land use and all the other things that are going on with it and economic development and what we've been discussing in just a few minutes is what the heritage corridor is all about. And right now we're in the implementation phase where we're looking for partners, seeking partners,

[21] A record of public comments can be found in Appendix N: Public Comment Reports in the Management Plan document on www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org. See also: Appendix H: Major River Basins and Threatened and Endangered Species, Appendix I: Economic Impact of Tourism and Appendix, and Appendix G: Consultation Letters, which includes records of the Commission's attempts to reach out to Native American tribes, State Historic Preservation Officers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and state departments of natural resources.

> organizations, planning boards, governmental bodies, who agree with what we have in the plan to be our partners, school systems, and then we'll have, we are also in the process of hiring staff so the staff can coordinate with the other partners.[22]

Campbell's response indicates that even though the Heritage Act was passed nearly nine years ago, the work is slow and methodical. Designated signage was being put up along the major roads in GGNHC to alert travelers of the importance of the space.

Figure 1: Signage to promote Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor along Highway 17 in South Carolina (Courtesy of http://www.us17coastalhighway.com/gullahgeechee-corridor/.)

Theory

The theoretical grounding of *Food on the Move* is comprised of feminist theory, affect theory and anthropological theories of the senses, as well as theories of diaspora, and travel. Like feminist theorist Shari Stone-Mediatore, I contend that storytelling and stories have intellectual and historical value and play a vital role in sustaining culture. Reclamation of stories can reevaluate what is "real, significant, and possible."[23] Simply put, narratives help orient us in the world. And, "when we theorize the intellectual value and historical role of stories, we can more self-consciously and self-critically cross disciplinary borders and reclaim stories as

[22] Emory Campbell, Oral Interview, February 2014.

[23] Stone-Mediatore 9.

integral components of human thought."[24] This is most relevant to my work in collecting stories of Gullah women around culinary practices, as storytelling holds the epistemological value of thinking from others' lives.

This dissertation is invested in three of the eight orientations that scholars Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth argue underpin and overlap to comprise affect theory: the affect of the everyday, the connection between the non-discursive arts (in this case, foodways) and the "'lower' or proximal senses" (such as taste), and the critical discourses of the emotions, especially a range of postcolonial, hybridized and migrant voices.[25] Specifically, I draw on the affective theorizing of Sara Ahmed in "Happy Objects," as well as Benjamin Highmore's discussion of taste and, as already mentioned, anthropologist David Sutton's work on memory and the senses to argue that the value we attribute to food is connected to emotion and place.

To begin a discussion of African diasporic migration and movement, I look to the theories of diaspora from Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall. Gilroy argues that there is no clear insider or outsider in terms of diaspora, no one monolithic diasporic or Black experience. In the first chapter of *The Black Atlantic* Gilroy posits the difficulty of having a distinct Black culture and a distinct British culture, now that the two coexist in one space:

> Previously separated political and intellectual traditions converged and, in their coming together, overdetermined the process of black Britain's social and historical formation. This blending is misunderstood if it is conceived in simple ethnic terms, but right and left, racist and anti-racist, black and white

[24] Stone-Mediatore 13.

[25] Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) 8.

> tacitly share a view of it as little more than a collision between fully formed and mutually exclusive cultural communities.[26]

Gullah culture, built out of isolation on the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, has been able to hold onto much of the African tradition and custom that was brought in the memories and hearts of slaves on the islands. While Gullah culture is steeped in African tradition, Gilroy's argument holds that a new culture is born because that tradition is mixed with colonial influence. New land, new weather, new foods, new people, and a new way of life cannot be ignored.

Gilroy's argument draws on Stuart Hall's notion of hybridity, imagining cultures on both sides of the Atlantic that are not fixed, but rather fluid and ever-changing. Hall shatters the white concept of the "Other" as being one dimensional. In his words "cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all…It is *something* – not a mere trick of the imagination. It has its histories – and histories have their real, material, and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us."[27]

To bring a local, Lowcountry context to Hall and Gilroy's discussion of fluidity, I bring in theories of travel in two realms, the physical and the imaginary. James Clifford discusses the etymology of travel theory:

> Travel: a figure for different modes of dwelling and displacement, for trajectories and identities, for storytelling and theorizing in a postcolonial world of global contacts. Travel: a range of practices for situating the self in a space or spaces grown too large, a form both of exploration and discipline. Theory: returned to its etymological roots, with a late twentieth-century difference. The Greek term theorein : a practice of travel and observation, a man sent by the polis to another city to witness a religious ceremony.

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[26] Paul Gilroy, "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity." *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) 55.

[27] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 237.

> "Theory" is a product of displacement, comparison, a certain distance. To theorize, one leaves home.[28]

While Clifford is speaking more about the ways in which theories travel, I would like to use his argument to think about the ways in which food travels. Sutton provides some context for how food can travel via the senses and memory, but I think Clifford's raw definitions of travel theory speak to the physicality of travel and movement in the Lowcountry, particularly before the advent of bridges in the region in the 1950s. Gullah people had to be creative about the ways in which they traveled from place to place, through thick sea grass, rough waters, or great distances over land and water. The story of the Gullah people involves travel, whether it is told in the context of one small Sea Island or many or if we venture up and down or even beyond the GGNHC.

Toward a Critical Feminist Food Studies

For us humans, then, eating is never a "purely biological" activity (whatever "purely biological" means). The foods eaten have histories associated with the pasts of those who eat them; the techniques employed to find, process, prepare, serve, and consume the foods are all culturally variable, with histories of their own. Nor is the food ever simply eaten; its consumption is always conditioned by meaning. These meanings are symbolic, and communicated symbolically; they also have histories.[29]

Food studies, a critical feminist food studies specifically, "is not the study of food itself but rather the study of relationships between food and the human experience.[30] The preparation of food is just as important as its cultivation because it

[28] Clifford 1.

[29] Sidney W Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past*. (Boston: Beacon, 1996) 7.

[30] Miller and Deutsch 3.

is steeped in ritual, culture, and history. In the quote that begins this section, anthropologist Sidney Mintz[31] points to the power of food above a purely biological necessity. From production to preparation to consumption, food is imbued with meaning and thus, I argue, power. To further illustrate the sustainable power of food and ground this project in feminist scholarship, I argue that the power and fulfillment felt by Gullah people, especially women, is what Audre Lorde refers to as the erotic. In this instance, I argue the erotic is evident in the relationship between food, the senses, and memory. The erotic is yet another way of characterizing "affective production," as defined above.

I see food scholar Psyche Williams-Forson's discussions of power and foodways as in conversation with Lorde. In her article "Other Women Cooked for My Husband: Negotiating Gender, Food, and Identities in an African American/Ghanaian Household," (2012) Williams-Forson cites food as "a metaphor for diasporic continuity and cultural retention"[32] in discussing how she and her husband have negotiated cross-cultural eating preferences in their home. Working toward this

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[31] Before Mintz in 1996, other anthropologists such as Mary Douglas (1982) and Tony Whitehead (1984) were calling for the recognition of the social dimensions of food beyond the biological. Douglas was interested in the ways in which family food systems were tied to issues of nutrition and governmental policy. Most helpful for this project is Douglas's insight into the sensory elements of food and the potential for food as art. While this project is interested in the sensory as tied to affect and memory, Douglas is referring to the texture, color, temperature, and other aesthetic qualities of foodstuffs. Whitehead brought a new paradigm to bear on the study of family food systems. The cultural systems paradigm places culture at the center of study, but looks closely at the relationships between components of a cultural system – social systems, ideational systems, food behavioral systems, the physical environment, basic survival needs, and historical factors.

[32] Psyche Williams-Forson, "Other Women Cooked for My Husband: Negotiating Gender, Food, and Identities in an African American/Ghanaian Household." *Taking Food Public: Redefining Foodways in a Changing World* (New York: Routledge, 2012) 140.

continuity and retention can be a tense process, as Williams-Forson uses her personal example to illustrate:

> In the language of food, identity and place can be problematized. Because of this, food is a critical expression of cultural identity and an important marker of cultural borders. Women have a significant role in easing and complicating the symbolic relationships that people have between the foods they eat and their identities. Their responses to food situations can enable people to find spaces that nurture and sustain or reject and refuse.[33]

Williams-Forson is able to accomplish through autoethnography exactly what Mintz argues anthropologists are just beginning to realize is a necessity for study: the connection between food, gender, identity, and place. Despite the potential for empowerment and joy that can be found in food memories, it bears mentioning that many peoples' relationship to food is fraught with tensions. Some may not have enough to eat. Some may find no joy, fulfillment, or skill in preparing food. Others may see food as purely a biological need, and others may equate food with a negative body image or self-worth. Whether positive or negative, food harnesses power in personal meaning and as a cultural symbol.

Williams-Forson is also directly in conversation with Counihan, Abarca, Witt, Arlene Voski Avakian and Barbara Haber, to name a few. Avakian and Haber are the editors of *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food* (2005). This text gives a name and definition to feminist food studies. When people ask why I study food and how food pertains to women's studies, I place my work directly into a conversation begun by Avakian and Haber:

> Some women's studies scholars have discovered that food practices and their representations, interwoven as they are into the dailiness of life, can reveal the

[33] Williams-Forson 139.

> particularities of time, place, and culture, providing an excellent vehicle to characterize women's lives.[34]

Avakian and Haber provide an excellent literature review of the grounding texts of feminist food studies, focusing on identity formation, cookbooks as community, the threat of modernization to cultures, food practices as being both constitutive and reflective of gender constructions, and eating disorders – all except the latter form the crux of *Food on the Move*.[35] This dissertation builds on the conversation begun by Avakian and Haber about women and representations, cultural practices and culinary histories. It goes a step further by reading cookbooks[36], literature, and film as companion pieces to traditional ethnographies and arguing these sources as ethnographic in their own right. In a paper given at the American Ethnological Society in 1997[37], anthropologist A. Lynn Bolles argues that novelists use their descriptive powers for settings, and social, economic and political commentary and allow the reader to move in time and space and inside characters' minds, while ethnographers can just observe, participate, and try to capture motif through behaviors, cultural practices, and symbolic representations.[38] Using novels as a resource allows us to use the author's rendition of the scene much like the ethnographer, but the reader can get inside the head

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[34] Arlene Voski Avakian and Barbara Haber, eds, *From Betty Crocker to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food* (Boston: University of Massachusetts, 2005) 7.
[35] The initial heavy-lifting connecting the physical, affective, and creative labor of Gullah women to the creation and sustenance of Gullah culture was done by Beoku-Betts (1995), Judith Carney (2002), and Jennifer Morgan (2004).

[36] For further reading on the power of recipes see Theophano (2002) and Leonardi (1989), and Toni Tipton Martin's *The Jemima Code* (forthcoming 2015), www.thejemimacode.com.

[37] A. Lynn Bolles, "Novels as Ethnography Sources." Paper presented at the The American Ethnological Society, Seattle, March 3-6, 1997.

[38] For other sources connecting novels as interdisciplinary resources, see Thorsson (2013), Abarca (2006), Witt (1999), Zafar (1999), Castillo (1992), among others.

of the characters. Expanding the scope of what counts as narratives allows for the women whose cookbooks and film I analyze to provide context for the voices of women interviewed for the project. Taking a cue from food scholar and anthropologist Counihan, whose work is published in Avakian and Haber's collection, the voices of Gullah women and descendants of Gullah people are privileged over mine as researcher. Therefore, the voices of Gullah women tell the story of the power of identity and place in the history of Gullah cuisine.

On the Menu: A Chapter Breakdown

Food on the Move takes the reader on a culinary tour of Gullah cuisine from its origins in West Africa with stopovers in the Caribbean, while focusing on its most renowned location, the Lowcountry[39] of the southeastern United States. As such, this dissertation is a feminist analysis of Gullah culture and foodways that is organized partly as a cookbook. Between each chapter a relevant recipe or ingredient serves as an interlude: hoppin' john, red rice, gumbo, Frogmore stew, collards, and pecan crunch cookies. By the end of this text, the reader will enjoy a complete analytical "meal."

The first chapter begins by answering the question, who are the Gullah?, which leads into a narrative of migration, both forced and voluntary, that helped to establish and expand Gullah culture and cuisine. The discussion begins with a brief history of the Atlantic slave trade that brought a certain group of West Africans to the

[39] According to the Lowcountry Council of Governments, "The southern corner of South Carolina was one of the first visited and earliest settled areas in North America. The Lowcountry is geographically bounded on the northeast by the Combahee-Salkehatchie River and on the southwest by the Savannah River, and within this geographic area today are the counties of Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton and Jasper." See: http://www.lowcountrycog.sc.gov/region/history for more information.

Sea Islands and shows how a unique Gullah culture was able to form. Following is an analysis of migration of Gullah people out of the Sea Islands and a subsequent return migration has impacted that has affected the culinary landscape of the region. This chapter also introduces the GGNHC as a site of cultural sustainability.

The second chapter analyzes Gullah cookbooks and contributes to positing a critical feminist food studies. I argue that these texts are more than simple collections of recipes; rather, they tell stories and offer portals into a rich culinary history, with women at the nexus. Cookbooks can serve as narrative accounts of the lives and history of Gullah people, as the authors emerge as theorists and knowledge producers and the recipes and cookbooks as examples of affective production. Cookbooks allow Gullah food to travel beyond the borders of the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor. This chapter sets the stage for the third chapter, which stresses the importance of the five senses in the analysis of Gullah cuisine. It considers Julie Dash's film *Daughters of the Dust*, a fictive, yet crucial account of Gullah culture available for larger public consumption. This "text" serves as a visual representation of a cookbook with sensorial culinary scenes figuring prominently in the film. The images and scenes from the film incite emotional responses in viewers. While we may not be able to smell or taste foods on the page and screen, our memories, like those of the protagonists in this representation are triggered. Julie Dash, as a storyteller and creative artist, transports us through our senses to the Sea Islands in 1902.

Based on interviews and participant observation, the fourth chapter features feminist food-centered stories of Gullah women, with a focus on the ways in which

food has traveled with them throughout their lives. The stories are drawn from interviews conducted with Gullah women and men,[40] primarily in Beaufort and Charleston counties in South Carolina, as well as participant observations during a pilot project and two subsequent research trips. Per the previous discussion of feminist food studies, the voices of Gullah women are privileged in this chapter over mine as researcher, recognizing that their privileged positions in the community, as well be revealed. Themes covered in the interviews include the connection between food and home, entrepreneurial endeavors, the definition of Gullah food, and what they argue should be known to the larger world about Gullah culture. The conclusion offers options for possible interpretive sites along the GGNHC based on the research for *Food on the* Move. All suggested sites have the goal of cultural sustainability at their core. I argue that it is in this institution that food can become a way of articulating cultural sustainability in this region for people who reside there, for people who have come back home, and for people who have moved away. All of these chapters cumulatively will answer the question: how does Gullah food travel? Further, how is Gullah culture is sustained via food? Let the meal begin. Bon appetit!

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[40] I interviewed two men for the project, both of whom claim to understand Gullah foodways through the lens of the women in their lives: grandmothers, mothers, and sisters. It became clear to me through my research that I could not write about Gullah foodways without including the voices of men, who only amplify the importance of women in the culinary history.

First Course: Hoppin' John

Cook black-eyed peas.
When they are almost done add rice.
Mix rice and peas together.
Season and – voila! – you got it.

And speaking of rice. I was sixteen years old before I knew that everyone didn't eat rice everyday. Us being geechees, we had rice everyday. When you said what you were eating for dinner, you always assumed that rice was there. That was one of my jobs too. To cook the rice. A source of pride to me was that I cooked rice like a grown person. I could cook it till every grain stood by itself. What you do is to rub it together in the palms of your hands and make sure you get all the grains washed. Then you put it in a pot with cold water.

Use 1 part rice to 2 parts water. Always use cold water. Let it come to a boil and cover it with a tight cover. Soon as it comes to a boil you turn it to simmer and you cover with a tight cover. Let it cook for exactly 13 minutes and then cut it off. Let it stand for 12 minutes before eating.

- Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor
Vibration Cooking Or, the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl xxxxi.

Chapter 1: Diasporic Origins and Histories of Migration: Who and Where Are the Gullah?

Upon Arrival

"In a brief word 'Gullah' is a culture comprised of a system of beliefs, customs, art forms, foodways, and language practiced among descendants of West Africans who settled along the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida from slavery period to the present."[41] It is estimated that over a quarter million people presently fit the definition of Gullah in these locales.[42] Noted Gullah scholar Emory S. Campbell's definition comes from his experience as a member of the Gullah community. Campbell is a native and current resident of Hilton Head Island, where he runs a consulting agency specializing in Gullah history and culture. He is also on the commission for the GGNHC, which was designated by Congress on October 12, 2006 as part of the National Heritage Areas Act of 2006. This congressional act has cast a spotlight on Gullah people and culture that is long overdue.

The story of the Gullah is told in four parts in this chapter: 1) The arrival of West Africans to the Sea Islands via the Atlantic slave trade; 2) The creation of Gullah culture within the confines of slavery; 3) The migration of Gullah people away from the Sea Islands and their return; 4) The construction of the GGNHC. These contiguous sections organize a story of movement and institution building.

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[41] Emory S Campbell, *Gullah Cultural Legacies*. 3rd Edition, (Hilton Head Island, South Carolina: Gullah Heritage Consulting Services, 2008) 5.

[42] Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1981) 5.

People traveled to the mainland and returned to this region. Gullah culture was born and continues to thrive in a diaspora context, and is culturally sustained by food, memory, and stories. Diaspora is used simply here as a term that "historically and typically denotes the scattering of people from their homelands into new communities across the globe."[43] The term "diaspora" can be complicated, as discussed later and in subsequent chapters, by collective memory and understandings of "home."[44]

Figure 2: Map of the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor (Courtesy of the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor Commission)

[43] Braziel 24.

[44] See Safran (1991); Cohen (1997); Mannur and Braziel (2002); Braziel (2008).

The Arrival

Many of the Gullah are descendants of West African slaves, primarily from Sierra Leone and other parts of the Senegambia region, which is part of the "Rice Coast" of West Africa[45]. When the enslaved from Sierra Leone crossed the Atlantic, many ended up in the Caribbean and were then brought to the Atlantic Sea Islands, in theory because they were thought to have knowledge and skill in rice production. The enslaved aboard British ships were also brought to Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, which were main ports of the slave trade, and very close to the Atlantic Sea Islands. No place other than the Sea Islands in the American southeast and the West Indies was home to a group of enslaved people from a single region of Africa.[46] Charleston was settled in 1670 by shiploads of white British planters from Barbados[47] and their African slaves.[48] British colonists recognized the coastal regions of South Carolina and Georgia as fertile ground for rice cultivation, but lacked the specialized knowledge for growing rice in semitropical conditions.[49] As Littlefield points out, "Being familiar with a crop, however, is a different matter

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[45] See Beoku-Betts (1995), Opala (1996), Gabaccia (1998), Carney (2002), Bower (2007).

[46] The Akan people from the Gold Coast of Africa were also targeted for shipment to the West Indies. They were often ring-leaders of slave resistance, both passive and armed. For further information see Mair 1975.

[47] The link between Gullah culture in the Carolina Lowcountry and Barbados is strong. Organizations such as the Barbados and the Carolinas Legacy Foundation (www.barbadoscarolina.org) and the South Carolina Heritage Corridor (www.scnhc.org) are making it their mission to educate the public about and maintain this historic connection. See also, the work of Dawn Marshall and Jerome Handler.

[48] Jodi A Barnes and Carl Steen, *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* (Volume 1, Number 2, Fall 2012) 167–224, 180.

[49] See Littlefield (1981), Beoku-Betts (1995), Carney (2002).

from being familiar with the cultivation of a crop."[50] John H. Tibbetts writes in a special edition of the South Carolina Sea Grant *Coastal Heritage* magazine, "By the 1720s, Carolina rice growers were telling slave traders that they wanted skilled Africans from the Rice Coast above all others. During the eighteenth century, more enslaved Africans from the Rice Coast were hauled into the ports of Charleston and Savannah than from any other African region."[51] Arguably the British landowners were knowledgeable enough to realize not only the potential for growth of rice in the region, but also the availability of a skilled labor source at their disposal for cultivation.

Scholars such as Joseph Opala, Daniel Littlefield, Judith Carney, Edda Fields-Black, and Jennifer Morgan among others, have shown that a specialized knowledge of rice cultivation held by enslaved African women from Senegambia and Sierra Leone was the catalyst for bringing shiploads of enslaved people from this region to Charleston and Savannah. Eventually many of these slaves were sold to rich white planters on the Sea Islands. Female rice planters were responsible not only for toiling in humid rice fields every day during the arduous 14-month rice growing season,[52] but also for educating male slaves on the rituals of rice cultivation. As Jennifer Morgan explains:

> The information necessary to cultivate and harvest rice drew heavily on female West African expertise, as women who had for generations begun their day with the pounding of a small amount of rice for daily use found their

[50] Littlefield 77.

[51] John Tibbets, "African Roots, Carolina Gold." *Coastal Heritage*. (Vol. 21. No. 1 Summer 2006) 4.

[52] Morgan 162.

> relationship with rice utterly transformed – beginning with the need to teach men how to efficiently and carefully perform this task.[53]

The division of labor on rice plantations was transformed, with both men and women responsible for all tasks involved in rice cultivation, including the preparation of irrigation systems, largely a male task in West Africa.[54] Women were not spared any laborious duties, but were also expected to carry the burden of reproductive labor.[55]

A high demand for rice meant increased commodification of slave labor, as well as the expectation of the production of more slaves. Women were not exempt from working in the rice fields while pregnant, however, which made their labor that much more difficult and exhausting than that of male slaves. In *Before Freedom, When I Just Can Remember: Twenty-seven Oral Histories of Former South Carolina Slaves* (1989), former slave Sam Polite from Beaufort, South Carolina states, in reference to a pregnant slave's time off, "Slave don't do mucher frolic. When woman have baby, he [Gullah speech often substitutes masculine for other pronouns, including possessives] have mid-wife for nine day and sometime don't have to work for month when baby born."[56] Polite's statement shows that some mercy was granted toward women after the birth of a child, but it does not indicate that any consideration was given to lessening the workload of pregnant women.

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[53] Morgan 163.

[54] Morgan 163.

[55] See Jennifer Morgan's *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* for a nuanced discussion of reproductive labor and slavery.

[56] Belinda Hurmence, ed, *Before Freedom: When I Can Just Remember: Twenty-Seven Oral Histories of Former South Carolina Slaves* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair Publisher, 1989) 79.

The length of the rice growing season was longer than both a calendar year and the length of a standard pregnancy. Difficulties faced by enslaved women are coded in the tasks in cultivating rice. Jennifer Morgan sums up the labor process rather succinctly:

> Clearing the land of trees, bushes, and shrubs in January and February; planting acres of seeds by hand and foot; weeding constantly with hoe and hand: spending weeks in knee- and waist-deep water scaring birds away from the ripening crop; harvesting and stacking the rice over the course of three to four weeks; and finally threshing, winnowing, and pounding the rice to remove the kernel from the husk.[57]

While the entire process was strenuous, the latter duty of threshing, winnowing, and pounding the rice was the most despised because it was most labor-intensive and monotonous. Both Littlefield and Morgan state that the number of runaways peaked between June and early August when it was time to pound the rice. While Littlefield and Morgan go to great lengths to illustrate the grueling task of rice planting, culinary scholar Jessica Harris claims that slaves in the rice-based economies enjoyed free time once their particular tasks were completed.[58] Harris may be alluding to the relative autonomy slaves on the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia experienced as a result of the white planters' lack of interest in spending time in the harsh terrain, but her blanket statement about the enslaved persons' free time in the region disregards the laborious fourteen-month growing season.[59] Still, within this relative autonomy, a unique Gullah culture was born.

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[57] Morgan 162.

[58] Jessica Harris, *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011) 94.

[59] Morgan 162.

Gullah women were valued for their specialized knowledge and reproductive capacities yet received no benefit for either. On one hand, these women, "enslaved in the Americas, saw their traditional agriculture emerge as the first food commodity traded across the ocean on a large scale…by capitalists who would later take complete credit for the innovation."[60] Historians such as Morgan, Littlefield, and Carney claim that Gullah women, despite being devalued, did what they could with what they had, and along with Gullah men used the relative autonomy afforded to them by sheer distance to establish a vibrant, distinctive and sustainable culture along the Atlantic Sea Islands.

From a Distance a Culture is Born

Distance was paramount in the creation of Gullah culture. The location of the Sea Islands provided a unique distance between the white landowners on the mainland and enslaved Africans on the islands, which allowed the inhabitants of the islands more autonomy than most other slaves dispersed throughout the plantation South. The utter difference in numbers of white owners and their families compared to slaves established a remoteness of sorts:

> The State Census of South Carolina for 1860 shows that in the four parishes comprising Beaufort District there were 939 property owners of estates containing 883, 048 acres of improved and unimproved land. The Negro population for the same district, including a negligible sprinkling of free Negroes, numbered 33,339, according to the United States Census of the same year.[61]

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[60] Carney xii.

[61] Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) 115-116.

Lorenzo Dow Turner, often termed "The Father of Gullah Studies," further underscores the vast difference in numbers; "it is said that there are twenty Negro families to every one white family in many sections of coastal South Carolina."[62] The word "families" should be noted in the previous sentence, because it speaks not only to the numbers of blacks versus whites in the region, but also to the sex ratio. William Pollitzer notes that the slaves on West Indian sugar plantations were majority male and had a life expectancy of five to seven years. He writes,

> Since South Carolina planters, in contrast, preferred to build slave families, they desired young males and females, preferably in a ratio of two to one. In 1744, Robert Pringle, a Charles Town merchant, wrote that 'the ideal slave cargo would include Boys and Girls about 15 or 16 yrs. Of Age. 2/3 Boys and 1/3 Girls.'[63]

Although West African women were particularly desired in the Lowcountry, there was a substantial influx of Africans of both sexes all over the state of South Carolina beginning at the turn of the 18th century through the end of the Civil War.

While there were many slave owners, the main landowners in the Beaufort District were the Reverend Dr. Fuller, William Elliott and William H. Truscott, who had large holdings that went beyond the district lines; and Captain John Frap and Mrs. Mary Coffin, who each held more than two thousand acres on St. Helena Island. Rose points out that "It would have been impossible for such men to come into direct contact in any depth with many of their slaves. Not only were the Negroes too numerous, but many of the great planters were away from home a great part of the

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[62] Dow Turner 4.

[63] Pollitzer 53.

year."[64] For example, Dr. Fuller was the minister to the Seventh Baptist Church in Baltimore and only visited his plantations on vacation, and the Elliott family traveled between Charleston, Beaufort, and Oak Lawn plantation throughout the year, but often took side excursions north to Newport, Boston, and Saratoga Springs.[65]

The tropical climate, swampland, and prevalence of mosquitoes provided ideal conditions for the spread of malaria and yellow fever, as well as dysentery and other water-borne diseases.[66] The strenuous labor involved in the year-long cultivation of rice left slaves with a short life expectancy. In fact, "among the enslaved in North America, those who toiled in the South Carolina rice fields suffered the highest mortality."[67] White planters and their families were more vulnerable to tropical diseases, such as malaria, than the enslaved who had built up an inherited resistance[68] in the rice fields of Sierra Leone. Many white families opted to live on or travel at certain times to the mainland and leave trusted slaves in charge of the plantations.

> Planters who could afford to do so left the islands completely or settled in some healthy locality nearer by, such as Beaufort, or in one of the small settlements on the ocean side of the islands. The villages of St. Helena Ville and Eddingsville on Edisto Island were a special boon to planters who wished to keep an eye on their crops.[69]

Although women had the knowledge that fueled the economy, enslaved men were placed in charge of the plantations, especially when white planters left their farms in

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[64] Rose 118.

[65] Rose 119.

[66] Carney 135.

[67] Morgan 164.

[68] Opala 8.

[69] Rose 119.

the rainy summer and autumn months when diseases were prevalent.[70] Opala notes that the daily plantation operations were overseen by white managers or often, "talented and trusted slaves working as foremen or 'drivers'."[71]

The physical distance between the white planters and blacks on the Sea Islands led to the development of a unique and vibrant culture on the islands which was a mixture of African tradition and creative forces found in the New World. Opala explains that Gullah people "have been able to preserve more of their African heritage than any other group of Black Americans. They speak a creole language similar to Sierra Leone Krio, use African names, tell African folktales, make African-style handicrafts such as baskets and carved walking sticks, and enjoy a rich cuisine based primarily on rice."[72]

Over the years, the coastal towns of Beaufort and Port Royal were considered the mainland, but in fact, mere miles separated them from the sea islands of St. Helena, Lady's, and Fripp Islands. Travel between the islands required boats. Bateaus, small, flat-bottomed rowboats, were the traditional mode of transportation for people living on the Sea Islands.[73] These vessels were essential to navigate the narrow creeks, tributaries, and estuaries that wound through the marsh grasses between islands in order to catch crab, shrimp and fish and then transport the catch or other goods to market. Further underscoring the importance of the boats, as well as the

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[70] Opala 8.

[71] Opala 8.

[72] Opala 1.

[73] Campbell 101.

unique distance of the Sea Islands from the mainland, Emory Campbell describes the large distance that a person would have to cover in such a boat in order to get wood to make another one:

> There was a considerable struggle to secure black cypress, the main building material for these boats. Savannah, being the nearest supplying city of such wood, sits eighteen nautical miles away from Hilton Head Island. Sailing and rowing a bateau loaded with black cypress siding and other freight required exceptional seafaring skills and steely nerves. When the direction of the wind and tide were severely unfavorable, the usual four to five hour trip could consume as many as two days.[74]

Bridges to the mainland and in between islands did not begin to appear until the 1920s. The first bridge connecting St. Helena Island to the mainland was built in 1927.[75] Hilton Head Island was only accessible by ferry until a bridge was built in the mid-1950s. In 2015, there is still no bridge connecting Daufuskie Island to the mainland.

In the novel *The Water is Wide*, bestselling author Pat Conroy recounts the experiences of his semi-autobiographical character, Conrack, securing boat travel between Hilton Head or Beaufort and Daufuskie Island when he was a teacher there in the 1960s. He details the impact the weather had on his daily voyages:

> Often the river would be rough and the boat would fight through heavy swells and bitter winds on the way to Yamacraw [sic].[76] Other times, the water would be glass, hard, green, and opalescent in the early light. I was always alone during the cold months. The winter ordained a cessation of motors, shrimp nets, and fishing lines. More than any other time, it emphasized the inaccessibility of the island and the isolation of its residents.[77]

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[74] Campbell 102-103.

[75] Cross 50.

[76] Conroy uses the name Yamacraw Island instead of Daufuskie in the novel.

[77] Pat Conroy, *The Water is Wide* (Dial Press: New York, 2006, 1972) 179.

Daufuskie residents remain isolated, and in many ways, despite the introduction of bridges, so do many inhabitants of the Sea Islands. Gullah culture was born and allowed to flourish, but it now requires active preservation efforts to sustain as a result of time reductions in travel due to the ever-increasing roads, bridges, and watercraft, and the influx of non-Gullah people.

While the entire Gullah Geechee corridor stretches hundreds of miles, the Sea Islands of South Carolina are what some Gullah people and scholars argue as the heart of Gullah culture. The relative isolation, history and current efforts of cultural preservation (i.e. the Penn Center) are why I chose it as the primary site for my qualitative research.

Figure 3: Overview map of South Carolina Sea Islands (Courtesy of Gullah Net - http://www.knowitall.org/gullahnet/gullah/seaislands.html)

In 1862, at the behest of northern missionaries who came to the Sea Islands, [78] the U.S. government allowed them to oversee a social and cultural experiment with Gullah Sea Islanders. Enslaved men and women were "freed" and monitored to see if they would be interested in working and taking care of themselves. The Port Royal Experiment

> would encompass political and social changes to equal the transition from slavery to freedom. The decadent South, with its antique civil arrangements, would be regenerated by the vigorous institutions of New England, the public-school system, 'liberal Christianity,' and even the town meeting, if possible. But most of all, its sponsors thought the Port Royal Experiment would prove that the fundamental precept of classical economics, progress through enlightened self-interest, was altogether color-blind. Much was expected of the Negroes of Port Royal.[79]

Abolitionists Laura Towne, Ellen Murray and Charlotte Forten[80] were three Pennsylvania missionaries who saw the humanity in the Gullah people when they came to Beaufort County, South Carolina to assist in the transition from slavery to the rights and obligations of the newly emancipated. All of these women came from

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[78] Edward L. Pierce of Massachusetts was sent to Beaufort by the Secretary of the Treasury in the winter of 1861 to "look after the negroes and insure another cotton crop for the ensuing year…He wrote to friends in Boston that the negroes were in great need of teachers and of clothing, and as a result the 'Educational Commission for Freedmen' was organized in Boston, and very soon afterwards similar societies were formed in Philadelphia and New York. Each of these societies sent its own teachers to the South, paying them salaries ranging from $25 to $50 per month; the Federal Government, for its part, making them an allowance for transportation, housing, and subsistence. Miss [Laura] Towne went as an agent of the Freedmen's Aid Society of Pennsylvania." Rupert Sarget Holland, ed. Introduction, *The Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne: Written from the Sea Colonies of South Carolina: 1862-1884* xii.

[79] Rose 38.

[80] *The Letters and Diary of Laura Towne*, *The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten*, and the writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, especially *Army Life in a Black Regiment* were some of the few written accounts of the events that led to the beginnings of the Port Royal Experiment. Noted abolitionist sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimké wrote of growing up near Charleston with slaves in their home, but did not write about the Sea Islands in particular. Their nephew, Francis Grimké, married Charlotte Forten in 1878 after her return to Philadelphia.

affluent Philadelphia families. At the height of the Port Royal Experiment, Towne and Murray founded The Penn School on St. Helena Island with nine adult students.[81] Forten arrived in the fall of 1862 and was the first black teacher to join the faculty. Interestingly, there is no mention of Forten as being a part of Penn School in Rupert Sargent Holland's introduction to Towne's diary; and in the diary she is hardly mentioned, save for a request for a song Forten had written to celebrate the freedpeople on Christmas 1862.[82] Teaching black students how to read and write at this time in South Carolina brought the threat of a fine of up to $100 and/or imprisonment,[83] but the women remained undeterred. While it was a risk to operate a school for freed men and women, before emancipation they were working under the tenuous Port Royal Experiment and thus could push against former rigid boundaries.[84] From their personal accounts it can be assumed that the drive of these women was difficult to stifle. Forten's time at the Penn School was cut short when she developed a chronic illness.[85] Both Towne and Murray continued to serve as teachers and administrators of the Penn School for the next forty years until their deaths.

Through the Port Royal Experiment, Gullah people received land that allowed them to sustain their culture at that historical moment. Toward the end of the Civil

[81] Cross 35.

[82] Towne 97.

[83] Cross 35.

[84] For further 19th century abolitionist interventions see writings about Sarah Grimké.

[85] Forten 218.

War when Union troops made their way to the Sea Islands, blacks on the islands began to cultivate the land for themselves. During this time Patricia Jones-Jackson (1987) notes:

> Hundreds of them joined the Union Army in the celebrated First South Carolina Volunteers. On January 16, 1865, General William Tecumseh Sherman's famous Special Field Order No. 15 set aside for the former slaves 'the islands from Charleston south [and] the abandoned rice fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea.[86]

This area comprised what is now named the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor.

For years, legal battles ensued over land ownership on the Sea Islands, and racial tensions grew. For example, legal squabbles during Reconstruction led to the increased erosion of the infrastructure in Beaufort and Port Royal. "The amount of land under cultivation in Beaufort County had fallen from 259,543 acres in 1860 to 150,000 acres in 1870."[87] Some owners could not afford to restore irrigation systems that had fallen into disrepair. Some could not afford to cultivate large tracts of land without free slave labor and some simply did not know how. Three years before the war, 54,904 bales were produced from the Sea Island cotton crop, but between 1870 and 1873 the total output was 23, 307 bales.[88] Despite constant battles with white former landowners, many of the freedmen on the Sea Islands near Beaufort and Port Royal were able to keep and maintain their land. In Beaufort in 1873, "Negroes were in a ten-to-one majority; on Hilton Head Island there were thirty colored persons to

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[86] Patricia Jones-Jackson, *When Roots Die: Endangered Traditions on the Sea Islands* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987) x-xi.

[87] Rose 381.

[88] Rose 381.

every white; and on St. Helena there were only seventy white persons among 6,000 Negroes."[89] And, "most of the freedmen who had retained their little farms were living, in the years just after the war, on a subsistence basis, raising their own vegetable crops, with enough cotton to produce a little ready cash and pay the taxes."[90] Laura Towne and Ellen Murray continued to operate Penn School, and in 1901 it became the Penn Normal, Agricultural and Industrial, modeled after the industrial arts curriculum taught at Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes. Penn offered educational training that helped a community of African Americans move into the post-war Industrial Age.

Further, "For the first half of the twentieth century blacks continued to be in the majority on the Sea Islands, and land values continued to be low."[91] By the mid to late 20th century, however, blacks on the Sea Islands were at great risk of losing their land to wealthy white businessmen who were interested in developing resorts on the Sea Islands.

> [Emory Campbell estimates] that Gullah lands and traditions first faced their most serious threats along the coast in the 1950s and 1960s when developers – equipped with many countermeasures, such as air conditioners, mosquito sprays, services to counteract semi-tropical diseases, better roads, and bridges to formerly isolated lands – began making inroads. They also hired publicists and advertising agencies to tout the many blessings and boons that vacation-home buyers could count on in places with fancy, plantation-sounding names.[92]

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[89] Rose 379.

[90] Rose 382.

[91] Rose xi.

[92] Wilbur Cross, *Gullah Culture in America* (Connecticut: Prager, 2008) 79.

The Gullah have consistently been forced to fight for their culture, and have succeeded to a remarkable degree even as their land has increasingly fallen into the hands of wealthy whites. One of the primary goals of the Penn Center today is to help Gullah landowners maintain ownership of their land and understand the true market value of it should they ever want to sell. School operations ceased in 1948, and the campus evolved into the Penn Center, which continues to serve as the nexus of Gullah history and culture on St. Helena Island. Currently, the center houses the York W. Bailey Museum, hosts educational and community events, including a Gullah Studies Institute and the Gullah Heritage Days Festival in November, as well as works with local Gullah landowners to help them keep their highly prized land.

Migration Into and Out of the Sea Islands

Since the arrival of Africans on slave ships in the early seventeenth century, migration has been an enduring theme in African-American history. Yet, only with the advent of World War I did blacks make a fundamental break with their rural past and move to cities in increasing numbers.[93]

There can be many reasons why Gullah people leave home – education, employment, marriage, to escape violence or some other form of oppression, or simply a desire to move. The introduction of bridges to the Sea Islands created more opportunities for movement into and out of the region. A railroad swing bridge across Whale Branch River in Beaufort County was built in 1907, but there would be no vehicle bridges linking the Sea Islands to Beaufort or Port Royal until the 1920s.[94]

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[93] Joe William Trotter, Jr., ed, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) 1.

[94] Marscher 11.

Emory Campbell says that islanders use the term "after the bridge" to denote a seismic change in ways of life as a result of the new options for travel.[95] Places like Hilton Head Island saw a large influx of white northerners almost immediately, as the resort town grew when a bridge was built in 1956 connecting the island to the mainland for the first time. Smaller islands began to see an out migration of younger people headed north for education and employment as early as the 1930s and 1940s.[96]

A 1932 study by Clyde V. Kiser, *Sea Island to City: A Study of St. Helena Islanders in Harlem and Other Urban Centers*[97]"documented the Sea Islanders' movement to Philadelphia, Boston, and especially, Harlem, New York via southern cities like Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina."[98] He concluded that blacks from St. Helena Island tended to leave their small rural surroundings for cities of substantial size, first in the South and then in the North."[99] This finding in 1932 holds true, based on the interviews I have conducted with Gullah people from Beaufort County who have gone north. The only difference is that quite a few of the

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[95] Campbell 19.

[96] Census data for Beaufort County that dictates in and out migration for the Sea Islands in particular was difficult to analyze mainly due to the changing categories for black citizens. Categories of analysis changed every ten years from the simple "Negro men" and "Negro women" in 1930 and 1940 to 1950 when categories included the former two, as well as "Negro girls under 10" and "Negro women over 21," for example. Document No. 1415 "Population of the Largest 75 Cities: 1900 to 1996" published in 1999 lists the 75 states with the highest populations in 1900, 1930, 1960, and 1996. Charleston and Savannah are listed as #68 and #69 in 1900 with populations of 55,807 and 54,244, respectively. These cities never make it back on the list of most populated cities. While these numbers do not say anything specific about the Sea Islands, they do indicate movement away from the region.

[97] Clyde V Kiser, *Sea Island to City: A Study of St. Helena Islanders in Harlem and Other Urban Centers*, 1932 (Reprint: New York: AMS Press, 1967).

[98] Trotter, Jr 6.

[99] Trotter, Jr 6.

people I spoke with ended up in Washington, D.C. It is possible that Kiser is reading this as a southern city, however.

Kiser's analysis placed emphasis on kin and friendship networks as push and pull factors for movement and pointed to the uniqueness of black life on the island for why people left and why they stayed. He found that Gullah people on St. Helena were often landowners who had little contact with whites, and that interestingly, their lives "reflected high levels of social and cultural links to slavery and African backgrounds. Indeed…many complaints of Islanders against whites developed after they left the Island. Life in northern cities intensified the contrasting situation in the South and clarified the forces which had led them to move."[100] Perhaps this is also a pull factor that brought them back home.

Return Migration

Food can tell the stories of migration, assimilation or resistance, changes over time, and personal and group identity. In short, many facets of the human experience can be accessed through what is eaten, avoided, no longer or more often eaten, and, of course, what is produced and prepared and how it is done.[101]

In *Call to Home: African Americans Reclaim the Rural South* (1996) anthropologist Carol Stack discusses the reasons why African Americans made and continue to make the decision to return to the South after decades of making the trip north. In *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations* (2010), Ira Berlin also makes mention of African Americans returning to the South: "The cumulative impact of the repeated interplay between movement and place has

[100]Trotter, Jr 8.

[101] Miller and Deutsch 8.

required continued innovation in black society: movement set loose the creative impulse and place gave it a platform to develop."[102] Like the black Americans Berlin describes, Gullah people have maintained a certain level of movement, whether they have left the Sea Islands or not.

Some of the Gullah people I had conversations with for this project are return migrants. The large majority left for educational opportunities in the northeast and Midwest, and they cite family, food, and a sense of duty and place as reasons for their return. Anita Singleton-Prather left her home in Beaufort to study at Howard University in Washington, D.C., in the 1980s. Although she had a brother in Philadelphia and a potential job offer in Boston, she returned to her family home in Beaufort upon graduation. She simply wanted to come home.[103] Mary Mack moved to New York City with her husband in the 1960s and made a career as a nurse and teacher. Despite being born in New York, her children felt strong ties to the Lowcountry, and she returned in the 1980s to help her son.[104] She and her husband made a home near their families on St. Helena Island, and Mack is enjoying a second career as an art gallery owner specializing in Gullah art. Emory Campbell went to college in Boston and began a career before returning to his native Hilton Head Island. He served as Director of the Penn Center for over 20 years and now runs Gullah heritage tours and consulting services with his siblings. His wife is from Natchez, Mississippi, and has learned to cook rice and gumbo the Gullah way rather

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[102] Berlin 239.

[103] Anita Singleton-Prather, Personal Interview, August 2013.

[104] Mary Mack, Personal Interview, August 2013.

than using the creole methods she used growing up near New Orleans.[105] Chef David Young went to the University of Wisconsin for college in the late 1980s and ended up attending culinary school after studying Spanish and Science. The owners of the deli he had worked for on Hilton Head were opening a location in Atlanta and lured him back from Wisconsin to run it. From there his dream to open a Gullah restaurant on Hilton Head took shape, and he opened Chef David's Roastfish and Cornbread in 2010. [106]

Reverse migrants have traveled beyond the Sea Islands to new places, and all have spoken about attempts to recreate Gullah recipes with ingredients they found in their new locations. In that vein, people like Mary Mack say they now crave foods from the locations where they migrated from. She will now drive the forty minutes to Hilton Head from St. Helena Island to a Jewish deli to get one of her favorite meals from New York City: a corned beef sandwich on rye with mustard.[107] Singleton-Prather, Mack, Campbell, and Young have roots in the Sea Islands that kept them tethered to a rich heritage, even when they traveled outside of these spaces, and that eventually pulled them back home.

"Home" is a complicated topic, particularly within the framework of migration. Feminist scholars Gloria Anzaldúa and bell hooks help to contextualize the tensions surrounding home that I discuss in reference to the Gullah women I interview, as well as the fictive characters in the film. In her introduction to *This*

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[105] Emory Campbell, Personal Interview, February 2014.

[106] David Young, Personal Interview, February 2014.

[107] Mary Mack, Personal Interview, August 2013.

Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation (2002), Anzaldúa argues that

> 'Home' can be unsafe and dangerous because it bears the likelihood of intimacy and thus thinner boundaries. Staying 'home' and not venturing out from our own group comes from woundedness, and stagnates our growth. To bridge means loosening our borders, not closing off to others. Bridging is the work of opening the gate to a stranger, within and without. To step across the threshold is to be stripped of the illusion of safety because it moves us into unfamiliar territory and does not grant safe passage. To bridge is to attempt community, and for that we must risk being open to personal, political, and spiritual intimacy, to risk being wounded. Effective bridging comes from knowing when to close ranks to those outside our home, group, community, nation – and when to keep the gates open.[108]

Like Anzaldúa, bell hooks imagines "homeplace" as a site of transformation and resistance, particularly for black women to renew their commitment to

> black liberation struggle, sharing insights and awareness, sharing feminist thinking and feminist vision, building solidarity. With this foundation, we can regain lost perspective, give life new meaning. We can make homeplace that space where we return for renewal and self-recovery, where we can heal our wounds and become whole.[109]

Later in *This Bridge We Call Home* Anzaldúa discusses the concept of *conocimiento*; a word that is "derived from cognoscera, a Latin verb meaning 'to know' and is the Spanish word for knowledge and skill. I call conocimiento that aspect of consciousness urging you to act on the knowledge gained."[110] "Conocimiento" is arguably in conversation with Audre Lorde's understanding of the erotic as a place to derive pleasure and self-awareness, especially as migratory subjects transition

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[108] Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating, eds, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 3.

[109] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990) 49.

[110] Anzaldúa 577.

between sites of home. According to Anzaldúa, “The passion to know, to deepen awareness, to perceive reality in a different way, to see and experience more of life” drives us to deepen awareness of ourselves. “Beneath your desire for knowledge writhes the hunger to understand and love yourself,”[111] an idea that resonates with Lorde’s discussion of the erotic, as I discuss in Chapter 3. Home can be all at once dangerous and safe, personal and political, wounding and healing, contradictions which I consider in relation to Dash’s fictional characters, as well as the stories of the Gullah women I interview. Food provides the context for these conversations; and in many ways, food is home for these women, as I suggest in Chapter 3.

The origins of Gullah culture and cuisine cannot be disentangled from their West African roots. The concept of home is further complicated in the next section about travel, bridges, roads, and land. The creation of the GGNHC provides another context for sustaining Gullah culture.

The Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor

Land is valuable, certainly, but the essence of place or what anthropologist Keith Basso terms “place-making” is neglected when land is taken and sold without consideration for heritage and culture. Place-making requires us to ask the questions: what happened here? Who was involved? What was it like? Why should it matter?[112] These questions should be considered when determining ways to preserve Gullah culture.

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[111] Anzaldúa 543.

[112] Basso 5.

Sites of preservation may be challenging to produce for a culture that thrives on a strong oral tradition, because performance needs to be considered a worthy part of the archive by those in charge of the archive's production. As Diana Taylor suggests in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, "Embodied performances have always played a central role in conserving memory and consolidating identities in literate, semiliterate, and digital societies. Not everyone comes to 'culture' or modernity through writing."[113] Writing is not the only way to knowledge, as we will see in the discussion of oral culinary traditions in Chapter 2, but writing recipes down allows for easier dissemination to a wide audience. A successful archive of Gullah culture would safeguard important examples of "intangible heritage" and cultural expression such as storytelling.[114] Intangible Heritage sites, as part of the fourth pillar of cultural sustainability, are being recognized with more consistency by UNESCO, as discussed in the introduction. The National Park Service and Department of the Interior alongside a commission of people committed to the preservation of Gullah culture has a chance to employ place-making and examples of intangible heritage in the interpretive sites along the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor.

The goal of *Food on the Move* is to be a significant contribution to the sustainable future for Gullah culture, specifically foodways. The GGNHC was officially designated by an act of Congress on October 12, 2006 as part of the National Heritage Areas Act. Rep. James Clyburn (D-SC), one of the authors of the

[113] Taylor xviii.

[114] Taylor 23.

Act, mandating a national heritage area, proclaimed, "The Gullah Geechee culture is one of the last vestiges of fusion of African and European languages and traditions brought to these coastal areas. I cannot sit idly by and watch an entire culture disappear that represents my heritage and the heritage of those who look like me."[115] Rep. Clyburn notes that the corridor is not part of the national park system, but the Secretary of the Interior "is authorized to provide technical and financial assistance for the development and implementation of the management plan."[116]

The purpose of establishing the Corridor as a heritage area was threefold: 1) recognize the important contributions made to American culture and history by African Americans known as Gullah Geechee who settled in coastal regions of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida; 2) Assist state and local governments, and public and private community partners along the Corridor in interpreting the story of the Gullah Geechee and helping to preserve the folklore, arts, music, and crafts of these people; 3) Assist in identifying and preserving sites, historical data, artifacts, and objects associated with the Gullah Geechee for the benefit and education of the public.[117] The Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor Commission is the legally responsible governing body of the Corridor. Of the 15 member commission, ten are nominated by the State Historic Preservation Officer and the remaining five are recognized experts in historic preservation, anthropology, and folklore. All members are appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. Current members include Veronica D.

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[115] www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org

[116] www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org

[117] www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org See also, http://www.nps.gov/guge/index.htm, though many links on the National Park Service website will redirect you to the Corridor's Commission website.

Gerald, Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee, who co-authored the *The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook* discussed in Chapter 2, and Emory Campbell, a South Carolina representative, who was also interviewed for this project.

History proves that Gullah people and culture are resilient. They have survived slavery, disease, war, Reconstruction, and displacement by consistently honoring and passing down beliefs and ritual. Although Gullah culture was born in diaspora, the link across the Atlantic and to cultural sustainability is crucial to understanding the people, language and tradition. Among the traditions passed across the generations are food preparation and culinary aesthetics. Through historical documents, film, and narrative evidence, this dissertation explores the ways in which Gullah culture is sustained through memory. Through an analysis of Gullah cookbooks, Chapter 2 will explore the various ingredients and recipes that make up Gullah cuisine.

Second Course: Red Rice

2 cups parboil rice
1 small yellow onion, diced
1- 14oz can tomato sauce
1 stalk celery (chopped)
½ red, bell (green) and yellow peppers (diced)
1 tbsp sugar
1 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
2 tsp bacon drippings
2 lbs smoked, hot sausage (cut into 2 inch lengths)
1 tsp cayenne pepper
3 cups water

Wash and drain rice. Place bacon drippings in a heavy pot. Heat over medium heat. Add sausage, bell and yellow peppers. Cook until tender (about five minutes). Add onions and celery. Cook three minutes. Add the water, tomato sauce, salt, sugar, cayenne, and black peppers. Bring to a boil. Add rice and blend well with fork. Cover and reduce heat. Simmer until rice is tender and water is absorbed about 25 minutes. Remove from heat and keep covered until time to serve. Serve hot.

- Veronica Gerald and Jesse Gantt, *The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook*, p. 66.

Chapter 2: Traveling with Gullah Women through Cookbooks

"It takes a village to create a cookbook." –
Susan Kammeraad-Campbell, co-editor, *Gullah Cuisine*

"When I cook, I never measure or weigh anything. I cook by vibration." -
Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor.

"The way southerners eat is a text," write David Davis and Tara Powell in the first chapter of their edited collection, *Writing in the Kitchen: Essays on Southern Literature and Foodways*.[118] If the way southerners eat is a text, then southern cookbooks must be important. As the essays in Davis and Powell's collection illustrate, southern food is nuanced and varied, and a close reading of it reveals "history, social values, and social problems; it maintains community and identity; and it contributes to the development and maintenance of southern culture."[119] Gullah food is not represented in this volume, though it could easily slip somewhere between Psyche Williams-Forson's reading of woman-loving fiction and soul food or Marcie Ferris Cohen's discussion of "Culinary Conversations of the Plantation South." Gullah food and the cookbooks written about Gullah food, particularly by Gullah women, need to be included in collections like *Writing in the Kitchen* because, as Davis and Powell argue of all southern food, Gullah food reveals history, values, problems, identity, and community, and contributes to the cultural sustainability of the Lowcountry.

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[118] Davis and Powell 9.

[119] Davis and Powell 9.

Rice, the hallmark of Gullah cuisine, endured the Middle Passage in the memory of the enslaved and their descendants. How then has the history of rice and its importance in the culinary repertoire of the Lowcountry been recorded? Besides cultural memory, how has rice as a foodstuff become memorialized in the written word? I argue that Gullah women have been the foremost purveyors of these culinary memories, and that they have successfully passed on a Gullah culinary history in their kitchens and eventually through cookbooks. The Gullah cooks I have met claim rarely to utilize cookbooks to cook Gullah food; rather, they rely upon taste and cultural memory to recreate dishes. Cookbooks house recipes, but more importantly they tell stories.

This chapter of *Food on the Move* is not just a review of cookbooks. It is a conversation with authors and recipes. My intent in this chapter is not to give a thorough reading of Gullah cookbooks; rather, to highlight a few Gullah cookbooks published in the 21st century and to focus on the variations on a traditional Gullah recipe, red rice. Ultimately I posit Gullah cooks, and arguably all culinarians, as theorists and knowledge producers, and their cookbooks and recipes as examples of affective production. Although cookbooks featuring Lowcountry cuisine such as *Charleston Receipts* (1950) were published in the early and mid-20th century by white women and groups such as the Junior League, cookbooks by Gullah authors were not seen until Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor's *Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl* in 1970[120]

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[120] There has been much scholarly criticism published on Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor and her writings since 1970. While I will discuss her work as it relates to the history of Gullah cookbooks, I would like to highlight other food writers and cultural producers in this chapter. Smart-Grosvenor's history as a food author, scholar, actress, and radio personality has been chronicled in her cookbooks published by the University of Georgia Press and stories on NPR, among others, leaving little need for an in-depth discussion here, although I will discuss the importance of her work in the chronology of cookbooks

and then into the 1990s with offerings from Sallie Ann Robinson, Veronica Gerald and Jesse Gantt and Charlotte Jenkins. Arguably this lag in publishing by black women has more to do with segregation and literacy than a lack of interest in the region's culinary offerings. Smart-Grosvenor had a following from her work on NPR and connection to literary circles in New York and Paris, so her publication was picked up by a wider, more diverse audience than any of the other cookbook authors, as she had access to publishers in these major cities. By thinking about Gullah women cooks in this light, I counter any argument[121] that may reduce their publications to texts that are precise, standardized, and reproducible. In fact, by identifying Gullah women cooks as knowledge producers in their kitchen spaces and cookbooks, like any other producers of knowledge, we can be inspired by, but never reproduce their work. We can cite them, invoke them, but we cannot be allowed to plagiarize or pilfer. Their culinary knowledge is to be shared, but not appropriated.

Before turning to an analysis of Gullah cookbooks, first I will establish exactly what constitutes a cookbook. Arjun Appadurai describes the complexity of cookbooks in "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India" (1988):

> Cookbooks, which usually belong to the humble literature of complex civilizations, tell unusual cultural tales. They combine the sturdy pragmatic virtues of all manuals with the vicarious pleasures of the literature of the senses. They reflect shifts in the boundaries of edibility, the proprieties of the culinary process, the logic of meals, the exigencies of the household budget,

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written by African-American women, particularly Gullah women. Julie Dash, an African-American woman film producer and director, also has a documentary on the life of Smart-Grosvenor in production right now.

[121] This contention speaks back to a question I received after I gave a paper on part of this chapter at the November 2014 meeting of the National Women's Studies Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico about the potential for reading cookbooks as rote lists of instructions that promise reproducibility.

> the vagaries of the market, and the structure of domestic ideologies. The existence of cookbooks presupposes not only some degree of literacy, but often an effort on the part of some variety of specialist to standardize the regime of the kitchen, to transmit culinary lore, and to publicize particular traditions guiding the journey of food from marketplace to kitchen to table. Insofar as cookbooks reflect the kind of technical and cultural elaboration we grace with the term cuisine, they are likely, as Jack Goody has recently argued, to be representations not only of structures of production and distribution and of social and cosmological schemes, but of class and hierarchy (1982).[122]

Perhaps most relevant here is Appadurai's claim that cookbooks tell us a great deal about a culture because they are not only meant to pass along lists of ingredients. Cookbooks tell stories about people, place, economics, cultural trends, events, celebrations, and more. There is a passing on of foodways and tradition in cookbooks, and as Appadurai suggests, cookbooks also serve as class markers. The ingredients people cook with and have access to can be illustrative of the class strata they occupy. Or more importantly, the recipes written down in cookbooks are codified and the legitimacy of a people, culture, and food is established. Further still, cookbooks provide a way to read women's lives.[123]

Brief History of Cookbooks in the United States

In the *Invention of the Modern Cookbook* (2010), Sandra Sherman asserts that the English-language American cookbook has roots in the eighteenth-century[124] and

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[122] Appadurai 3.

[123] Janet Theophano, a food scholar and folklorist, writes extensively on the powerful role of cookbooks in the telling of women's life stories (2002). Similarly, Susan Leonardi (1989) and Doris Witt (1999) have written about the importance of recipes in women's life narratives. For further discussion of women and foodways in the twentieth century, see Sherrie Inness (2001) and Laura Shapiro (1986).

[124] Sherman, p. xi. See Carol Fisher's *The American Cookbook*: *A History*, p.1: The eighteenth-century may have given rise to the American cookbook, but the first German printed cookbook arrived in 1485,

that the goals of these cookbooks seem to inform the cookbooks published both by small and popular presses that we find today. The earliest cookbooks told stories, as I contend the Gullah cookbooks continue to do. They must be engaging, captivate readers, and convince them that they could rely on them to "produce tangible, successful outcomes on the way to even greater success."[125] *The American Cookbook: A History* (2006), by Carol Fisher unpacks the history of the first American cookbook by Amelia Simmons in 1796 and tells how the American cookbook landscape has changed in over 200 years since the printing of Simmons' work. The first cookbook written by an American for an American audience is *American Cookery*, written by Amelia Simmons, a white domestic worker, in 1796.[126] Janice Bluestein Longone identified the first African American cookbook author as Melinda Russell,[127] who published *A Domestic Cook Book: Containing a Careful Selection of Useful Receipts for the Kitchen* in 1866.[128] In the text Russell claims to draw inspiration for her recipes from Mary Randolph's *The Virginia Housewife or Methodical Cook* (1824), which is thought to be the first southern cookbook.[129] Prior to Longone's discovery,

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with a French cookbook following, at the end of the fifteenth-century. The first English cookbook, *The Boke of Cokery* was published in 1500.

[125] Sherman xi.

[126] See Sherman and Fisher.

[127] Russell was born in Tennessee, lived and worked in Virginia and Michigan and eventually returned to Tennessee. Longone refutes the idea that Russell drew inspiration from Randolph's text in particular, given the varied places she lived, and argues that her recipes could be from anywhere in the eastern United States.

[128] Fisher 88.

[129] See Fisher, p. 18-20: Mary Randolph was a white elite woman from Chesterfield County, Virginia. She was known as a hostess with a wide knowledge of food and she opened a boarding house to ease her family's financial burdens in Richmond and wrote the cookbook after her family moved to Washington, D.C. *The Virginia Housewife* provided "a window through which food historians could

Abby Fisher's *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking, Soups, Pickles, Preserves, etc.* (1881), was thought to be the first cookbook published by an African American woman.[130] Abby Fisher published the book with the Women's Co-operative Printing Office in San Francisco, likely as a result of dictating recipes to friends who wrote them down, as she was illiterate.[131] Karen Hess's research "indicates that Abby Fisher was born a slave in South Carolina and married and moved to Mobile in later years. Sometime after 1870 she moved with her family from Alabama to California, where she established a business producing pickled and preserved food items."[132] According to Fisher, the publishing of cookbooks by African American women then jumps to *A Date with a Dish* (1948) by Freda DeKnight, a longtime food columnist for *Ebony Magazine*, a black-owned publication with a focus on black communities and affairs. The book was reprinted as *The Ebony Cookbook* in 1962.[133] The "Chronological Bibliography of Cookbooks by African Americans," compiled by Doris Witt and David Lupton in the Appendix of *Black Hunger: Soul Food and America* (1999), tells a different tale, with the next cookbooks by African-American women published in 1912, then 1921, 1927, 1936, 1939, 1940, 1942, 1945, and 1947. The National Council of Negro Women produced

envision the styles of cookery and dining typical of the elite of the South," p. 19. See also the work of Leni Sorenson, PhD who writes and speaks regularly about the role of Mary Randolph in the American culinary landscape: www.indigohouse.us.

[130] Clark 154.

[131] Clark 154. See also the work of Carol Fisher and Karen Hess.

[132] Fisher 89 and Hess 77.

[133] Fisher 90.

cookbooks in 1958, 1991, and 1993. The first was a historical cookbook, the second focused on family values and was dedicated to Mary McLeod Bethune, founder of NCNW, and the third mixed "quilt heritage, food memories, health conscious recipes, and the history of soul food."[134]

Although Fisher covers enhancements in publishing and printing, the rise of the charity cookbook, and regional and ethnic cuisine, she does not mention Gullah or Geechee recipes save for a discussion of rice in cookbooks written by Charlestonian whites. She also neglects to mention Smart-Grosvenor, who published *Vibration Cooking or the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl* in 1970. Smart-Grosvenor and Gullah food in general are striking omissions from the cookbook histories written by Fisher (2006), Karen Hess (1992), and Sandra Sherman (2010). Smart-Grosvenor's culinary memoir has drawn such an audience that it was reprinted in 1986, 1992, and 2011, and her life is now being made into a film by Julie Dash of *Daughters of the Dust* fame. Fisher does discuss one of the cookbooks from esteemed restaurateur and culinarian, Edna Lewis, but only *In Pursuit of Flavor* (1988), leaving out *The Edna Lewis Cookbook,* which Lewis co-wrote with Evangeline Peterson in 1972. Lewis does not reveal her identity as an African-American woman in the latter, which may be why Carol Fisher opted to leave it out of a discussion of African-American cookbooks. Regardless, it is important to recognize Lewis's contribution to the publishing record in the 1970s, alongside Smart-Grosvenor's. Another restaurateur, Mildred Council, from Chapel Hill, NC, wrote a cookbook in 1999 entitled *Mama Dip's Kitchen*. Smart-Grosvenor, Lewis, and Council all keep with the eighteenth-

[134] Fisher 91.

century tradition of engaging readers with narratives steeped in nostalgia and culinary memories.

Smart-Grosvenor's 1970 text is in conversation with Abby Fisher's cookbook (1881) nearly 100 years earlier. Fisher's cookbook includes a narrative of her migration from east to west, which is the counter narrative to the common south-to-north migration of many African-Americans.[135] Smart-Grosvenor, born in South Carolina and raised in West Philadelphia, speaks of travel that has taken her to Paris, New York, and back again, suggesting that migration can be more than a one-way journey. Fisher's text, following Russell's (1866), set a precedent for African American women as writers, or as women "who document [their] knowledge by any means necessary."[136] This is where the work of these cookbook authors enters into a contemporary discussion with food scholars of the African diaspora, notably Jessica Harris, Psyche Williams-Forson, Toni Tipton Martin, and Jessica Walker. It is here that I locate the work of *Food on the Move*. Harris's work over the last few decades uncovered the ways in which African ingredients made their way across the Atlantic and informed cuisine all across the Americas. Williams-Forson investigated the ways in which chicken signified and traveled throughout the south. Tipton Martin's work centers on the Jemima Code, and the book of the same name that will be published later in 2015 offers culinary treasures from over 150 rare black cookbooks and renders a critical analysis of the role of Aunt Jemima in our popular understanding of

[135] Clark 155.

[136] Clark 156.

African-American foodways.[137] Following a similar track, Walker's important work interrogates what she terms the "soul food imaginary." Collectively, this group of women food scholars offers a critical analysis of African American food practices and histories, but leaves room for the nuances of localized cultural products, such as Gullah cuisine, the focus of this project.

Not all texts that discuss gendered food production and Gullah culture do so in a way that demonstrates the value of the cuisine within American culinary history or the complex identities of Gullah people. For example, Laura Schenone's *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances* (2003) paints a picture of the Sea Islands, particularly St. Helena Island, as completely untouched, and fixed in time. While it is true that on St. Helena, "many of the back roads remain unpaved, and car wheels easily get stuck in the thick sandy dirt, spinning and sliding as if in snow,"[138] Schenone does not give credence to the close proximity of commercial retail and real estate. Within a mile of the back roads she describes, visitors can find a large, regional grocery store called Publix, multiple restaurants, including a Chinese carry-out joint and a Subway- a fast food establishment, gas stations, and boutiques interspersed with shacks selling fresh local seafood and produce. Schenone offers a romantic view of the beautiful Sea Islands, but the history she recounts is coming up against the reality of commercialization very quickly. Her book is beautiful to look at and to read, and it is clear that she consulted many resources, both textual and human. However, after

[137] For further information on Tipton Martin's work, see www.thejemimacode.com.

[138] Laura Schenone. *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances* (New York: Norton, 2003).

conducting my own research, I conclude that she provides an example that I would prefer not to emulate, including a tenor of language romanticizing a reality that is more complex.

I prefer the more dynamic view of Anne Bower who investigates the history of community cookbooks in her edited collection *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories and Histories*. Through the text Bower hopes that readers will find, as she has, that community cookbooks

> contain the writing of women who took the time and energy to formulate written discourse not only to raise money for a cause but also to formulate and express their collective value system and to produce texts of their own, balancing generic cookbook characteristics with their own desires for innovation and style.[139]

Subsequently, Gullah women cookbook authors whose work I will discuss in the next section are transforming the cookbook into autobiographies told through their recipes. I chose the cookbooks in the subsequent sections based on what I have been able to find in libraries, independent bookstores in South Carolina, and through recommendations from ethnographic sources, and prioritize cookbooks written by natives of the Lowcountry region, specifically the Sea Islands, but move outward to Charleston, Savannah and beyond to demonstrate the ways in which Gullah foodways have traveled via migration by Gullah descendant peoples and those who acknowledge their heritage. Through their stories I explore the question: How can recipes continue to give voice to culture?

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[139] Anne L Bower, *Recipes for Reading Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997) 4.

Reading Gullah Cookbooks as Cultural Archives

The interdiscipline of feminist food studies relies on cookbooks as primary and secondary sources, depending on the publication format, for crucial information about culinary histories. This dissertation leans heavily on archival research into Gullah cookbooks. The research illustrates that cookbooks serve as vehicles for storytelling, as well as for recipes. Stories of history, culture, and identity that are essential for Gullah cultural sustainability come through in the annotations supplied by the authors or simply within the lines of the recipes themselves. Like Susan Leonardi, I argue that recipes are a way of communicating culture, memory, and feeling. According to Leonardi, "A recipe needs a recommendation, a context, a point, a reason-to-be."[140] The meaning of a recipe is easier to decipher when it is narrated and given context. Writing a list of ingredients is not the same as writing an explanation of the work required to create a dish or the history of a dish within a family or community.

Gullah recipes have been published in several cookbooks since 1970. Included in Doris Witt's bibliography in *Black Hunger* are Smart-Grosvenor's *Travel Notes* from 1970 and *Stirrin' the Pots on Daufuskie* written in 1985 by Billie Burn. Burn's book is a collection of recipes, many from Gullah cooks who called Daufuskie home. Witt placed an asterisk by Burn's text in the bibliography to denote "substantial input by non-blacks."[141] Burn was born near Monroe, Tennessee, grew up near Columbus,

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[140] Susan J Leonardi, "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie." Maryanne Schofield, ed. *Cooking by the Book: Food in Literature and Culture* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989) 127.

[141] Witt 222.

Georgia, and moved to Daufuskie with her husband in 1935. She became a local celebrity of sorts, serving as Postmaster from 1963 – 1984 and as the school bus driver from 1963 – 1981.[142] Oddly for a cookbook author, Burn admits in the precursor to one of her family recipes, "I don't particularly like to cook, but I do like good food."[143] Her name graces the cover of *Stirrin' the Pots*, which earned her the asterisk from Witt, but it includes the recipes of many Gullah cooks. As Burn writes in the introduction,

> it seemed appropriate to get every woman or man (black and white), on and off the island, to share an original or their favorite recipe. This not only gives an insight as to the popular foods they cooked, but also reveals some names of those who once lived here.[144]

Whether the author is white or black or from Daufuskie, Charleston, or St. Helena Island, when they write about Gullah cuisine, there is a hallmark that is inescapable.

If there is one ingredient that sets Gullah food apart from the rest of southern cuisine it is rice. Rice recipes abound across the Lowcountry and Caribbean and can be a main or side dish. Some of the most popular dishes are hoppin' john, red rice and perlow/ perlau/perloo/perlo, depending on your geographic location. Rice has truly been on the move. In her cookbook *Vertamae Cooks in the Americas' Family Kitchen* Smart-Grosvenor details a recipe for "Proper Geechee Rice":

> For Geechee/Gullah people, proper rice is 'dry and every grain to itself.' Failure results in your name being scandalized, and eye contact forever avoided. And of course, no one will ever come to your house to eat, nor will they eat your rice at a potluck. The rule to achieve the perfect result is simple.

[142] Burn 18.

[143] Burn 18.

[144] Burn ix.

> You can multiply out this formula to feed whatever number of people show up at your table.[145]

Smart-Grosvenor then provides a simple recipe requiring one part long-grain white rice and 2 parts water:

> Rinse the rice until the water runs clear (or as Grandma Sula used to say, 'rinse it three times and then once more').
>
> In a heavy saucepan over high heat, combine the rice and water and cover with the lid ajar.
>
> Bring the water down to a boil, shift the lid so that it covers the pan tightly, turn down the heat to very low, and cook for 20 minutes until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed. Never, never, never stir the rice during this time. Don't even think about uncovering the pot to peek.
>
> Remove from the heat and let rest for 10 minutes before serving. Your rice will be proper.[146]

While Smart-Grosvenor offers explicit instructions for cooking proper rice, some people argue that proper rice is cooked using your senses, not a recipe. A long conversation around a dinner table with Sara Bush and Ervena Faulkner in Bluffton, South Carolina, focused on using various body parts as measuring tools to cook rice. Use your eyes to calculate how much rice you need and place it in the pot. Fill the pot with cold water an inch (or the top of your index finger) above the rice. Bring the water to a boil, then bring it down, cover the pot and let it simmer on low. You will know when it is done.

Cooking proper rice ultimately takes practice. Smart-Grosvenor claims that she can't remember exactly how old she was when she cooked her first proper rice,

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[145] Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, *Vertamae Cooks in The Americas' Family Kitchen* (KQED Books: San Francisco, 1996) 134.

[146] Smart-Grosvenor 134.

but she remembers exactly the way she felt when it was noticed by her Grandmama Sula. "'Now who cooked this rice?' 'She did,' said Mama. 'Well,' said Grandmama Sula, 'it sure is cooked proper.' I thought my chest would burst with pride."[147]

As the vernacular measurements of rice suggests, oral tradition and storytelling are responsible for much of the culinary education of younger Gullah generations, as much of it is learned by younger children watching their mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, aunts, and sisters farm, fish, and prepare food. Gullah recipes were rarely written down until the 1970s when Gullah women began to publish cookbooks. Many cookbooks are printed through local and independent presses, while others are published by major university presses. Different cookbook authors claim varied ingredients and cooking methods for traditional Gullah foods, such as Hoppin' John and red rice. Such is the case for the examples of preparing red rice discussed later in the chapter.

The kitchen is a classroom in Gullah culture where empowerment is taught, albeit indirectly. Food is revered as a blend of old and new traditions and a crucial element in maintaining and disseminating Gullah traditions. In the foreword to her cookbook *My Gullah Kitchen* (2006)[148], Eva Segar credits her mother and grandmother for teaching her how to cook. They allowed her to observe their methods and "play cook" alongside them in the kitchen. Segar came to cook on her own rather simply:

> One day, Mother came home and said, 'Sister, you was home all day. How come you didn't put on the rice? And why didn't you boil the beans or peas

[147] Smart-Grosvenor 134.

[148] Segar's self-published text is also not included in Witt's (1999) bibliography.

> or something?' So I went from 'play cooking' to cooking for ten or more people just about every day. I've been cooking ever since (9).[149]

In Segar's case cooking was taught by example. She mentions watching her mother and grandmother, but does not indicate how much of the teaching, if any, was done verbally, through recall or through written recipes. Segar also fails to mention how the process of cooking is often wrought with frustration, burned dishes, and failure to replicate tastes and memories, which cause cooks to abandon traditional processes or develop new methods.[150]

The passing on of Gullah culinary heritage occurs through ritual presence, not just through stories. Many of the women and men I interviewed in Beaufort County remember pulling a stool close to the stove to watch their mothers, grandmothers or great-grandmothers cook.[151] The act of watching an elder cook is also an education in proper relations of authority and respect. Children learned to yield to the women in the kitchen who were in charge of the stove. Watching closely the techniques and ingredients used by these women often allowed Gullah children to be ready to help when they were asked to do so, as was for Eva Segar.

Gullah cooking techniques are based on practicality. Technology was limited on the Sea Islands until the mid to late twentieth century, when the areas began to attract wealthy builders, vacationers, and retirees from other parts of the United

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[149] Segar, Eva. *My Gullah Kitchen* (Beaufort, South Carolina: You Should Write a Book www.BarbaraMartin.net, 2006).

[150] For further information on frustrations in the kitchen see Rebecca Sharpless, *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South 1865-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[151] See Chapter 4 for more specific examples.

States. The Sea Islands, such as St. Helena Island and Daufuskie, were relatively untouched by "outsiders" through the beginning of the 1980s. Bridges were not considered a necessity until wealthy white northerners identified the Sea Islands as a prime spot for their vacations. Gullah food was not cooked in stainless steel Kenmore ovens from Sears or chopped on Corian countertops. Food was, and sometimes still is, raised, hunted or trapped[152] by people on the island and prepared using water from a hand pump.[153] Cookbook author Sallie Ann Robinson grew up on Daufuskie Island in the 1960s and 1970s and had to take a boat to the nearest grocery store. She writes in her cookbook, *Gullah Homecookin' the Daufuskie Way* (2003):

> Most of our food came from the land – and water – around our tin-roofed home. We tended a big garden, four seasons of the year in Daufuskie's mild weather. We raised chickens, hogs, and cattle in our yard. We gathered berries and trapped or sometimes shot animals in the woods. We fished, crabbed, shrimped, and picked oysters. We didn't always have a lot, but we always had enough.[154]

Cooking for Robinson was bringing together the fruits of a day's physical labor. "Food is life. And the way we lived, life was gathering, growing, and preparing food."[155] Culinary tradition was more than the passing on of recipes; it was a transmission of knowledge of farming, hunting, and fishing. The preparation called

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[152] For a larger discussion of trapping and hunting, particularly by women, see the episode "Savannah Travel Guide" episode of the Travel Channel's *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern*. Sallie Ann Robinson teaches Zimmern how to trap, slaughter, dress, and cook a raccoon. The episode originally aired March 12, 2012. http://www.travelchannel.com/shows/bizarre-foods/video/traditional-gullah-living.

[153] Sallie Ann Robinson, *Gullah Home Cooking, the Daufuskie Way: Smokin' Joe Butter Beans, Ol' 'Fuskie Fried Crab Rice, Sticky-Bush Blackberry Dumpling, & Other Sea Island Favorites* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) 4.

[154] Robinson 4.

[155] Robinson 12.

for creative energy. Robinson's writing is about growing up in the mid to late twentieth century. She also recounts the ingredients and preparations she enjoys that are rooted in slavery times, as a descendent of enslaved women who molded old traditions from Sierra Leone with new resources found in America. This kind of storytelling via cookbook recipes is essential to food studies scholarship.

Gullah cookbooks demonstrate that cooking from memory is not a simple task. A multi-faceted sensory curriculum goes into the development of such sensitive taste buds. Years of watching, listening, smelling, touching, and tasting have provided the culinary education for Gullah women. Many people can likely relate to certain foods feeling like home, but not all can replicate such dishes perfectly. Beyond cooking for oneself, it is also very difficult to find "home" or authentic taste in familiar dishes when traveling, in exile, or simply when the person with whom you associate certain dishes has passed on.

There is a body of literature on notions of authenticity in foodways. Here I choose to use a particular piece by Lisa Heldke, "But is it Authentic?: Culinary Travel and the Search for the 'Genuine Article'" (2005), as a point of definition to link taste, authenticity, and migration. Heldke argues that dishes have certain properties of taste, appearance, and preparation that contribute to an overall gastronomic experience for the eater. In this way the making of food and the eating of the food are in conversation with one another. Authenticity then "begins with the understanding that *all* works of cuisine involve transactions between dish (cook) and eater – and calls us to *attend* to the particular kinds of transactions represented in the

cross-cultural experience."[156] The presence of the cook and traveler, whether native or non-native, must be accounted for in any definition of authenticity. Doing so arguably leads to less romanticizing of culture than, for example, is found in Schenone's text. Learning to cook and taste by example are ways of retaining cultural practices related to foodways. The acts of food preparation - by and for whom – are also taken up by the genres promoting Gullah culture.

Food Travels: Red Rice Along the South Carolina Coast, Inland, Upstate and Back Again

> "…We had the big crab pot outside and they'd be boiling up the crab and the kids would have to behead the shrimp, mama would be inside the house fixing the red rice."[157]
>
> - Anita Singlton-Prather, Personal Interview

Tracing single recipes through various Gullah cookbooks demonstrates how food travels within a small geographic locale. This section focuses on an analysis of four cookbooks written by Gullah cooks between 2003 and 2010. These texts by Veronica Gerald and Jesse Gantt, Sallie Ann Robinson, and Charlotte Jenkins were published a few years after Witt's *Black Hunger*, and builds on the helpful bibliography of cookbooks by African-Americans and gives contemporary Gullah cooks a place at the table. By looking at cookbooks through a larger theoretical lens, we can see them as more than repositories for recipes, but as Appadurai suggests, as vehicles to pass on culture and tradition. Let us consider red rice, a dish that has

[156] Lisa Heldke, "But is it Authentic?: Culinary Travel and the Search for the 'Genuine Article.'" *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*. Carolyn Korsmeyer, ed (New York: Berg, 2005) 390.

[157] Anita Singleton-Prather, Personal Interview, August 2013.

graced Gullah tables for centuries, from the vantage point of four different Gullah cookbooks (two by the same author), referred to earlier in the chapter. I chose to highlight red rice here, because the dish was referred to repeatedly in my conversations with Gullah people. Some people even referred to it as "*the* red rice," emphasizing its importance. I chose the cookbooks and authors because they each tell a story of travel and migration, however short the distance. Of these cookbooks, three are written by self-identified Gullah women and the fourth is written by a self-identified Gullah woman and man.

Why should we care about what red rice looks like on different tables around the Sea Islands? Red rice is a popular dish in the Gullah culinary repertoire. I argue that analyzing its nuances, depending on location of the cook or the table, or the source of the ingredients, contributes to the cultural sustainability of Gullah cuisine. Following a recipe, such as red rice, along the GGNHC could provide opportunities for culinary interpretive sites, locations for field trips, archives, performance, and publications about Gullah culinary history. Perhaps the GGNHC could become home to a Rice Trail in the same way that Louisiana has the Gumbo Trail. Similarly, the geographic origins of the authors matter, because they inform the ways in which they name certain dishes, such as Shrimp b'ile/Frogmore stew or deviled crab on Daufuskie. Each author discusses her connection to Gullah culture, her surrounding landscape, and identifies a particular place as home whether it be Conway, South Carolina, St. Helena Island, South Carolina, or Daufuskie Island, South Carolina. Each author tells her version of the Gullah people and foodways through the lens of her particular location.

The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook, written by Dr. Veronica Gerald and Jessie Gantt was published in 2003 and again in 2007 by the Gullah House Foundation. Charlotte Jenkins, owner of the recently shuttered Gullah Cuisine in Mt. Pleasant, SC[158], published her colorful, glossy cookbook with the Evening Post Publishing Company in Charleston in 2010. Two cookbooks in this group are published by the University of North Carolina University press.[159] Sallie Ann Robinson was a student of author Pat Conroy's[160] when he taught in the one-room schoolhouse on her native Daufuskie Island, an island still only accessible by boat. Conroy wrote the foreword to her first book, *Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way*. He wrote about how well he was fed during his time on the island and promises, "you will eat like me because Sallie Ann Robinson, one of the children I loved and taught, and wrote about in *The Water is Wide,* grew up and got herself smart and ambitious and wonderful – and decided to write herself a book."[161] Her cookbooks were published in 2003 and 2007, and she has another under contract. While Smart-Grosvenor published her book in 1970, it is significant that despite a sustained interest in foodways among Gullah

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[158] According to an article published in the Charleston City Paper on November 3, 2014, Gullah Cuisine has now closed. Charlotte Jenkins continues to operate her catering business.

[159] The University of North Carolina Press has a significant and growing list of publications on food, cooking, and foodways, including works by Psyche Williams-Forson, Mildred Council, and Sallie Ann Robinson. The University of Georgia Press has a short list of fifteen titles under the "Cooking" category, most notably *Vibration Cooking* and publications by the renowned Southern Foodways Alliance.

[160] Conroy detailed his experience of teaching on Daufuskie Island in the novel, *The Water is Wide* (1972).

[161] Conroy in Robinson xv.

people, cookbooks by Gullah women were not published by popular presses again until the 21st century. The reason for the lapse in publishing is not clear.

I have intentionally grouped these cookbooks in descending geographic order from Georgetown, South Carolina, to Daufuskie Island, South Carolina to help illustrate my point that recipes change ever so slightly depending on location within the heritage corridor. Recipes are fluid and can be altered on any kitchen space due to time constraints, ingredient availability, skill level, utensil options, altitude, among other variables. Tracing a recipe within a geographic area that espouses a common culinary tradition offers us more than ingredients. As Theophano argues in a 2007 newspaper interview, recipes and cookbooks tell personal stories and "reveal the details of women's lives and the culture they helped shape."[162]

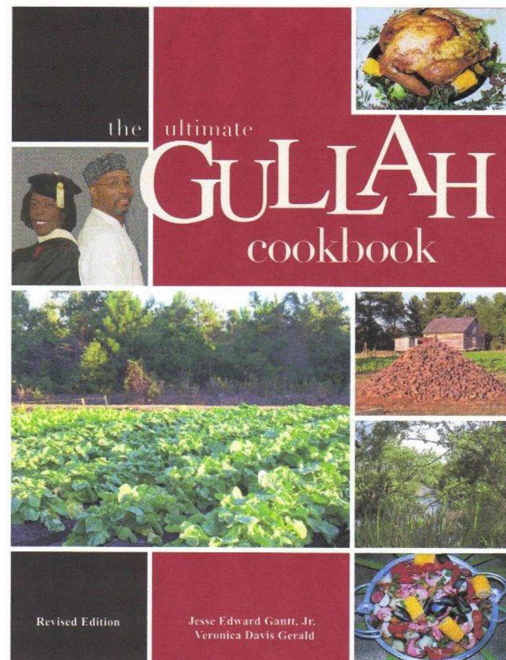

Figure 4: Front cover of *The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook*

[162] Marder, Dianna. "Memories with each meal collecting recipes from mothers and grandmothers forges a precious link to the past." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. May 10, 2007. "http://articles.philly.com/2007-05-10/food/25228726_1_cookbook-janet-theophano-recipes

We begin our journey with a cookbook that bridges the coastal area north of Charleston with the sea islands of Beaufort County. *The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook* is co-authored by Veronica Gerald, a descendent of slaves from the Brookgreen Plantation, in the Waccamaw Neck near Georgetown, one of the largest and most prosperous of all the rice plantations, and Jesse Gantt, who is what coastal Gullah call a "High Land, Fresh Water Geech," or a descendent of Gullah people who left the Atlantic coast and went to high ground in South Carolina. The area referred to as "upstate" includes cities such as Greenville and Spartanburg. "First enslaved in the Carolina Lowcountry, many did not return after being taken to the midlands and upstate by slave holders evading union troops. After freedom, others migrated there to find work…Away from the Lowcountry, they survived away from salt water and learned to live on fresh, still water and red dirt."[163] In 1998, Jesse Gantt came back to the Lowcountry to St. Helena Island in Beaufort County and opened the now closed Ultimate Eating Restaurant. Gantt had roots on the Sea Islands, but spent time upstate after his family moved. Gerald went to college at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, and received a Master's degree in English from Atlanta University. After completing her studies, Gerald returned to the Lowcountry to serve as the Director of History and Culture at the Penn Center and is now a professor of English at Coastal Carolina University and Vice-Chair of the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor Commission.[164]

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[163] Jesse Edward Gantt, Jr. and Veronica Davis Gerald, *The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook: A Taste of Food, History and Culture from the Gullah People* (The Gullah House Foundation, 2003) 9.

[164] www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org

The cover of this cookbook is full of significant images that help to tell a story of Gullah foodways, at least from the perspective of Gantt and Gerald. A photograph of Gantt and Gerald on the top left shows Gerald in her academic regalia and Gantt in a chef's coat and a kufi-style hat. Through their choice of dress, it appears the authors want to signify authority – academic, culinary, and cultural. According to the photo credit, the largest photograph toward the center shows rows of collard greens at Freewoods Farm, Burgess, South Carolina. To the right is a photograph of a pile of sweet potatoes. The pile shows bounty, but it does not demonstrate the banking or burying of the potatoes, which is a method of preserving the tubers after they are harvested.[165] Below the sweet potatoes is a photo of the 2002 rice crop at Turnbridge Plantation in Hardeeville, SC. A beautifully plated fried turkey is located in the upper right corner, which does not immediately signify Gullah cuisine, at least to this researcher. The same picture appears again in the color photos in the center of the book. The recipe for fried turkey is on page 46, alongside a quote about celebrating Christmas with food, particularly fried turkey, which provides further context for the cover image. Turkey may not be considered part of Gullah cuisine, but I argue Gantt and Gerald are offering a glimpse into the ways in which their Gullah family celebrates holidays with food. This is more than a cookbook, it is a family scrapbook of sorts.

The remaining photos on the cover continue the story.The picture on the bottom right is a seafood platter – a silver platter with flowers on the handles – shows

[165] I learned about banking potatoes from Ernestine Atkins and Sara Reynolds, both from St. Helena Island, South Carolina, during separate interviews in January 2009.

readers the prominence of seafood in Gullah cuisine. The dish appears to be Seafood B'ile (aka Gullah Bowl/Frogmore Stew/Lowcountry Boil) on page 36. Mussels are not listed in the recipe, but are in the photo. Crawfish are shown in the picture, yet no oysters, which abound in Lowcountry cuisine. Gerald and Gantt, as well as Sallie Ann Robinson, include recipes for oysters and rice, among other oyster dishes. The crawfish seem out of place on the cover of the "ultimate" Gullah cookbook, since they are not found frequently in Gullah dishes. Robinson and Charlotte Jenkins have different recipes for a similar stew and none have crawfish. Jenkins has three different stews with similar ingredients – St. Helena Stew, Local Awendaw stew, and Gullah Stew.

The back cover of the cookbook shows photos of old pots along with a story of the Corridor, particularly the importance of Highway 17 as a space where Gullah culture travels. According to the cover, people along this highway are the "caretakers of the Gullah story."

Gerald and Gantt claim to offer "Food so great, you'll scrape your plate,"[166] which was also the slogan of their Ultimate Eating restaurant featured on inside front cover. The restaurant stood at the corner of Sea Island Parkway and Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive on St. Helena Island, close to the Penn Center. The cookbook has a scrapbook-like feel to it. The spiral binding, snapshot photos by the author, and the layout of the pages – recipes on the right side of each page and a potpourri of Gullah sayings, words, "facts" and cooking suggestions on the left side of each page – allow

[166] Gantt and Gerald 28.

the text to read like a diary or community cookbook.[167] A Gullah grace is printed prior to the table of contents. Sources are not listed for any of the quotes in the book other than an occasional name and location. This is especially interesting, since Gerald is dressed in academic regalia on the cover. While not citing sources may seem like a gross oversight for an academic, the choice lends itself to the feel of the text as a personal, family or community publication.

The cookbook remains accessible in terms of the time, labor, and utensils required. Recipes utilize many standard tools in their recipes. For example, the most commonly called for are the large mixing bowl, large skillet, and medium baking pan. The shrimp omelet specifies a cast iron skillet.[168] Many recipe steps assume a certain level of culinary knowledge. For instance, no utensils are named in the instructions for egg wash and breading of fish. It is assumed that you would know to use separate flat dishes for each step of the dredging process. Despite these small omissions, the language is simple, and the instructions and recipe titles are easy to follow.

Like many Gullah folks, Gerald and Gantt promote "Cooking in one pot,"[169] and their red rice is no exception. Gerald and Gantt's red rice recipe calls for bacon grease, sausage, 2 cups of rice, red, green, and yellow bell pepper, onion, tomato sauce (no mention of fresh tomatoes), sugar, salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper.[170] The cayenne pepper imparts a level of heat not usually found in Gullah cuisine. I find it

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[167] See Bower (1997) for more on community cookbooks.

[168] Gantt and Gerald 29.

[169] Gantt and Gerald 21.

[170] Gantt and Gerald 9.

interesting that Gerald and Gantt do not call for cooks to use their Gullah Luv seasoning in this dish. Gullah Luv is available in many markets specializing in Gullah food throughout the Lowcountry, as well as on Gerald and Gantt's website. The homemade season is not spicy, and eats like a season salt or Old Bay, a spice mix used commonly in the Mid-Atlantic region for blue crabs and shrimp.

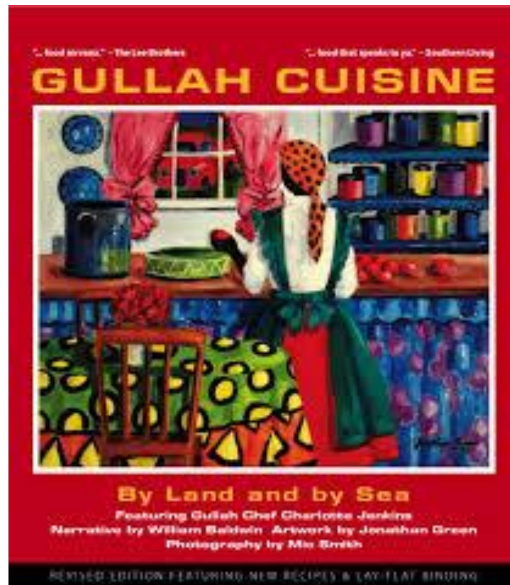

Figure 5: Cover of *Gullah Cuisine* by Charlotte Jenkins

Let us move south down Hwy 17 to Mt. Pleasant, SC, a noted Gullah enclave just north of Charleston, where Gullah women have held court selling their handmade sweetgrass baskets from roadside stands for over a century. Charlotte Jenkins operated her restaurant, Gullah Cuisine at 1717 Hwy 17. Jenkins was raised in Awendaw, in an area just north of Mount Pleasant called Ten Mile on Gadsenville Road.[171] Spending her whole life in the region, Jenkins honed her culinary skills at Johnson and Wales, a culinary and hospitality school, in Charleston.

[171] Jenkins 14.

Gullah Cuisine is a striking counterpoint to *The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook* in a discussion of the aesthetics of Gullah cookbooks. The former is a beautiful coffee table book filled with the artwork of Jonathan Green and the photographs of Mic Smith. It is essentially, a work of art. "Red Tomatoes," a painting by Green from 1992 spans the front cover. Upon closer inspection of the front cover, readers will see, "Featuring Charlotte Jenkins" and "Narrative by William Baldwin." Jenkins did not write the main text of the book, but the words and images of her and her family are pictured throughout. Jenkins's voice is heard in short vignettes about each dish or holiday celebrated. The names accompanying the narrative and illustrations lend a certain Lowcountry credibility, which is furthered through quotes on the front and back covers from acclaimed cookbook authors, Natalie Dupree and the Lee Brothers, as well as *Southern Living* magazine, *The Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, and *New York Times*. These testimonials give this cookbook some prestige. The back cover features pictures of Jenkins and her husband, Frank, and a rice dish, again illustrating the connection between Gullah people and rice.

The recipes throughout the cookbook are easy to follow. Respect for ingredients is noted, such as in the recipe for a Lowcountry Shrimp Boil – "Gullah Style," in which only water, wine, and seasoning is required. The shrimp are the star. Jenkins calls for utensils similar to those recommended by Gerald and Gantt, as well as Robinson, and adds to the list a Dutch oven, cutting board, measuring cups, deep fryer, large pots for seafood, measuring spoons, whisk, cookie sheet, and sauce pans.

Jenkins is a culinary school-trained chef who has a deep love of her roots. Her accumulation of cooking skills and interest in food began at a young age as she watched her mother cook.

> I'd stand and watch her cook. And she'd instruct me. She said I was a pretty good learner. When she prepared something, she'd show a person each step. Then she'd do the taste test. If the test failed, she'd say, 'You murdered it!' She never said that to me. She was always proud of me.[172]

Jenkins's version of red rice is listed along with eight other recipes under "Rice Dishes." Of Mama Julia's Sunday Red Rice, she writes:

> Even when I was grown and married, those Sunday family dinners were so important to me. In the old days, we went into the fields and picked the overripe tomatoes so we could make tomato sauce. The Gullah way is the no waste way. Peel them, mash them, and sauté that with a little bacon. That's red rice. Of course, there are different versions of red rice now. Add sausage or shrimp.[173]

Despite the simplicity of her story in the margins, the printed recipe calls for bacon, picnic ham, celery, garlic, dried basil, bay leaf, sugar, and notably two cups of raw converted rice, Uncle Ben's preferred.[174] Long gone are the days when tomatoes would be picked fresh, with any consistency, for sauce to make red rice, but Jenkins provides a way for cooks to continue the tradition of making red rice for Sunday dinners in her phrase, "the no waste way." Old traditions may not be utilized in the contemporary moment, but modern conveniences, such as canned sauce, allow us to call up and recreate food memories.

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[172] Jenkins 16.

[173] Jenkins 177.

[174] Uncle Ben's is a brand of parboiled rice, which is a technique developed in the 1930s to help rice retain some of its nutrients. Perhaps this is why cooks like Jenkins prefer the brand.

About 75 miles and a boatride south, we encounter Sallie Ann Robinson. Robinson is a native of Daufuskie Island, but now lives in Savannah. She still owns family land on the island; however, since the island is only accessible by boat she visits less than she would like. Robinson's two cookbooks are by the same academic publisher, University of North Carolina Press. Robinson's texts, which are not colorfully illustrated, read initially as flat until you seep into her folksy language and storytelling, which is peppered with local knowledge and cooking techniques. Through personal memories, Robinson weaves together a discussion, particularly about growing up on Daufuskie, of language, ritual, spirituality, everyday life, measurements, family, land, work, customs, folklore, and home. Each text includes beautiful photos by a professional photographer, artfully done and simply captioned. The pages have neat layouts and accessible section titles. There are many photos of historic cooking utensils, such as old water pumps and stoves. Robinson does not shy away from discussing work, and often mentions labor intensive dishes, such as Momma's Shrimp and Tada Salad from *Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way*. Robinson says, "This is a recipe that feeds my beenyah soul. It's simple, but when you work from raw ingredients, as we did, it's a project."[175] Similarly to Jenkins's red rice recipe, using store-bought ingredients may bring us closer to replicating a time-consuming dish. Robinson claims that working with raw ingredients makes this salad a project. Modern convenience allows us to buy cooked shrimp, cooked eggs, and chopped vegetables that would make assembling this dish much easier than gathering each ingredient from the land or sea. That said, an argument can be made that what is

[175] Robinson 31.

gained in time can be lost without the process. For Robinson this process is suggested in lines like this: “The sea and the garden, as well as all we did to harvest from both, come together in what remains of my favorite dishes.”[176]

Like Jenkins, Robinson has co-writers for her books, but she does not make it known on the front covers. The inside title page lists “Sallie Ann Robsinson with Gregory Wrenn Smith,” and she shares writing credit with Gloria J. Underwood on her second book. The back covers of her books also include quotes from *The New York Times Book Review*, *Savannah Morning News*, food scholars Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor and Jessica Harris, novelist Pat Conroy, *Black Issues Book Review*, and *Cookbook Digest*.

Figure 6: Cover of *Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way* by Sallie Ann Robinson

[176] Robinson 31.

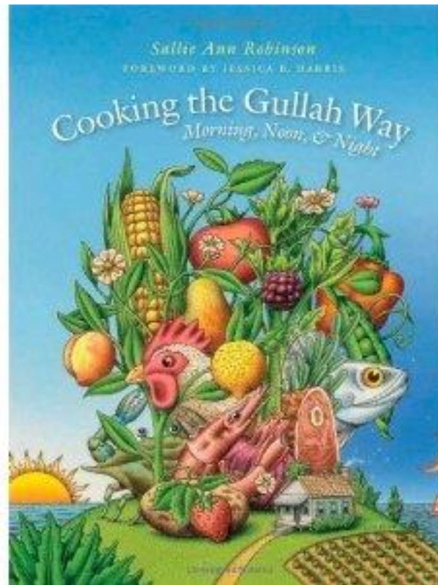

Figure 7: Cover of *Cooking the Gullah Way Morning, Noon, & Night* by Sallie Ann Robinson

While the books share similarities, the cover aesthetic differs. In *Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way,* Robinson is front and center on the cover. She is well-dressed. The kitchen in the background is well-appointed. She is showing the viewer a cast iron pan filled with what appears to be "Anything Rice." If it is "Anything Rice" from the cookbook, perhaps Robinson is signifying that anyone can cook these recipes, or perhaps that it is possible to bring Gullah food into your home with relative ease. The words of the lengthy title consume most of the cover. "The" is in italics, signifying authority of the author as a purveyor of the "Daufuskie way."

The front cover of *Cooking the Gullah Way Morning, Noon, & Night* offers a strange mélange of a fish, crawfish, ham, citrus, berries, peppers, corn, flowers, crab, strawberries, potatoes, pear, tomatoes, pea pod, purple onion, peach, and a chicken – all rising from a piece of land surrounded by water. There is one house and a sailboat in the ocean. Rows of cabbage or lettuce line the front yard. The sun and the moon

straddle the cornucopia of meat, seafood, and produce on either side. Perhaps this has something to do with Gullah people historically eating with the sun and the moon, meaning they eat what the land provides at certain times of the year.[177] It does signify a closeness to the land and water, as well as isolation via the land surrounded by water, and self-sufficiency via the images of crops and whole sources of protein. Otherwise, however, the illustration does not immediately signify Gullah culture, which is a departure from the ways in which the former Gullah cookbooks have been packaged.

The cover boasts, “Including 75 recipes and Gullah traditional home remedies,” which accompanied by the many recipes for jams, jellies, and other canned items, wine, and simple meals, points to a much different type of consumer for this cookbook. Whereas the books produced by Gerald and Gantt, Jenkins, and Robinson in her first effort, point to a consumer interested in Gullah foodways, culture, history, and art, *Cooking the Gullah Way* invites a new breed of reader interested in traditional medicine, canning, and wine-making.[178] There are photos in the introductory section about the Daufuskie landscape, but few illustrations beyond the front cover. In the foreword to the book, Jessica Harris notes the ever-increasing interest in Gullah culture as more and more people travel to the Lowcoutry. Harris claims that Robinson is in the vanguard of those telling stories of growing up Gullah,

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[177] Katie White, "Traveling with Yellow Mary: Gullah Culture, Migration, and the Sensory in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dus*t." *Digest: A Journal of Food and Culture* (Vol #2. Summer 2013) http://digest.champlain.edu/article2_3.html.

[178] All photos in the cookbook were taken by Karen Paluso in 2007 with line illustrations by Ed Lundloff.

"when life was different, and the world seemed a simpler place."[179] Robinson's acknowledgements have "home" as a theme, highlighting family, discipline, and God as her centering forces. She mentions that her family thrived on hard-work, responsibility, and knowing both the good and dangers of natural food sources:

> God gave us the stars, the moon, the sun, and the tides, as well as our changing seasons. We gave our time and labor, and made it all work for us. I have memories of many moments of joy, pain, spirituality, and love, but most of all, memories of blessings.[180]

Upon further reflection, the cover art for *Cooking the Gullah Way* pays homage to the mixture of joy, pain, labor, responsibility, nature, and spirituality that inform Robinson's experience.

The list of ingredients in Robinson's Sizzlin' Sausage Red Rice are found in *Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way,* and is very similar to the lists found in Gantt and Gerald's and Jenkins's cookbooks. Like them she lists this recipe in a chapter titled "Rice Dishes." However, the only bit of tomato in her recipe is a six-ounce can of paste. After spending a bit of time in the region and speaking to various members of the community under consideration, I realized that the use of canned tomato paste is probably due to her distance from the mainland and lack of fresh tomatoes grown on Hilton Head Island, where Robinson's family would likely have done most of their shopping. In the introduction to the chapter on rice dishes, Robinson writes, "Once a month we'd go shopping on nearby Hilton Head Island or the mainland (Savannah), and every two or three months we would bring home a 50-pound cotton sack filled with long-grain white rice. From that big sack, we filled a

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[179] Harris in Robinson xiii.

[180] Robinson xv-xvi.

large covered can that sat under the kitchen table. Nearly every meal began with a scoop from that can. Two cups of rice, three cups of water, a pinch of salt, and a slow simmer in a covered pot was the rhythm of Momma's kitchen."[181] On the shopping list was also tomato paste.

Cookbooks give these Gullah people a vehicle to remember specific connections between food and place so they can convey their memories like any storyteller. Culinary memories are transitioned from the oral tradition to the written. Not all of the authors are scholars like Gerald, but cookbooks provide a vehicle for them to share pieces of themselves and their families. As Psyche Williams-Forson explains,

> Stories are like that. They hold our attention, filling our imagination by encouraging us to remember, even while they challenge us to expand our ways of thinking. The acts of telling, sharing, remembering, and listening to stories are often part and parcel of the lexicon of African American women's writings because storytelling has always been important in African-American culture. Before and since leaving native shores, African American people sang, told, and chanted oral narratives concerning such things as nature and life, gods and heroes.[182]

In that vein, all of these authors are storytellers. Gerald and Gantt show us that a recipe can bridge the midlands and upstate South Carolina to their coastal roots on rice plantations. Jenkins gives us a recipe that has been handed down and gathered ingredients and flavor over time. And finally, Robinson demonstrates a tried and true red rice built from what her family was able to buy to sustain them on monthly

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[181] Sallie Ann Robinson, *Gullah Home Cooking, the Daufuskie Way: Smokin' Joe Butter Beans, Ol''Fuskie Fried Crab Rice, Sticky-Bush Blackberry Dumpling, & Other Sea Island Favorites* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) 122.

[182] Williams-Forson in Smart-Grosvenor xiii.

shopping trips. A can of tomato paste may not be much, but it can impart a familiar flavor and color to dish that brings her home.

The connection between home and food is a critical component of Gullah cookbooks. From memory and hands on tutelage, to writing down recollections as recipes for others to value, this theme of home and food found its way into the affective production of Gullah people. These examples of affective production work together to serve, as Gerald and Gantt suggest, as "caretakers of the Gullah story." The next chapter continues the discussion of food, place, and memory through the lens of Julie Dash, a film director and descendant of "Geechee Girls." While Dash's film, *Daughters of the Dust,* is not overtly about food, it draws on the connections between food, identity, home, art, culture, race, history, travel, and memory to tell their stories. I argue that Dash's film is not only a critical cultural representation of the story of Gullah Geechee heritage, but a crucial component to the cultural sustainability via foodways within the GGNHC.

Third Course: Mommy Dash's Gumbo

*As with many gourmets, Mommy Dash doesn't use precise measurements. For best results, rely on your own sense of taste.

2 lbs of fresh short-stemmed okra
3 Medium Ham Hocks (or use smoked turkey)
Chicken
Beef
Shrimp
Tomato Sauce
Whole Stewed Tomatoes
Crushed Tomatoes
2 Medium Onions
Fresh Cut Corn (or baby ears)
½ Cup Cooked Lima Beans
Sweet Red Peppers
Dash of Sugar
2-3 Cloves of Garlic (Diced)
Celery (Instead of Salt)
Parsley

Cover ham hocks or smoked turkey with water in a very deep pot. Cook on low flame, keep adding water. Cook until meat is falling off the bone (the bone sweetens the soup).

While the meat is cooking, cut the tips and heads off the okra. Finely slice the okra; don't dice it! Chop your onions, peppers, garlic, celery and parsley.

Add the chicken and the beef to the pot when the meat is almost off the bone. Add tomatoes, onions, green and red peppers, celery and garlic. Continue to cook slowly.

When it's almost ready, add cut corn and crushed tomatoes. Add okra and shrimp in the last ten minutes of cooking. If the shrimp cook too long they will be tough.

This soup should be eaten with white rice.

- Julie Dash, *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African-American Women's Film* ix.

Chapter 3: Memory, Food, Travel, and Taste[183]

> It's kind of paraphrasing a passage in the Bible, in Ezekiel which goes, "O ye sons of the dust," and I changed it to daughters of the dust. Dust also implies the past and something that's grown old and crumbling. The whole film is about memories, and the scraps of memories, that these women carry around in tin cans and little private boxes.[184]

"Memory, Food, Travel, and Taste" builds on the previous conversation around cookbooks as vehicles for storytelling. It conveys the power of film to create a fictional referent for Gullah culture and society and explores the role of women in the elaboration and sustenance of Gullah culture, particularly through the fictional character of Yellow Mary in Julie Dash's film. Here the crucial role of the five senses is transmitted via culture, particularly in relation to food and memory.

Daughters of the Dust, like Gullah cookbooks, is an example of affective production. As a creative artist, Julie Dash employs theories of the senses and the imaginary. Although it is not a documentary, Dash put in over a decade of research at major archives of African-American history in preparation for the film. In the end, Dash, a storyteller, released a product that centers Gullah culture and evokes the senses of the viewer. During the opening ceremony of "We Carry These Memories Inside of We: A Symposium Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of *Daughters of the Dust* and the Black Art Aesthetic of Julie Dash" at the Avery Center, College of Charleston in September 2011, Consuela Francis, Director of African-American

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[183] Portions of this chapter are based in part on a paper titled, "Traveling with Yellow Mary: Gullah Culture, Migration, and the Sensory in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dus*t," which won first prize in the 2013 Sue Samuelson Foodways Essay competition sponsored by the American Folklore Society. The full paper was published in the AFS's *Digest: A Journal of Foodways & Culture*, Volume #2, Summer 2013.

[184] Dash in Davis 111.

Studies and Associate Professor of English said, “Storytelling is the most profoundly important thing that we can do…collecting stories is doing the work of African-American Studies,” and Julie Dash provides a model for what we should be doing as scholars to collect and tell stories.

After Dash concluded her research for the film she knew that she needed to do something different with the way she told the story. Her main goal was “to show black families, particularly black women, as we have never seen them before. I want to touch something inside of each black person that sees it, some part of them that’s never been touched before.”[185] Her idea was to structure the narrative in the same way that “an African griot would recount his family’s history. The story would just kind of unravel. This very important day would unravel through a series of vignettes…”[186] The liberties she takes with the story are poetic. This may make some viewers uneasy, in the same way that Gloria Anzaldua has been criticized for writing in Spanish for English-speaking audiences. In a very powerful, feminist way, these women write themselves into the narrative of film and prose where their names do not appear.[187]

Daughters of the Dust may not be considered a food film, but the book about the making of the film tells a different tale. The pages immediately following the table of contents include recipes from Dash’s family: Aunt Gertie’s Red Rice and

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[185] Dash 32.

[186] Dash 32.

[187] Drawing from the poem “Diving into the Wreck” by Adrienne Rich, 1973.

Mommy Dash's Gumbo.**[188]** Gumbo goes on to play a significant role in the film.[189] Arguably, gumbo is a trope for home, in both the film and the making of *Daughters of the Dust*, triggering the viewers' senses.

Figure 8: Still Shot of Gumbo from Daughters of the Dust

The analysis begins with exploration of the senses, family, and memory. These critical concepts surface in Dash's life and are recreated in her art. By investigating Yellow Mary's travels away from Ibo Landing, a fictive space in Gullah culture, as well as the drive to return home, this chapter is invested in an exploration of taste and the sensory, sustainability of culture and cultural identity, and migratory patterns of Gullah people from and back to the Sea Islands. It argues that Yellow Mary assumes the role of what scholar Anita Mannur refers to as a "culinary citizen,"

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[188] Dash viii-viv.

asserting her place on Ibo Landing through nostalgic memory.[190] It demonstrates how Yellow Mary is operating as a diasporic body, creating a framework for the larger narrative of migration within the film. Yellow Mary asserts the importance of her Gullah roots and migration from the opening scene. In one of the first scenes of the film, a boat appears on the water, most likely coming from the Intercoastal Waterway or a tributary, given that the travelers are coming from the mainland en route to the fictive Ibo Landing. We do not see the occupants of the boat at first, due to camera angle and fog, and then figures appear, three women in formal dresses and a man in a suit. Yellow Mary wears a St. Christopher charm and a large hat and tulle, perhaps to protect her from mosquitos, obscuring her face. Trula and Viola also wear hats. Trula's hat is very small, what may be called a fascinator in Britain, and is hardly a match for her wild mane of yellow hair. Viola is wearing a dark dress, and her hair is perfectly coiffed. Mr. Sneed, a photographer, is with the group, also well put together. In Dash's screenplay, Yellow Mary is referred to as a prostitute, Trula as her companion, Viola as a Christian missionary, and Mr. Snead as a "Philadelphia-looking Negro."[191] After awkwardly introducing Yellow Mary as her cousin to Mr. Snead, Viola explains to the women that he has come along to document their family's crossing over to the mainland. Yellow Mary and Trula begin to laugh uncontrollably. This group of travelers embodies the movement of a Gullah people that was just beginning at the start of the 20th Century. As the boat gently glides through the water, the fog lifts and their destination, the beach, appears. The arrival is

[190] See Mannur (2007).
[191] Dash 77.

not seen immediately; rather, the scene cuts to "two women, in rhythmic unison, [are] husking wild rice with a mortar and pestle."[192] Old traditions and new ideas clash in the boat, as they do on Ibo Landing.

Textual and filmic evidence helps to explain the relationship between the senses, food, and cultural identity, including the varied tensions that surround our relationships to and around food. Like scholars such as Sutton and Beoku-Betts who speak to the everyday tangible experiences with food to evoke memories in which identities are formed, I argue that Dash's film is an example of affective production that invites a viewer into the story via the senses. The rhythms and senses involved in culinary practices can remind us of home, family, history, and place. For example, characters such as Yellow Mary cite food, specifically gumbo, as a pull factor toward home. To aid in my contextualization of Dash's storytelling and the importance of the senses are Lowcountry gumbo recipes from the screenplay, as well as other Gullah cookbooks. This analysis evokes the sensory elements Yellow Mary misses in the gumbo she eats outside of Ibo Landing. Perhaps authenticity is not what Yellow Mary is missing, but rather her original experience of gumbo, as Meredith Abarca suggests. Dash's use of sensory elements such as sounds, gestures, images, and performances are critical to understanding the history of Gullah people and culture in artistic expression.

[192] Dash 79.

Power, Food, and Culinary Sensory Communication

To illustrate the sensory power of food, I argue that the power and fulfillment felt by Gullah people, especially women, when engaged in culinary affective production is what Audre Lorde refers to as the erotic. For Lorde:

> [T]he erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire. For having experienced the fullness of this depth of feeling and recognizing its power, in honor and self-respect we can require no less of ourselves.[193]

Lorde calls women, particularly black women, to hone in on what brings them unadulterated joy. Finding the erotic within ourselves increases our capacities to create and to communicate with others, which arguably leads to sustainable relationships with others and the self. Lorde contends that to refuse the erotic, or any deep feelings, is the same as committing an act of violence toward ourselves: "To refuse to be conscious of what we are feeling at any time, however comfortable that might seem, is to deny a large part of the experience, and to allow ourselves to be reduced to the pornographic, the abused, and the absurd."[194] For example, author and playwright Ntozake Shange claims in her culinary memoir, *If I can cook/you Know God can* (1998) that black women are, "blessed, since we can find our ovens and stoves and make up for some of what we long for."[195] In this way, cooking, sharing recipes, and writing culinary tales can be a source of Lorde's erotic.

Similarly, in *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power,* Psyche Williams-Forson demonstrates how food is a site of power and a

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[193] Lorde 54.

[194] Lorde 59.

[195] Shange, 40.

catalyst toward identity formation for black people, particularly in her focus area: Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolina Lowcountry. To discuss the empowerment of enslaved populations is tricky, and Williams-Forson succeeds particularly because she argues that

> power is heterogeneous in nature, not limited to a single area of society and thus implicit in the process of sharing cultural norms and values. From this perspective power can be defining oneself through exploration – and can be fun![196]

This understanding of power is indicative of Williams-Forson's tone throughout the text. She does not perpetuate a narrative of victimization, but rather uses the examples of oppression to create an alternative narrative of resistance and self-actualization through food.

Watching the techniques and ingredients used by Gullah women in kitchenspaces often gave Gullah children the power to be ready to help when called upon. In "We Got Our Way of Cooking Things: Women, Food, and Preservation of Cultural Identity Among the Gullah," Beoku-Betts shows that both inside and outside the kitchen, Gullah women take very seriously "the task of transmitting cultural traditions to a rapidly declining younger generation."[197] Passing on tradition requires not only hard work on the part of tradition bearers, but also the willingness and receptivity of younger generations. In her short personal essay "Rice Culture" in *Through the Kitchen Window: Women Explore the Intimate Meanings of Food and Cooking*, Julie Dash details her association between rice and her Aunt Gertie, a resident of Charleston. After recounting a haunting memory of herself as a ten-year-

[196] Williams-Forson 6.

[197] Beoku-Betts 550.

old stirring a pot of red rice after it had started boiling over, and being lambasted by the family before Sunday dinner because boiled rice is ruined rice, Dash fast forwards to her present day kitchen, standing over a bowl of cold water and rice, scrubbing it in preparation for cooking. She flips the script and instead of a child standing watch as elders cook, she still feels "Aunt Gertie watching me. Checking on me. Perhaps behind her the old souls are watching all of us, checking on the seeds that they have planted."[198]

Food can be comforting and bring us home, at least in memory, when we need to travel to a comfortable place. In "Exiled at Home: *Daughters of the Dust* and the Many Post-Colonial Conditions" (2001), Catherine Cucinella and Renee R. Curry argue that

> [n]o collective "home" – whether geographical, familial, sexual, marital, religious, or racial – exists for the women characters in *Daughters of the Dust*. They constantly occupy the many varied post-colonial positions of exile while negotiating moves between "homes" old and new.[199]

Adding to this argument, I contend that the women in *Daughters of the Dust* are searching for home also through food or culinary creation, much like my informants and their families in Beaufort County.

As discussed in the introduction, the subject of home can be fraught. Enslaved women had to be creative in the kitchen and recipes were orally passed down. Citing the repeated refrain in Shange's novel *Sassafras, Cyprus, and Indigo* (1982), "the slaves who were ourselves," literary scholar Courtney Thorsson argues:

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[198] Dash 2.

[199] Cucinella and Curry 199.

> The past tense here indicates that slavery is an inherited and meaningful but not ongoing condition for these women. Rather, women's work broadly defined, with some acknowledged roots in slave labor, is the foundation of an alternative cultural nation because it both expresses lineage and looks forward…to inform present and future liberation through artistic creation.[200]

Taste is a matter of opinion and arguably, in the case of the Sea Islands, tradition. The preservation of Gullah culture, then, involves not only the cultivation of certain culinary skills, but also a particular sense of taste and creativity. The construction of Gullah culture is a sensory experience, in which all senses – taste, touch, sight, sound, and smell - are engaged. The example of gumbo from earlier in the chapter demonstrates that while viewers of *Daughters of the Dust* cannot directly experience the taste of the food, the sound of cooking, or the feeling of the gumbo on their lips, they can conjure these senses in their own memory banks. The film allows viewers to see characters employing their senses around food, which causes viewers to appreciate the vision in a voyeuristic fashion. The ultimate example of this is the family feast on the beach, which I will discuss in detail later in the chapter.

Coming Home: Gullah Food, Culture, and Sustainability

...[it] is testimony to the fact that although we may leave home, get rid of our accents, and change our names and diets, the aroma of certain foods will trigger warm memories and fill us with longing and taste to return home. Once in Rome I passed someone's apartment and the smell of collard greens 'gently stewing in the pot,' as Langston Hughes wrote, made my eyes tear and knees buckle. I wanted to go home.[201]

In this section the themes of food, recipes, tradition, home, and the senses in Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* are discussed. Home provides a sense of place and

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[200] Thorsson 76.

[201] Smart-Grosvenor in Shange xii.

belonging and food can get us there. Memories and imagination will also take us there when we are unable to travel in time and space.

The Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, particularly St. Helena Island, Lady's Island, and the town of Port Royal in Beaufort County, are parts of Gullah country. This area is very close to Hunting and Fripp Islands where *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) was filmed. *Daughters of the Dust* provides an illustration of ways in which food is ritualized in Gullah culture. Ritual is present in the actual cooking of food, but also in its preparation. Women create community while peeling potatoes, preparing rice, and boiling crabs, much like women in the rice fields of Sierra Leone constructed community while fanning and pounding rice.[202] In the film, the passing down of Gullah food preparations is demonstrated rather than provided through recipes. However in the screenplay, Dash provides recipes, which serve as a call to action, moving from the filmmaker to the collective in the community.

Set at the turn of the 20th century *Daughters of the Dust* centers on the matriarch, Nana Peazant, who is unhappy that some of the younger family members want to leave Ibo Landing for the mainland in search of a new successful life. She begs them to hold onto their history and their roots by repeatedly reminding them that they owe their ancestors their every breath. The Peazant family lives without electricity, running water and other "mainland" American luxuries of that era, but producer and writer Julie Dash exposes a self-sufficient familial operation. Members of the Peazant family are clothed well, and they eat well. They rely on a mixture of

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[202] See *Family Across the Sea* (1991), directed by Tim Carrier. A unique look at the ways Gullah communities and kinship ties were created and sustained under the brutal system of slavery can be found in Guthrie 1996.

African and Christian spiritual traditions, as well as faith in one another, to maintain their relationships with one another, as well as with their ancestors, tradition, and culture. To use all of our senses when taking in this artistic representation of Gullah culture is to tap into our creative spirits as consumers, as well as to appreciate the full power of African American women as affective producers.

Daughters of the Dust, produced in 1991, tells the story of the Peazants, an African-American Sea Island family preparing to migrate from their home on Ibo Landing in South Carolina to the mainland, presumably Charleston, in 1902. Ibo Landing is a fictional depiction of the portion of the South Carolina Sea Islands the Peazants call home. The gathering of family to celebrate the departure includes members who have crossed the Intercoastal Waterway from the mainland, namely Viola Peazant and Yellow Mary Peazant. These women are cousins, natives of Ibo Landing, and grandchildren of Nana Peazant. As previously indicated, Yellow Mary and Viola are accompanied by Trula, Yellow Mary's lover and traveling companion, and Mr. Snead, a mainland photographer who will document the Peazant family's last day on Ibo Landing. Yellow Mary and Viola, who have spent time on the mainland, are returning to Ibo Landing to spend time with their family on the eve of the family's departure from their island home of origin. The film illustrates the tensions between tradition and assimilation[203] experienced by families during the Great Migration at the turn of the 20th Century as they moved out of old locations to new environments.

[203] Here assimilation refers to the ways in which a migrant may feel the need to abandon ways of life that they were used to in a homeland to better fit in after migrating to a new location. This term can be fraught with racial and class tensions, as well, as some of the pressures to change come from a desire to erase a culture that is deemed inferior.

Yellow Mary in *Daughters of the Dust* came home to Ibo Landing not intending to stay, rather to satisfy the craving for good food that she claims not to have had while she was away. Yellow Mary comes back after approximately ten years away from Ibo Landing to a less than warm homecoming. She arrives with store-bought cookies in a tin and suffers from verbal cuts from her female relatives about her lack of involvement in the kitchen, only to articulate her desire for home-cooked food a short while later. To better contextualize the scene mentioned at the start of the chapter, while Yellow Mary is chatting with Trula, and her cousin, Eula, in one of the trees close to the beach, Yellow Mary says that she hopes the women are making gumbo. She looks back toward the spot on the beach where a group of women are preparing the picnic food. You can almost see her smelling it or even feeling it in the air. Yellow Mary says, "Y'know, I sure hope they're fixing some gumbo. It's been a long time since I've had some good gumbo. (Looking up at Trula) I had some in Savannah, you know, but they didn't put everything in it. I haven't had some good food in a long time."[204]

Food takes on many meanings in this scene.[205] It is sustenance, memory, ritual, and most poignantly, lesbian sexuality, as Yellow Mary's gaze is directed toward Trula when she says that she has not had good gumbo in a long time. Trula is Yellow Mary's light-skinned traveling companion. In an interview with bell hooks published in *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of An African American Women's*

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[204] Dash 122.

[205] Although food takes on many meanings in *Daughters of the Dust*, I am primarily invested in the lesbian sexuality and sensuality in the scene involving Yellow Mary and Trula, her traveling companion and female lover. These two characters illustrate sensual nature of food, place, and memory.

Film, Dash explains that in her research for the film she found that prostitutes of that time, were often involved with other women. Their significant others were often women, yet their customers were usually men. It is not evident in from the film that Yellow Mary is a prostitute, unless a viewer has read the screenplay or knows about prostitutes in the early 20th century. Dash comments, "in developing Yellow Mary's character [I] realized that she, as an independent businesswoman, would not be traveling alone. In fact, she would have a significant other."[206] Given the sexual relationship between the two women, I argue that Yellow Mary's comment about gumbo has two meanings. First, she is hungry for a familiar, home-cooked dish. Secondly, Trula no longer provides her with what she desires sexually or in terms of a home, and what that location implies, for example, comfort, family, and stability.

As Julie C. Ehrhardt writes in "Towards Queering Food Studies: Foodways, Heteronormativity, and Hungry Women in Chicana Lesbian Writing" (2006),

> The study of gender has indeed emerged as one of the most exciting topics in food studies. However, when investigating what foodways can tell us about 'the relations between the sexes, their gender definitions, and their sexuality" (Counihan 1999;9), we tend not to specify that we are usually investigating heterosexual gender relations between women and men.[207]

Ehrhardt brings to the fore the argument that a queering of food studies allows scholars to disrupt the heteronormative biases, whether intentional or unintentional, within the discipline. If we read *Daughters of the Dust* as a food film, as I suggest, the focus on culinary practices uncovers a "richness that is obscured when food is not

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[206] Dash 66.

[207] Ehrhardt in Williams-Forson and Counihan 239.

considered among the important themes."[208] Particularly in the example of gumbo, food serves to express varying meanings of black womanhood and lesbian identity,[209] an argument that Psyche Williams-Forson makes about the woman-loving fiction of Ann Allen Shockley (2014). Like Dash, documentary filmmaker Marlon Riggs used the visual metaphor of gumbo throughout his 1994 film *Black Is…Black Ain't* because the black community, like gumbo, "got a little of everything in it."[210]

Leading into her comment about gumbo, Yellow Mary mocks the traditions and backwardness of Ibo Landing, as if to create distance between herself and the land, only to wish her way back onto it. In her essay "Culinary Nostalgia: Authenticity, Nationalism, and Diaspora" (2007), Anita Mannur writes:

> The desire to remember home by fondly recreating culinary memories cannot be understood merely as reflectively nostalgic gestures…Discursive and affective aspects of food are valued over their symbolic and semiotic meaning in nostalgic narratives that negotiate the parameters of "culinary citizenship," a form of affective citizenship which grants subjects the ability to claim and inhabit certain subject positions via their relationship to food.[211]

Yellow Mary is arguably assuming the role of culinary citizen in this instance, asserting her place on the island through nostalgic memory.

My contention is that Yellow Mary is operating as a diasporic body, within the framework of the larger narrative of migration. What sounds like her voiceover at the beginning of the film sets the tone: "I am the first and the last. I am the honored one and the scorned one. I am the whore and the holy one. I am the wife and the

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[208] Williams Forson in Davis and Powell 173.

[209] Williams-Forson in Davis and Powell 173.

[210] *Black Is…Black Ain't*, 1994, California Newsreel.

[211] Mannur 13.

virgin. I am the barren one and many are my daughters. I am the silence that you cannot understand. I am the utterance of my name."[212] The words Yellow Mary utters are adapted from the Nag Hammadi Scriptures, a collection of thirteen ancient codices discovered in upper Egypt in 1945 and previously thought destroyed. The selection Yellow Mary speaks from, titled "Thunder, Perfect Mind," is drawn from writings dealing primarily with the feminine deific and spiritual principle, particularly with the Divine Sophia.[213] According to the Gnostic Society archives, the Divine Sophia – or Holy Wisdom – desired most intensely to know the origin of her own creation.[214] Perhaps Dash deliberately places Yellow Mary in the role of Divine Sophia as she returns home to Ibo Landing to rediscover her origin.

What can be learned about Gullah culture, as well as migration and diasporic bodies, from listening to and watching Yellow Mary navigate the space of Ibo Landing after some time away? She is someone who has left the island and stayed away for ten years. The notes in Dash's screenplay (1992) list Yellow Mary as working for a family near Edisto Island, South Carolina, which in the present day is not very far north from the fictional Ibo Landing. At the turn of the 20th century and before the advent of bridges, Edisto Island was considered the mainland. According to the screenplay, when Yellow Mary became pregnant in the late 19th century, she lost her baby, but became a wet nurse for white children of an Edisto Island family. When Yellow Mary traveled with this family to Cuba to look after the babies, she was assaulted by their father. Keeping with the play on food, although according to the

[212] Dash 75-76.
[213] The Nag Hammadi Library 2011.

[214] The Nag Hammadi Library 2011.

screenplay her travels have taken her to Edisto Island, Cuba, and Savannah, where she could have easily found rice-based cuisine, her physical location did not placate her palate. Returning to the iconic dish, what was missing in the gumbo that Yellow Mary ate in Savannah that caused her to crave the gumbo of home?

Gumbo recipes from Beaufort County and Savannah do not differ greatly, but it is difficult to find two recipes that are alike. Dash provides context for these different recipes when she describes her personal connection to gumbo:

> [She] was raised on Gumbo; in my house it was called Okra Soup. Gumbo has been described as the 'poor man's meal,' or a 'Saturday dish,' prepared when you emptied your refrigerator at the end of the week. As far as I'm concerned Gumbo is a luxury. It takes all day to prepare (to do it right) and the fresh okra required to make it can be difficult and expensive.[215]

Some Gullah cookbooks list okra soup and gumbo as distinct recipes, while others do not. For some, the distinction between okra soup and gumbo need not be made for the sake of redundancy:

> Geechee folk tend to say either that they're having "okra soup" for dinner—or they're having "gumbo." This is by no means universally true, but folks don't tend to talk about the "okra gumbo" they're cooking. I think that's because "gumbo" means "okra" and, even if the conscious memory of that has faded, the unconscious knows that saying you're having "okra gumbo" is redundant, like saying you're having "okra okra."[216]

Food serves as a bridge to home for Dash. In her notes, Dash describes gumbo as a luxury that takes time and labor, usually of women. For example, in a scene in *Daughters of the Dust*, women are captured on film cracking crabs, snapping beans, shucking corn, and other acts of labor necessary for meal preparation. This scene,

[215] Dash ix.

[216] Kendra Hamilton, "The Taste of the Sun: Okra Soup in the Geechee Tradition." *Callaloo*. (Vol. 30, No. 1, Winter 2007) 75-86, 78.

among others, illustrates that food is nuanced. Taste is subjective, and the tastes, smells and feelings we crave may not be easily found outside of home. We can recall these senses, even though we can't taste or smell them. As a viewer, we cannot physically enjoy it outside of vision, but we can recall similar sensorial feelings based on our own experiences.

Each of the aforementioned gumbo recipes was published in the latter part of the 20th century, so it is difficult to discern what components of a gumbo Yellow Mary wished for when she was away from Ibo Landing. As Janet Theophano argues in *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives Through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (2002):

> Although recipes remain nearly unchanged through the years, each new cook adapts some recipes to accommodate altered environments and the changes in fashion, and invents new dishes. Change is constant. The accidental or deliberate modification takes place with the passing of each generation, with the movement of people from one location to another, with periods of crisis or scarcity such as war and natural disaster…Yet some recipes are not forgiving. Cooks may closely follow the original for the purposes of remembrance. To alter even an ingredient would disrupt the evocative, symbolic qualities of a dish.[217]

Theophano's argument works as a foil for Yellow Mary. Cooks may be the ones following recipes, but those who are not cooking are often looking for consistency, familiarity, and sensuality when eating specific foods.

The Five Senses

To underscore the value of the five senses in understanding lived experience, I draw on feminist scholar L. Ayu Saraswati's argument in *Seeing Beauty, Sensing*

[217] Theophano 50.

Race in Transnational Indonesia in which sensing is “an epistemic apparatus” that “provides us with a means through which we make sense of the ‘real’ world and how to live in it.”[218] To further punctuate this stance Saraswati claims “because senses function as a tool of knowing, they are never innocent and are always historically, politically, and socially specific,”[219] a point iterated here. To illustrate, the five senses are dramatically shown during the feast on the beach in *Daughters of the Dust.* There is no dialogue during this scene, but the viewer is able to imagine the savory smells and taste of the food and see the pleasure of the people sharing a meal together. The wind is whipping and the tide is rolling out on the Sea Island as the Peazant women prepare a delicious meal for their family and visitors. All are dressed well – white dresses and boots for the women and lightweight trousers, shirts and suit jackets for the men, suitable attire for that time. Nana Peazant is dressed in blue, the color of her indigo-stained hands. Yellow Mary, Trula and Viola have on more sophisticated traveling clothes than the others, distinguishing them as people who have traveled away from Ibo Landing.

Daddy Mac makes an announcement that Eli and Eula are expecting a child that will be the first child to be born on the mainland. “Our child of the future,” he says.[220] From then the screenplay states, “The silence is broken by laughter and applause, and the passing and serving of food begins. There are oysters steamed in croaker sacks over open barbecue pits; RICE; CORN; MELONS; CRABS; SHRIMP;

[218] Saraswati 3.

[219] Saraswati 3.

[220] Dash 142.

VEGETABLES and FRUITS."[221] The sights and sounds of food being passed and consumed assume center stage. A symphony of utensils, chewing and crunching, and satisfied breaths can be heard, intermixed with the clinking of forks against ceramic plates, the crunching of corn on the cob, the shelling of shrimp and the cracking of blue crabs. No words are needed between family members as they pass plates back and forth between bowls and platters piled high with fish and tomatoes. Generations of sharing allow them to communicate seamlessly and silently. Although the family members are sitting on a beach, Dash's direction gives each person a special place to sit, as if they were at a formal dining table. The wind dies down and the sun is shining on this last supper before the majority of the family migrates north.

This scene may be what Yellow Mary was looking for in her travels. The food that the Peazant family is enjoying was likely planted, harvested, caught, or shucked by some of their own hands. They have created a sustainable life and home by working the land and also by passing on skills and traditions to one another. As the women prepared the food no recipes were read from a cookbook or even narrated. Yellow Mary could not find the good gumbo she was looking for because the gumbo she remembers can only be made by Peazant women or by people who have watched Peazant women make it in their way. This feast scene is demonstrative of the benefits of sustainability in terms of defining home for people. Ironically, just as the scene evokes home and sustainability, it also signifies the end of an era and the beginning of a new life for a certain number of Peazants on the mainland.

[221] Dash 143.

I have seen this particular scene more times than I can count, and each time I notice something new. Each time I view it, at least one of my senses is triggered in a new way. Subsequent viewings have alerted me to a bowl of okra and tomatoes being passed around or the way the hair braider helps a child spoon food onto her dish, or the way some members of the family close their eyes as they taste the food.

The central role of food in Gullah culture, particularly in celebrations, is implied simply by watching the family prepare their plates and eat. Listening to the sounds of this scene is arguably more important than watching. Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (1997) credits Dash for evoking:

> …suppressed signs and sounds of the past. From the beginning of the film, the viewer is presented with a mélange of Gullah culture through sounds, images, and performances. It is the attention to the nuances of rituals, styles, and especially the kinesthetics of gesture, which strongly evokes an Afrocentric visual memory making (Foster 1997:49-65).

Viewers are invited to migrate back to the Sea Islands at the turn of the century to witness common culinary practices that may have made their way north with some of the Gullah people who migrated. Foster's essay praises Dash for her creative use of time, space, and color to tell the story of the Peazant family, focusing on the film and filmmaker rather than issues of migration. In a conversation with bell hooks about the film, Dash contends that camera placement allows viewers a unique intimacy not often found in film:

> Where the camera is placed, the closeness. Being inside the group rather than outside, as a spectator, outside looking in. We're inside. We're right in there. We're listening to intimate conversation between women, while usually it is the men we hear talking and the women kind of walk by in the background. This time we overhear the women. So it's all from the point of view of a woman – about the women – and the men are kind of just on the periphery.[222]

[222] Dash 33.

What Dash describes can be felt while viewing the beach picnic scene, in particular. It is more than just a scene to be watched, rather viewers experience a sort of communion with the family. We do not become part of the story Dash is telling, but can feel connected, as onlookers.

Clearly, Dash's affective production conjures up not only notions of home, but also memory. As Foster acknowledges the contributions of Dash, Patricia Clark argues:

> that [Ntozake] Shange's collation of recipes in *Sassafras* is an archive that marks the black women's emergent literacy and projects a continuum of their appropriations and masteries of technologies—writing, publishing, and performing their own works. It is within this archive, whose limits are indeterminate, that one might imagine a recovered history.[223]

Clark's argument supports the position that we can use fictive examples as semi-ethnographic accounts[224] that contribute to the archive of Gullah history and African-American history writ large. Dash is pushing back at a history in which it was illegal for African Americans to learn to read and write. In reference to Sassafras, Witt argues, "By incorporating the performance of cooking into novelistic art, moreover, Shange insists that the forms of creative expression long attributed to African-American women should be valued as highly as are the forms often reserved for white and men."[225] Drawing on Witt's assertion, I argue that Dash should be seen as doing the same type of artistic work as an African-American woman filmmaker.

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[223] Clark 151.

[224] See Bolles 1997.

[225] Witt 11.

Dash offers the viewer the type of sensory experience that Fitzgerald and Petrick (2008) argue is important if we are to understand the history of a people and culture:

> …[T]o understand a culture, past or present, we should endeavor to understand how a society feeds itself. It is the ubiquity and everydayness of eating that makes understanding it historically so important. The taste and flavor of food play an important part in social relationships, and a food's taste can embody meanings well beyond what is put into the mouth[226]

While we may not be able to taste the food straight off the screen or page, we are brought into these scenes as observers who on a basic level know what it means to eat. The characters in *Daughters* do not discuss recipes, but we bear witness to the ingredients and how they are manipulated, and by using our senses we can create an approximation.

As we have seen, investigating sensory elements of history, people, and cultures can help us make sense of the world. Current scholarship is invested in the anthropology of smell, hearing, and movement, but less so of taste.[227] As we saw in the scholarship and in the film *Daughters of the Dust*, *Food on the Move* begins an intervention to illustrate the intersection between cultural sustainability and the five senses, particularly taste and memory, using film and narrative as investigative and theoretical tools. As Saraswati contends, focusing on the senses provides us with a way of making sense of the real world and how to live in it.

Similarly, valuing all five senses can help to uncover how much of nostalgic memory is constructed from lived experience and perhaps, where, how, and by whom

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[226] Fitzegerald and Petrick 393.

[227] Sutton 14.

memories are created and the role each of the five senses play in the creation of memories. I argue that we are missing crucial elements when Gullah history is told without a reliance on sensory experience, as sensory experiences are crucial parts of lived experience. Yellow Mary does not use all of her senses in each scene. However, when we engage sensually with the texts when she does, I believe we are grasping not only a richer version of the text itself, but we also gain intimate insights into the nostalgic memories of the filmmaker, who put so much personal and intellectual research into the film. Taking the theoretical assumption that senses are a tool of knowing into the next chapter allows for a more intimate engagement with the feminist food-centered stories articulated by contemporary women and men whose culinary experiences inform this study.

Fourth Course: Frogmore Stew

Frogmore stew came in from St. Helena, an island near Beaufort. No frogs in the stew. It's named for a plantation. It's called Beaufort Stew, too. Each area has a little different version. Corn on the cob, sausage, seafood thrown in a pot…Whatever you want goes in there.

3 cups fish stock
1 large onion, cut in to 8 pieces
1 small green bell pepper, chopped
1 rib celery, chopped
¼ cup Gullah seafood seasoning
1 bay leaf
5 small new potatoes, quartered
3 smoked sausage links, cut in 2-inch slices
5 small ears corn, cut in half
20 large (21/25 count) shrimp in the shell

Put the fish stock, onion, green pepper and celery in a stockpot and bring to a boil. Add the Gullah seasoning, bay leaf and potatoes and briskly simmer for 10 minutes. Add the sausage and briskly simmer for 10 minutes. Add the corn and briskly simmer for 5 minutes. Add the shrimp and briskly simmer until the shrimp turn pink and are firm to the touch, about 5 minutes.

Serve immediately.

- Charlotte Jenkins, *Gullah Cuisine* 110.

Chapter 4: Feminist Food-Centered Stories

"Eat in order to remember…"[228]

"But we are in danger of refining the theory and scholarship at the expense of the lives of women who need to experience the fruits of research. For this reason, I have chosen to write of women's lives, rather than of the texts I have been trained to analyze and enjoy. I risk a great danger: that I shall bore the theorists and fail to engage the rest, thus losing both audiences. If this does, indeed, occur, I shall at least have failed as the result of a conscious choice, one made in knowledge, insofar as that is ever possible, of the dangers, the challenges, and the vitality whose price is at risk."[229]

In both fictional and autobiographical accounts of growing up Gullah, authors cite an association between culinary memories, tastes and home and the ways in which they will travel distances or in their minds to recreate these experiences. This chapter weaves together narrative accounts of Gullah people to produce food-centered stories. In writing about Gullah people, I call upon Carolyn Heilbrun's work. In *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988), Heilbrun asserts,

> This is a feminist undertaking. I define *feminist,* using Nancy Miller's words, as the wish to 'articulate a self-consciousness about women's identity both as inherited cultural fact and as process of social construction' and to 'protect against the available fiction of female becoming.' Women's lives, like women's writing, have, in Miller's words, a particularly 'vulnerable relation to the culture's central notions of plausibility.' It is hard to suppose that women can mean or want what we have always been assured they could not possibly mean or want. Miller has shown us how 'the literal failure to read women's writing has other theoretical implications.' The same can be said of reading women's lives.[230]

Like Sharon Stone-Mediatore (2003), who found through her research that "experience is meaningful to us largely by virtue of the way it is articulated in a

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[228] Sutton 2.

[229] Heilbrun 20.

[230] Heilbrun 18.

narrative,"[231] I argue that the food-centered stories of Gullah people produce critical knowledge about a people and culture. I am interested in their stories, not some abstraction called "the truth."[232]

The stories in this chapter, like Carole Counihan's "food-centered life stories," consist of "digitally recorded, semi-structured interviews with willing participants on their beliefs and behaviors surrounding food production, distribution, preparation, and consumption."[233] This methodology is used with women and men in various sites in Beaufort and Charleston counties in South Carolina. My entrée to Lowcountry communities began in 2008 with participation in a Gullah Studies Institute at the Penn Heritage Center on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. Over eighteen months (2012-2014), I conducted a feminist study, including semi-formal interviews and participant observations,[234] on various Sea Islands near Beaufort and Charleston, South Carolina. Through contacts made at the Gullah Studies Institute, I used a snowball sample to connect with other community members, as mentioned in my introduction.[235] The collected food-centered narratives provide a connection to the

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[231] Stone-Mediatore 3.

[232] Feminist Standpoint theorists, Nancy Hartstock (1983), Dorothy Smith (1987), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991), and Sandra Harding (1991), among others, have argued that critical knowledge and theory must be informed by every day experience. Conversely, Michel Foucault (1976), Judith Butler (1990), Gayatri Spivak (1988), and Joan Scott (1988), among others, have all brought forth the anti-positivist argument that there is a danger in trusting experience-oriented narratives as the "truth."

[233] Miller and Deutsch 171.

[234] See Appendix 2 for a detailed list of participant observation sites and experiences.

[235] All interviews were set up ahead of time following IRB standards, included informed consent and permission to tape record all interviews. In this way, I captured their comments, but also this held myself accountable in the translation. If they consented to tape-recording I made sure they understood that we could go off the record at any point in our conversation. Only a few participants took advantage of this option. I offered full transcripts to anyone who wanted one, as well as copies of the final project for their records. [See Appendix 1 for interview questions].

film just examined in Chapter 3. The personal narratives offer another way of storytelling in addition to the cookbooks and *Daughters of the Dust*, and a living link to Gullah story-tellers and characters in these texts.

These food stories center on the knowledge produced out of every day practice. All of my informants signed on to discuss food and food-related topics. While food may seem benign, it usually served as an entry point, taking us on a conversational journey that covered everything from holidays and celebrations to gender roles, politics, violence, death, and a central theme for this project, travel and migration. Seeing how food moves us through these interviews, producing narratives that are personal, emotional, and poignant, made me think about the ways in which food was part of migration stories and other narratives of diaspora. In sum, talking to Gullah people about food was the inspiration for this entire dissertation project, and for the conversations I had through this study. Food stories link the history discussed in Chapter 1, the cookbooks examined in Chapter 2, the fictional account of Chapter 3, and constructs a springboard to imagine the future of the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor that is posited in the introductory and concluding chapters. From the early stages of this project, I made an investment in including the voices of those I am writing about.

Indian filmmaker Mira Nair offers a point of view that surfaced in her interview with actor John Lithgow at her alma mater, Harvard, "if we don't tell our own stories, nobody else will tell them."[236] While Nair is speaking directly about

[236] "A Conversation with Filmmaker Mira Nair" Part of the Office for the Arts' "Learning from Performers" Series President and Fellows of Harvard College 2006. 5 March 2012. http://athome.harvard.edu/programs/cmn/cmn_video/cmn_6.html.

filmmaking, she is also placing herself into conversation with scholars invested in giving voice to the voiceless. In the film *Monsoon Wedding*, Nair invites viewers into the lives of a Punjabi family. With a very limited budget, Nair used actors from her own neighborhood, many of whom had never acted before, as she says in the same interview, to "inspire young people, because it was made out of nothing. The point of the film was to shoot it in 30 days, to do it very simply but imaginatively, to show people that their story can be told using very simple means."[237] I use Nair's discussion of her filmmaking as a point of departure because it is the type of storytelling I am interested in doing myself. I hope to give voice to the Gullah people who have told me, "keep talking about us," when I ask what they would like me to do with their stories. To be clear, Gullah people are far from voiceless. As a matter of fact, storytelling is a part of the culture. I am interested in assisting these food storytellers to find a wide audience beyond the coastal Sea Islands of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

In the retelling and writing of these stories I take inspiration from Counihan's organization of *A Tortilla is Like Life: Food and Culture in the San Luis Valley of Colorado* (2009). In this ethnography, Counihan uses testimonios[238] as a framework to balance her voice with those of her participants. Counihan cites John Beverley's definition of testimonio as "told in the first person by a narrator who is also the witness of the events she or he recounts…The production of a testimonio often

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[237] Nair.

[238] See Counihan, 211-212. "Testimonios emerged as a literary genre out of the liberation struggles of indigenous people, workers, and campesinos in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s and are widely known through the book *I Rigoberta Menchú* (Menchú and Burgos-Debray 1987)." See also, Stone-Mediatore (2003).

involves the tape recording and then the transcription and editing of an oral account by an interlocutor who is an intellectual, journalist, or writer."[239] I will add his contention from the same essay that testimonios "are not literary, not linguistically elaborated or authorial,"[240] thus delineating between fiction and nonfiction. With storytelling and traveling as central to my argument I wish to push back against Beverley's assertion and claim that the lines of fiction and non-fiction in testimonios and the feminist food ethnography I write are blurred. First-person accounts are often embellished and may not resonate with all members of a group. That said, the Latina Feminist Group's definition of testimonio points directly to why I choose to share Gullah stories in this way: Testimonios are "a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure."[241] I introduce each section, present relevant excerpts from participant interviews, adding brief connecting commentary,[242] and did not edit the selections used for readability. In some ways I feel as if I would be editing life out of the dialogue for the sake of the reader. Counihan was asked by her participants for this type of editing. I was not. If we are what we eat, then these stories help us move beyond a proverbial understanding of biology to the importance of food in emotional and cultural sustenance. As mentioned in the introduction, pseudonyms are not used. All the interviewees gave permission to use "real" names. In fact, some were against

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[239] Beverley 70-71.

[240] Beverley 130.

[241] Latina Feminist Group 2.

[242] Counihan, 8.

the use of pseudonyms and encouraged me to use as much identifying information as possible, including company names, websites and contact information.

With the narratives as evidence, I use food to contextualize relationships between the Gullah people I interviewed, and complicate terms of power relationships through examples of women who command respect and power via the production and sharing of food. There is respect in food because food is culture and history, which sustains families and communities. As David Sutton contends, there is an obviousness and taken-for-grantedness of food that is worthy of focus.[243]

As a student of Women's Studies and not formally of Anthropology, I consider my work an example of "experimental feminist ethnography" that Kamala Visweswaran argues as a possibility. From my first visit to the region in the capacity of researcher, I was acutely aware of my positionality as a white female academic. Over a period of these past six years I was invited into the homes, gardens, and kitchen spaces of Gullah people.[244] I've broken bread, cooked, and shared tea with them. I've kept in touch with some interviewees via social media, email, phone calls, and handwritten letters. Ervena Faulkner and I exchange Christmas cards every year, and I have accompanied her to farmers' markets, church, and to events at the St. Helena Island library. Anita Singleton-Prather, Sallie Ann Robinson, and I are connected via social media. That said, I must agree with Hortense Powdermaker, who in 1966 details in *Stranger and Friend* that "no matter how intimate and friendly I

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[243] Sutton 3.

[244] If I had more time, I would have stayed in the region for months, but was only able to make long-term visits.

was with the natives, I was never truly a part of their lives."[245] The graciousness with which I have been welcomed into Gullah spaces does not mean that I am a member of the culture; I know that I do not offer an objective view, as my identity comes along for the journey. Still, I work to create a narrative of Gullah culinary history that centers the stories of women and complicates the power relations between women, food, and culture.

In *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (2005) D. Soyini Madison argues from the beginning of her text that "with all of the good intentions, excellent craftsmanship, and even with the reliability and eloquence of a particular story, representing Others is always going to be a complicated and contentious undertaking."[246] It requires a deliberate method and certain set of ethics, but that does not mean that the representation needs to be dry, boring, or traditional; there is room for performance. Madison asks what is at stake with representation and argues that we must be accountable for the consequences of our representations and the implication of our message.[247] Good critical ethnography calls us to use our resources, skills, and privileges to access voices and experiences of subjects who are otherwise restrained and out of reach. Such a method "contributes to emancipator knowledge and discourses of social justice."[248] Although I reference ethnography, my

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[245] Hortense Powdermaker, *Stranger and Friend* (New York: Norton, 1966) 116.

[246] D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. 1st ed. (Sage Publications, Inc, 2005) 3-4.

[247] Madison 5.

[248] Madison 5.

collecting of these stories does not entirely fit that description, because I did not stay in the region for an extended period of time; rather, I made several brief visits.

Setting

The beauty of the South Carolina Lowcountry transcends its spectacular vistas. It is the evocative smell of salty ocean, swampy marsh and sweetgrass that envelopes you along with the ever-present humidity which hugs you close as you inch toward the shore. This smell is the sensory hallmark of my research, as the familiar smells rising from stoves are for my informants. These familiar smells draw them home, and me to them.

As indicated in previous chapters, the Gullah Geechee corridor stretches from Wilmington, North Carolina to Jacksonville, Florida, and extends approximately 40 miles inland. The setting for the ethnographic work is comprised mainly of the Sea Islands of South Carolina. I chose this region after attending a Gullah Studies Institute at the Penn Center on St. Helena Island, because it is the documented cornerstone of Gullah history and culture. However, information shared in the following interviews with Mary Mack and Anita Singleton-Prather gestures toward a widening of the designated borders of Gullah culture. As people travel, so does culture.

I conducted a total of nine in depth semi-structured interviews with Gullah women and men. Not all of the voices of my interviewees appear directly, but they all inform the project. I chose to include men in my interview sample because after years of research in the region, I have learned that while Gullah culinary history is arguably built on the backs of women, Gullah men are acutely aware of this and many wish to honor their foremothers via their cooking and carrying on of culture. The inclusion of

men in the sample does not decenter women as the focus of this project. Three major themes surfaced in the majority of the interviews and create the framework for the following stories: 1) the relationship between home and food, 2) Gullah food as a commodity, and 3) food, place, and Gullah/Geechee identity. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the points my interviewees want readers to take away from their stories. These stories are told around key topics: food and home, entrepreneurial endeavors, food and identity, and finally what the interviewees want the world to know about Gullah food. Stories from multiple interviewees intertwine under each theme.

Home is where the Food Is

Through a history of migration we learned how Gullah culture was formed, and through a filmic example we have seen how Gullah people have moved out of the Heritage Corridor but also traveled back to their Lowcountry homes of origin. These feminist food ethnographies provide examples of Gullah women who were born or have roots in the Lowcountry and for various reasons decided to leave, only to feel a deep pull back home years later. Some women did literally travel home, and some traveled via their food as they call to mind the homes they have left behind. Their senses are steeped in history, which allows them to remain rooted in and in some ways sustain their Sea Island heritage. So what does this kind of travel look like? What does it mean to come home again?

Most of the women and men I interviewed mentioned one person who seemed to be the main vessel of culinary knowledge in their families. In some cases they were speaking of themselves. These family members share the common thread of either

never leaving the Lowcountry or going away to pursue an education, a career opportunity or relationship, and then coming back home. And others have followed them.

Food, or rather the people who make good food, are like north stars for Gullah people who travel away from the Carolinas to follow home. Romeater Anderson from Lady's Island, South Carolina is one woman who has never left the Lowcountry for long periods of time, although her siblings have. When they come back to the Lowcountry or she goes to visit them in Maryland, the first thing she is expected to do is cook. They hold on to home via food, and wherever they are those memories spill out of her pots and pans. In a conversation with Ms. Anderson about home, she says that home is where she most likes to be, and that when her siblings look for comforting food, they look to her.

Anita Singleton-Prather encouraged me to speak with Ms. Anderson for the project and provided me with her phone number. Ms. Anderson replied almost immediately to my voicemail requesting a conversation. She invited me to the trailer she has outfitted with a full commercial kitchen from which she operates a small business, selling traditional Gullah lunches and dinners several days per week. Upon giving me directions, she asked if I knew where I was going. I answered affirmatively, as I was familiar with all of the roads she mentioned. In fact, the lunch spot was right off of the main roads that cuts through Lady's Island. The next day I allowed plenty of time to get to Ms. Anderson's place, giving myself a cushion in case the draw bridge that separates downtown Beaufort from Lady's Island decided to open on my way. The draw bridge did not open and I made my way down Highway

21 toward Port Royal, per the directions, but I could not find my destination! Several U-turns later, I entered Ms. Anderson's tree-covered, dirt driveway and saw the trailer on the right.

Figure 9: Romeater Anderson's Food Trailer on Lady's Island, South Carolina, August 2013. Photo, Katie White.

Ms. Anderson greeted me at the door, dressed in what appeared to be cooking scrubs and a hair net, and invited me to have a seat. The seating area was crowded, but cozy. The kitchen rightfully comprises most of the space. I made myself comfortable in a dark green plastic lawn chair at a small table, covered with a floral tablecloth. Despite being inside, I felt like I was sitting on someone's front porch. It was a hot, damp day on the Sea Islands, so the humidity was high in the trailer. The heat from the kitchen rose thick and sent the steamy smells of oxtail, red rice, and sweet potato pie swirling in the air. Ms. Anderson offered me a sweet tea while I waited for her to finish up a few last minute preparations for the lunch crowd.

Figure 10: Seating area, Romeater Anderson's food trailer, August 2013. Photo, Katie White.

Figure 11: Romeater Anderson and her commercial kitchen space, August 2013. Photo, Katie White

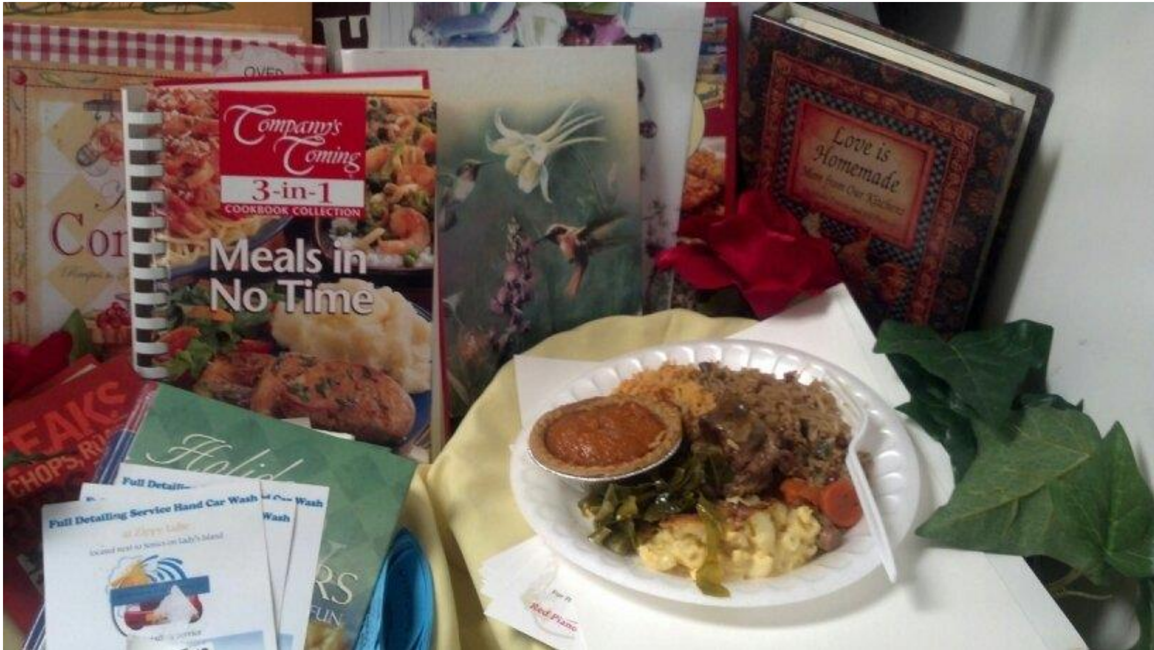

Figure 12: A full lunch plate from Romeater Anderson's kitchen surrounded by cookbooks in the seating area of the trailer, August 2013. Photo, Katie White

Once Ms. Anderson felt comfortable walking away from the stove, she joined me at the table with her own Styrofoam cup of sweet tea and we began our conversation. She was eager to share the story of the trailer's history with me and talk quickly turned to family.

> KW: You said you grew up near Burton. Have you lived your whole life in the Lowcountry or have you gone away and come back?
>
> RA: I visit, but I've never had the mind to actually move away to actually live away from home because I guess my grandmother when she was living was always here and I always took care of her, and then when my mother moved away and then she moved back home and I took care of her it was like all the other siblings moved away, but I always wanted to be like close to them. I would go and visit, but after my two weeks off I'd say, I'm going back home. I see y'all next year or whatever, but I'm going back home. I enjoy myself when I go, but I just love home.
>
> KW: When you say your other siblings moved away, do they cook Gullah food?
>
> RA: Nah, they love my food. They wait until they get here. When they come home, this kitchen is full! I just cook and they just eat. Like we were all

together for the Gullah festival. We had tables and chairs out there, friends and family stopped by and we just, they just pigged out.

It's only once a year, but yeah, they just love my cooking. Anytime any event is going on I better get Romeater to cook because ain't nobody else cooking. Give her the money and let her cook the food. I have a sister in Atlanta, bless her little heart, she be tryin'. She'll drive herself all the way from Atlanta just to get some oxtail stew. And I'll give it to her and she'll say "gurrrrllll." She'll drive here. She like, “Girl, you need to move to Atlanta and I say, “No I don't.”

KW: So that's what she misses, oxtail stew?

RA: Actually, she just misses my cooking. See I'll, like I said, I cooked for all my siblings when they were growing up so when they come home, they're coming home to mama cooking. Now my mother cooked, but she didn't raise them, I raised like all my siblings under me, so they always come for my cooking. For the famous bread pudding and sweet potato pie. Right now my brother live in North Carolina and every time I go up there or every time he come I make sure his pie and pudding are in the freezer to be ready to take back with him.

In Ms. Anderson’s case, her food represents a physical home and warmth, but also a maternal feeling and a connection to familial history. Her siblings find comfort in coming home to the same food that nourished them when they were young. Ms. Anderson repeats a cycle with her culinary creations that she remembers as part of her childhood, and now she not only conjures up similar memories for her siblings, she is also imprinting her food on the memories of her customers via homemade Lowcountry lunches and dinners. Food may not erase the reality of harsh events, but it can certainly provide a space to rest your mind and body for a short while. What is recalled in Ms. Anderson’s narrative is how, in fact, her food and the space she has created in her kitchen is emblematic of what home represents for others.

Like Ms. Anderson, Anita Singleton-Prather recounts similar memories of home through food. Whereas Ms. Anderson has lived in Beaufort County her entire

life, Ms. Singleton-Prather moved away to Washington, D.C. for college, yet came back. As the epigraph that begins this section suggests, "eat to remember...," and food memories are at the fore of what brought Ms. Singleton-Prather back home to Beaufort County, and what continues to bring Ms. Anderson's siblings back to her table on Lady's Island.

My interview with Ms. Singleton-Prather was the longest, not a surprise given her gift of gab. We first met in 2008 when she performed as Aunt Pearlie Sue, the character she has created to tell Gullah stories. We will hear more about Aunt Pearlie Sue and the entrepreneurship of Ms. Singleton-Prather later in the chapter. I interviewed Ms. Singleton-Prather for a project in 2009.[249] We kept in touch over the years and she was eager to participate in *Food on the Move*. The week we planned to meet was a very busy one for her, as the start of the new school year was imminent, and she was shuttling her grandchildren around for new school shoes and supplies. We met at a Golden Corral on Ribaut Road, a main thoroughfare connecting Beaufort and Port Royal. Ms. Singleton-Prather says the all-you-can-eat buffet restaurant has become a gathering place for Gullah people over the years, as a lack of time has contributed to a decline in Sunday and other large, formal dinners. Her granddaughter accompanied her and sat at an adjacent table, quietly reading and occasionally playing with her grandmother's phone. Beaufort was experiencing a heat wave, and we were all sweating and grateful for the bottomless sweet tea. Eating with Ms. Singleton-Prather at the Golden Corral was like eating with a local politician. She

[249] In all of the interviews I have conducted with Ms. Singleton-Prather, she has not assumed her stage persona, Aunt Pearlie Sue. She is only in character when she is performing on stage.

took phone calls, had lengthy conversations with friends and old acquaintances, and waved to most people who passed.

In a lengthy discussion about her brother moving to Philadelphia to train as a boxer and her travels to Washington, D.C., for college, Ms. Singleton-Prather describes why she detests snow, why she willingly left Washington, D.C., to come back to Beaufort, and why her friends and family still flock to the Lowcountry for good food and company. It is not just Ms. Singleton-Prather's cooking that keeps people coming back, but a history of cooking and hospitality begun by her grandmother.

> ASP: Oh yeah, girl, I always knew I wanted to come back home. The city was not for me. I am not a city girl. A couple months before graduation I was talking to my advisor and he said, "Anita, I have a job offer for you." And I said, "Oh wonderful!" Because I was a psychology major with a minor in early childhood education and they were looking for an early childhood educator with a minor in psychology, but they were willing to switch it around. And I said, "Ohh great!" He said, "Boston" and I said, "Boston where? I'm headed south." See, my first year up there my roommate was from Boston and said there was 24inches of snow. Uh uh. No. He said, "Well, what you gonna do? You gotta job?" I said, "uh, uh." He said, "Well what you got?" I said, " I got a mama, someplace to stay, I know I can get three square meals. I'm heading south. I ain't going nowhere colder than D.C. Boston? Are you for real? Oh no, not me! I don't do snow. And it snowed one time the three years I was in D.C. One time and it was right before spring break. Girl, I was afraid they were gonna cancel my train. Girl I was boo hooing. When I heard the tracks were open and I could head south. I hibernated I didn't go to class. I got the syllabus and when I saw attendance wasn't required I would go the week the paper was due and the week before finals. As long as I kept a 3.0 I kept Mama happy. If I was able to do that I was ok.

In Ms. Singleton-Prather's case, she not only had food to come back to, but someone to prepare it, as long as she kept Mama happy, I suppose. Her comments about home indicate an expectation of culinary labor from her mother. Her friends from Howard also came to appreciate her mother's and grandmother's labors in the kitchen, as she

recounts their affinity for the Sea Islands and their repeated visits during school breaks.

KW: And still be able to go to the club and all that?

ASP: Actually I didn't do a whole lot of clubbing in D.C. A lot of my friends were from New York , Richmond, VA, Fredericksburg, VA, Miami. Everybody wanted to come to Beaufort. Nobody wanted to go to Florida, New York, I think we went to Fredericksburg once. Everybody always wanted to come to Beaufort. All my college friends, my husband was from D.C.

KW: So he moved here?

ASP: Well, he moved here after we got married. But all my friends, even now, we've been out of college for 30 years almost and they still come here to visit. Beaufort was the partying spot. You would think everybody would want to go to New York, but everybody came here. There is something about Beaufort. And mother was a retired school teacher and they called her Mama Daise or Mama Dawg. My sister went to SCSU and her friends would come and my brother was at Savannah State and his friends would come and my brother was in Philly. My mama had a house full of college students. There'd be about 30 of us in there and she'd be up fixing grits, shrimp, crab patties, hot biscuits, and lunch was about the same thing, and by the time dinner was a pot of beans and greens and fish. And they loved it. Everybody loved and wanted to come to Beaufort…

ASP: It's so funny, I mean they come, and still even now my Mama's been dead almost ten years and they still say remember Mama used to cook this, Mama used to cook that. I mean we'd be sleeping everywhere, all over the place. I guess it really was all around food.

KW: The food brought them?

(Talk turns from Ms. Singleton-Prather's college friends to nostalgic memories of her mother and grandmother and her own culinary history.)

ASP: Yeah. And my mother always cooked. She was a school teacher, but she cooked all of the time. And my grandmother went up north to work and she stayed with her grandparents and my great-grandparents lived out by the air station. That was the settlement out there. Used to call it Edgerly. And they were rowing the boat across the river from behind where the Kmart is back to behind the air station, and the boat collapsed because they had lumber in it cuz they were getting ready to add another room to the house. And they both drowned at the same time so my mother ended up going to Shanklin boarding school which was out near Burton. It was basically like Penn's system. Both

were set up like Tuskegee Institute. That's where she met my father. He wasn't a resident. He would come and go, but my mother was a boarder there and so she started cookin I guess in elementary school for the boarding school, so she always loved cooking. And like my grandmother started me cooking, I guess when I was 3 or 4 years old. She used to have this 3-legged stool that was in her kitchen and that is where she would sit on and she'd be beatin'. I can see her now, she was beatin' a cake or whatever and then if I was cookin' at the stove that's where she would have me to stand on that to turn the chicken or whatever I was cookin'

KW: At 3 years old?

ASP: I couldn't have been more than 4. Cuz, I can remember leaning up too close to the frying pan and back then she didn't have no air conditioning and she was short and her ceiling must have been right here (gesturing to a low ceiling) so it was always hot. And her birthday's in June and she threw her own birthday party. She didn't have nobody else cook for her birthday party and she always wanted all this hot food. Ham, fried chicken and fried this, and baked macaroni and cheese, and baked, um, baked corn casserole or whatever. So you know I'm up there with these frilly drawers on and that's all, standing up on this thing and when I leaned up against the thing it was just my bare skin. One time I had this one brand right across here (gesturing to her stomach) and that was like my badge of honor.

KW: You learned quick!

ASP: Hmm. Hmm. I guess about the time I was about, oh gosh, about 8 or 9, I was cooking a full meal.

KW: What do you think the first thing, other than turning things, the first thing you made was?

ASP: Rice. Everybody learned how to cook eggs and stuff like that, but I'd say the first real cookin' was rice.

Like many Gullah people, Ms. Singleton-Prather learned to cook rice first. As a staple of the Gullah diet, it makes sense that the cooking of rice is passed along before most other recipes. What follows is an important discussion of Ms. Singleton-Prather’s grandmother and the labor she put into her work as a domestic worker, a manager of a boarding house, and the raising of her children and grandchildren. Ms. Singleton-Prather describes her grandmother’s house, food, and work, so vividly, we are

transported back in time to Beaufort in the mid-twentieth century. Elements of her home, such as the use of Irish linen tablecloths to the covering of her front porch in downtown Beaufort with fresh flowers, and the fact that she was always dressed in the latest trend from "high-falootin' stores" even if she had to put the items on lay-away, signify a certain class status. Such details serve as further evidence that this is a middle class study, as stated in the introduction.

> KW: And what did your grandmother say you do? This much water and this much rice? Was it a measurement or did she just say…?
>
> ASP: She'd tell you how to do it, you know, eyeball it. And if you didn't get it right she'd be like, uggghhh. And so you realized, ok, last time I did too much so maybe I need to put this much and you soon realized how to eyeball it.
>
> KW: So full meals at 9 or 10 would be?
>
> ASP: A meal I might've cooked would be rice, pork and beans with sausage and bacon in it and fried pork chops. That was a Saturday meal for us.
>
> KW: Now, did she always have the pot on for people who came by?
>
> ASP: Always, always. I mean my grandmother basically lived by herself, but she started, she started having boarders. Because a lot of men would come here to work when they were redoing the bridge and when they were doing the dredging down near Fripp Island. And so we lived with her. And I can remember between 9th or 10th grade she slipped and fell and broke her hip and that was the only time she was in the hospital for her whole lifetime. And when she got out I went to stay with her and I skipped 11th grade. Went from 10th to 12th grade and I would help her feed the boarders. And she worked a full-time job. She ran the Christianson's house. They were abolitionists who came down I think in the early 1800s from Boston and so I never remember my grandmother saying Miss anybody. It was Helen and Winnie and my grandmother would say, "Now Helen, didn't I tell you to stay out of my kitchen." Ok, Rosa! My grandmother was the real Madea. Tyler Perry created Madea, but she was the real Madea. Pistol in her pocketbook. Cussed like a sailor. She was maybe five feet tall. Busty. Very robust woman. Clothes was always immaculate. Everything was starched and pressed. Every hair had to be in place. My grandmother always bought the latest whatever. If she had to put it on layaway for a year it didn't matter she always had the best. She shopped at Shine's and Belk's and high-falootin stores. And she was an

> excellent seamstress. So when she would see something she liked she would say ok, I can make that. She made all of my mother's ball gowns and all of our Easter dresses. There was 3 of us, three sisters and three brothers and she did all of our Easter dresses, all of the smocking.
>
> But she had it well planned out. She'd get up in the morning and get breakfast made for all of her boarders, get their lunch packed and get them off and then she would go to work. She would drop me off at Kindergarten. The front part of the barber shop was the Kindergarten and the back part was where they cut the hair and it was on her way to work so she would drop me off and then go on to Miss Helen and get breakfast ready for them and lunch, dinner, and in between doing all of this, Miss Helen lived right on the water so she would decide if she wanted shrimp or crab or whatever and she'd go throw out the lines, pick the clothes up, wash the clothes or whatever, put the stuff out on the line, go check the lines, dip the crabs, come in and boil the crab. While her roast was in the oven she'd be pickin' the crab, and Miss Helen would come in and she'd say, "Miss Helen stay outta my kitchen. What do ya need? I'll get it fo ya." And get them all fed, get their dinner and everything all set and then 3:30/4 o'clock she's on her way home. By the time she get home, get her dinner ready so by the time the men get home from work and they get bathed up. And you know it's funny because as a child it seemed like her house was huge. I mean to this day I'm trying to figure out how that many men fit in her house. And she'd get in there and fix a meal and most of the vegetables she grew herself in the backyard. She had this huge vegetable garden. Just in the heart of Beaufort. We're talking about in the heart of the city, not talking about in the country. Um, and so whatever fresh vegetables and herbs she wanted she'd get out there and fix the food and her table was always immaculately set. She would just cringe at a paper plate, and plastic forks and stuff. She didn't play that. Irish linen tablecloth with nice, everything was set. All the bowls put out so the men could serve themselves and once they were done she'd get the dishes clean and that's when she would do her sewing. And so she'd sew and whatever, whatever, whatever and get ready for the next day. That's what she'd do.
>
> KW: In less than 24 hours…
>
> ASP: In less than 24 hours she'd get all that done. And in between, like I said, gardening. Her front porch was like a greenhouse. She didn't believe in buying flowers. She said "It didn't grow right until you steal a piece." So she'd pinch a piece of this and pinch a piece of that. I mean every inch of her front porch was covered except for where you walked in to front door and just a little aisle so she could get in to water the flowers. Everything was flowers.

Through the memories of Ms. Singleton-Prather's grandmother we see that feelings about home, and what calls people back, is a litany of senses – smells, sounds and

tastes of food, sights of pots on stoves and flowers covering porches, and feelings of familiar furniture and the embrace of family and friends. She intermixes the humorous, "Tyler Perry created Madea, but she was the real Madea," with intricate details about the ways in which her grandmother refused to set a table with paper and plastic products, even for men who were boarding in her house. She kept a certain aesthetic in the home, but not without a good amount of labor. She worked through the pain of a broken hip to tend to children, boarders, the Christianson home where she worked, and in her vegetable and flower gardens, all while keeping up appearances with fashion. While these types of actions may not be considered methods of cultural sustainability on the surface, I argue that what Ms. Singleton-Prather's grandmother was doing was carving out a place for her and her family in Beaufort society. Through her labor and desire, the family name and Gullah history live on in her grandchildren.

Entrepreneurial Endeavors

Anita Singleton-Prather can thank her cooking skills for seeing her through Howard University. To this day she cannot type, so her friend and fellow Gullah performer and entrepreneur, Ronald Daise of *Gullah Gullah Island*[250] fame, helped her graduate from high school by typing her papers. In college she originally struggled, but found a way to exchange her food for typing. Like her grandmother and legions of black people before her,[251] Ms. Singleton-Prather is an entrepreneur, or

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[250] *Gullah Gullah Island* was a television show on Nickelodeon (years) produced by and starring Ron and Natalie Daise, natives of Beaufort, South Carolina.

[251] For detailed history of black entrepreneurship in the United States, see the work of Juliet E K Walker, particularly, "Racism, Slavery, and Free Enterprise: Black Entrepreneurship in the United States Before the Civil War," *Business History Review*, 60 (Autumn 1986): 343-382. Jessica B. Harris

"one who organizes, manages, or assumes the risks of a business or enterprise."[252]

The conversation below began with my asking a question about the ways in which her Gullah culinary knowledge has traveled with her, and Ms. Singleton-Prather's memory took us back to a time when she realized that food could be used as currency:

> ASP: But, when I got to Howard I had to type all these papers. Still couldn't type. My neighbors got me out of high school, but I still couldn't type. So I had this girlfriend who was originally from Nassau, Bahamas, but she grew up and her grandmother raised them in Florida. She couldn't cook, but she could type.
>
> KW: Well, there you go.
>
> ASP: I couldn't type, but I could cook. (Laughing). So, I'd have all these hot plates going on 'cause you wasn't supposed to be cooking in the dorm. So I had a hundred hot plates going on in the dorm. Everybody's room had a hot plate on. So I'd have something cooking on somebody's hot plate, something else cooking on somebody else's hot plate and by the time I had all the hot plates together, we had dinner and she'd have my paper typed. So that's how I made it out of Howard.
>
> KW: That's pretty fantastic.
>
> ASP: You know we'd come home and my grandmother might give me things like crab meat, picked crab meat and shrimp, stuff like that and you know I always had rice.
>
> KW: So you were able to make rice on hot plates in your dorm?
>
> ASP: Oh yeah, girl. I had pots and pans up in there and I had a Grand Aunt that lived in D.C. So I would go, all my girlfriends and I, that's how I got 'em all to go to church on Sunday. We'd go out and party. Come in about 5 o'clock in the morning and get up and go. About 10 o'clock I'd get up and go knock on doors and everybody'd say "Ugh, I'm dead, I'm dead, just come by when you get ready to go to Aunt Maggie's house." And I'd say, "Uh uh, no church, no eat." And guess what? They'd be sittin' up in church with a little toothpick in their eyes, but they'd be sittin' up in church. It'd be so funny because one would be like, just leanin' and the other one would be leanin'on the other side

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discusses the prevalence of women in New Orleans, especially, selling sweets to make money post-Emancipation in *The Welcome Table* (1996). For a more recent discussion of food, gender, race, and entrepreneurship, see Psyche Williams-Forson, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs* (1996).

[252] Definition of "entrepreneur" from Merriam-Webster dictionary.

> of the pew and everybody'd be sleepin', but they'd be in church. Everybody'd be in church because they all wanted to go to my aunt's house because we didn't have, we didn't buy a meal plan. So, I mean, you know the only hot meal we got was at Maggie's on Sunday. And her kitchen wasn't any bigger from like from here (gesturing just a few feet from where we were sitting). It was really tiny so only three people could sit at her table at a time. So three people would sit at her table and eat and the rest of us would sit in her little living room. Then we'd switch in. By that time she'd have enough to feed about seven of us.
>
> KW: Where in D.C.?
>
> ASP: Um, Northwest area. Hmm hmm. She lived off 11th Street, NW. I lived, I lived off Meridian Road, I mean Meridian Dorm. Was that Meridian Street? I can't remember what they called it, but it was called Meridian Dorm. Meridian Hill Dorm. It was right next to the Meridian Hill Park. Right across from the embassies. It was right down and so on Sunday we'd go and Aunt Maggie would feed everybody and I would go on Friday, too. Every Friday she would have fried fish, cabbage and cornbread and fried potatoes. And that was our Friday meal because she was a widow by this time and she lived on top of her in-laws and I'd go and we'd have dinner together on Friday and then I'd bring the crew on Sunday. And she would have homemade cookies because she used to go to Vermont Avenue Baptist Church and she used to bake cookies, cakes, and pies. And after she fed us, everybody got a brown bag to take home to the dorms. So we would eat for Monday and Tuesday and I would go back to her Friday, but Wednesday it was nuts and raisins. Or if we put a couple of pins together we'd buy a 10lb bag of white potatoes and go to the microwave and put them in the microwave five times because they were so slow back then. And somebody would buy some butter and we'd get the salt and pepper out of the cafeteria and that would be it through the week. And like I said, the fish on Friday and then go over Sunday evening. That's how we kept everybody in church. Hallelujah!

Food became a conduit for Ms. Singleton-Prather to cultivate friendships and relationships with family in Washington, D.C. and maintain connections to her home in South Carolina, as well as to her church. She turned a deficit in not being able to type into a means of social networking and laid the groundwork for what would become her career as a caterer and professional Gullah storyteller.

Ms. Singleton-Prather uses her business, Aunt Pearlie Sue & Singleton's Catering, to combine food and cultural transmission through storytelling, dance, and

music. Her stage persona, Aunt Pearlie Sue, a mammified interpretation of a Gullah woman based on her own grandmother, is a performance, and she relies on her audience's understanding it as such. This is a risk Ms. Singleton-Prather takes in order to participate in the cultural sustainability of the Gullah heritage she is trying to preserve. That said, she is complicit in how she wants to be read. The character, complete with head scarf, patchwork dress, and strong Gullah accent, provides a way for Ms. Singleton-Prather to capitalize from a fraught stereotype of black women as mammies.

Aunt Pearlie Sue has become so ubiquitous in the Lowcountry that Ms. Singleton-Prather encouraged me to use the stage name as her real name in *Food on the Move*. The mask of the Gullah storyteller has almost subsumed her real identity. If she is complicit in the reading of Aunt Pearlie Sue, perhaps she is engaging the mask that Paul Laurence Dunbar so eloquently and painfully questions, "Why should the world be over-wise, in counting all our tears and sighs? Nay, let them only see us while we wear the mask."[253]

What happens when the lines between the mask and reality are blurred? What if the audience does not see the agency in the performance or understand that there is a real person behind the mask of the caricature? These are arguably some of the risks of entrepreneurship. Historian and food scholar, Leni Sorensen[254] is an historical interpreter at Monticello, and she is so believable that visitors to Thomas Jefferson's

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[253] *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, Ed. Joanne M. Braxton. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993).

[254] For more on Leni Sorenson's work, see Kendra Hamilton's article, "Living by Hand." *Virginia Living*. August 2010. http://www.virginialiving.com/home-garden/Outside/living-by-hand/

home leave thinking she is a legitimate 17th Century hearth cook. Ms. Singleton-Prather runs the risk of blurring the lines between fiction, history, and reality, but she does so with the goal of telling her version of the story of the Sea Island Gullah people, and audiences continue to grow.

Figure 13: Anita Singleton-Prather as Aunt Pearlie Sue. www.knowitall.org

Figure 14: Anita Singleton-Prather not in character. www.knowitall.org

She has made it part of her mission to include Gullah women chefs and caterers in her productions, especially her Gullah Christmas showcase, held during

the first weekend of December every year on the University of South Carolina Beaufort campus.

Figure 15: Advertisement for Aunt Pearlie Sue and the Gullah Kinfolk's Christmas Show, http://kokoamag.com/meet-anita-singleton-prather/, November 2014.

KW: Who are some of the other caterers?

ASP: Susan Jenkins and Mary Jenkins, they call themselves J&J Jenkins and Jenkins. What I ask each caterer to do is a rice dish. Everybody has to do a rice dish, a vegetable, do chicken some kinda way, so if I'm doing smothered chicken or jerk chicken then the next person will do smothered chicken or curried chicken. Everybody do some different kind of chicken. And um, you know collard greens, somebody may do rutabaga, string beans, somebody may do cabbage. So that people get a taste of all of these different kind of Gullah foods. Susan and them usually do some kind of crab and shrimp. I usually do an okra rice. One of my friends usually does a peas and rice. Somebody else do a shrimp, sort of a shrimp almost like a Spanish yellow rice. So you know you get to taste a variety of food. And you know all kinds of desserts. Cobblers, bread puddins, cakes, rum cakes, cookies, and you just eat as long as you want…Well, we do this event every December, the first weekend of December and we do it in conjunction with Night on the Town. Downtown Beaufort has a big 'ol block party so people get dressed, come downtown at 6 and they can come to us at 7. We open the doors at 6:45.

KW: Isn't there some sort of boat show that weekend?

ASP: Yes, the boat parade is on Sunday. So people can come down and make a weekend of it.

KW: There's that tourism piece again.

ASP: Umm hmm. We try to make sure that people have plenty of stuff to do. Plenty to do.

KW: And you have the Lands End Festival coming up, too?

ASP: Yep

KW: Who supplies all the food for that?

ASP: Susan and those usually. They have quite a few vendors that come out. I use to try to cook for those festivals, but I don't like to cook and not know how many people are going to be there. That's why I like catering. Because I know, ok how many people? Ok. 20 people. 200 people. 300 people. Ok gotcha. So I'm good with that. Like I have a cousin in Beaufort and she caters. In fact she's catering something for 500 people this weekend. Another friend of mine, Janie, Romeater, so those are some of caterers who are trying to do, we are trying to do. I just had a new corporation set up called Gullah Traveling Theater and all of that is going to be the food so if Janie can't go this time, Romeater gets to go because I'm not going to try to do a show and cater, too. Can't do it all. Don't want to do it all. I see God using me to open doors. To open doors so that other people can have their businesses showcased. That was the whole idea behind Gullah Christmas. So the caterers come in and I don't charge them anything and we try to get as much of the food donated as possible and all I tell 'em is have your business cards. And some people have had the chance to get some catering gigs because people have the chance to taste their food. So, and the same thing with the artists. The artists come up with their art and I don't ask them to pay anything. You know I say if you want to give a $25 donation to help offset the cost ok, but no problem. Come and set up. Doesn't take anything away from my show. Now we have this little mini Christmas Gullah festival going on because we have the artwork and the food and we set up in the lobby so people can sit and eat and soft music is playing. 6:50 is the curtain call for our show.

Although I have had conversations with Gullah people who have tried to give me a hard sell for their books or food or other creative enterprises, it is safe to say that most are like Ms. Singleton-Prather. While she is interested in making a living for herself,

she is most interested in sharing Gullah culture with the world and lifting her friends and family up in the process. One of the women she has shined a spotlight on is Romeater Anderson, who is the caterer she chooses to take with the production when it goes on the road.

Ms. Anderson retired from hospital foodservice, and in retirement has begun a full service catering business. Every weekend she sells traditional Lowcountry hot lunches and dinners from her trailer, which she has converted into a commercial kitchen. Fridays she will open for lunch and stay open until about 7pm for dinner. People stop by after they get off of work for a home-cooked meal and even order enough food for the weekend because they enjoy it. In the middle of the interview she handed me a catering menu to illustrate the types of food she makes along with the prices. It was not clear how she built a customer base, so I engaged her in a conversation about marketing and the reasons behind the foods she served.

> KW: Do you advertise your space at all or is it all word of mouth?
>
> RA: Actually I've advertised on like Facebook. I've advertised to different business in Beaufort and different leaders I've given my flyers, too. In fact I have these flyers right here that I put in different places. I just launched that menu right there. So you can have that if you want to. This is some of the things I made when we went to Texas. We have some of the stew platters.
>
> KW: You even have sandwich platters.
>
> RA: Yeah, that's for like if you have a group that comes to town and they have like 25 people and want a boxed lunch or whatever. I'll do that. Up here is like the kitchen menu and down here is like the catering menu. Some people ask me to cater sometimes and want a big old pan of macaroni and cheese or hoppin' john or want 100 pieces of baked chicken or stewed chicken or whatever. So you know I kind of like let them know how much it would run them if I actually did that for them. Basically when it comes to putting out any type of food I probably couldn't get all of that on that. So you know, I just throw out the main things that I know people want and when they ask "so can you make this or make that" I say yeah, you know.

> KW: I don't doubt it. So what's on the menu today?
>
> RA: Well, we've got the bbq ribs, I got the turkey wings, the oxtail stew and I'll let you taste some of it all before you leave. I've got collard greens. I've got cabbage. Bread pudding, cornbread muffins. Sweet potato pie.
>
> KW: A little of everything?
>
> RA: Yeah! Cuz like I say, when I actually opened the kitchen up I actually went through a rough run through draft, I just opened up a bunch of different type food. One Saturday I like food fest just to see what people actually liked and out of all the food that I've done it was the ribs, oxtail stew, wing/turkey wings, red rice, peas and rice, collard greens and cabbage, and macaroni and cheese, gotta be macaroni and cheese and I just married it down to that. And if somebody asks for a special request like I want some smothered liver and onions, I say hey, that's no problem. But you try not to cook stuff that people don't normally order.
>
> KW: Because then you waste it.
>
> RA: Right, right. So, but if somebody say I just want me some grilled honey mustard chicken with some mushrooms on there or somethin' I can do that, that's no problem, but it's not on the menu because it's not somethin' that people order every day. Like gumbo. People eat a lot of gumbo in the winter months when it's cold, or potato soup and stuff like that.

My conversation with Ms. Anderson elicits themes of home, movement, and love, even though she has never lived outside of the Sea Islands. Of course it is helpful to make a living doing what she loves, but the joy Ms. Anderson gets from feeding people and making them feel good is evident. She says, "… A lot of people don't even like you to get to the stove anymore and even cook. But this is something I enjoy doing. I love what I do. Just when people come and say like wow, I really enjoy this. I love coming to see you. I'm like ok, I'll be here." Our interview ended with her giving me a taste of a Gullah plate piled high with oxtail, greens, cornbread, macaroni and cheese, and red rice. For $10.00 it was a steal and easily fed me for both lunch and dinner. As I was leaving, a gentleman was coming in the door, hollering a big

hello to Ms. Anderson. She was on the phone taking orders and telling potential customers to hurry over so she wouldn't run out of their favorites before they arrived. Ms. Anderson has created a community Gullah kitchen of sorts. People know they can stop by and get a plate of food that may take them back to their own dining room tables at a time when a family member spent the day cooking and filling their home with the smells, sounds, and tastes of cooking. She is selling more than food. She is selling memories, as evidenced by the man who stopped by for lunch. He kept talking about how he had been thinking about her food all week. He said it reminded him of the food he ate growing up.

Like Ms. Anderson, Valerie Erwin[255] is in the business of selling food memories, as well, but it is unclear whether they are her own or those of Gullah myth. In her restaurant, Geechee Girl Rice Café in Philadelphia,[256] she calls upon her Gullah roots to create a Lowcountry food experience for northerners. Her mother's people were from South Carolina, but moved to Philadelphia in the 1920s looking for jobs. Her father's father died young, but grew up in Savannah. Although she and her sisters did not have bucolic visits with their Gullah grandmother growing up, their mother and father occasionally shared food memories. Ms. Erwin remembers that her mother would make classic Lowcountry recipes such as hoppin' john at the New Year with a hog jowl in the pot to ensure luck and wealth for the coming year. However,

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[255] The Geechee Girl Rice Café came to my attention in a Google search for Gullah restaurants in 2008. Upon further research, I learned of Ms. Erwin's association with the Southern Foodways Alliance. A cold email and call from the information on the restaurant website was my method of contact. She obliged me with an interview.

[256] The Geechee Girl Rice Café had closed by the time of this printing. The last dinner service was 12/31/14.

her father was the cook in the family. The first food she remembers watching him make was pasta with a well of flour with a broken egg in it. She remembers thinking, “that will never work. What could that possibly turn into?” It eventually became homemade ravioli. Ms. Erwin remembers cooking from the early age of 11. A custard that her father used to make, but she always had a difficult time replicating, has both haunted her and provided inspiration for how she writes recipes for her restaurant. When she conceives of a dish, no matter how difficult it is, she remembers him saying, “Oh, you can make that” (in reference to the custard).

Her restaurant in Philadelphia drew the attention of the Food Network program “Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives,” which, along with articles in local papers, provided a high level of marketing. She says that a large majority of her customer are from around the immediate area. The Lowcountry story behind the restaurant is just an added impetus for customers outside of the neighborhood to visit. People who vacation in the Lowcountry or who are interested in the pan-southern movement happening in restaurants nationwide are likely to make reservations because they feel a certain connection or nostalgia. Ms. Erwin said that in particular, black people come from all over to support her and her family. To add to the experience for those customers wishing to recreate a Gullah culinary memory, Ms. Erwin makes every attempt to source products from the Heritage Corridor – Carolina gold rice, Anson Mills grits, and Sea Island red peas when available. Her produce is sourced from local farms and orchards or farmers’ cooperatives. “You do realize how much flavor is in these products,” she says. “The local, heirloom movement has to be led by chefs. Chefs have to create the demand.” Having just received the news that the Geechee

Girl Rice Café closed on December 31, 2014, I can only speculate that the demand that Ms. Erwin is speaking of is a struggle to create even with a wealth of local and national marketing and support.[257]

Are You a True Saltwater Geechee?

Mary Mack is the owner of the Red Piano Too art gallery right down the street from the Penn Center and the Gullah Grub restaurant on St. Helena Island. She lives on a beautiful piece of property on Coffin Point on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. From her living room you can see a sweeping vista of the Intercoastal Waterway. This is where we sat for the first part of the interview, as the sun went down casting rays on the hundreds of pieces of Gullah art covering her walls. It is a spectacular home, imparting both comfort and beauty. We spent the rest of the evening at her dining room table enjoying a dinner she just whipped up by adding some ingredients to a lunch that she never got around to eating. Fish chowder that she claims was too salty, rice, cornbread, salad and wine, "so it's pretty simple," she says. Other than simple, she refers to what she prepared as "backed into food" made with seafood leftovers from a restaurant and whatever else she had on hand. Although she loves to cook and has a long held desire to publish a cookbook featuring Gullah art, Ms. Mack says she does not cook very often since she lives alone. Her son did call that day to let her know that he has an appetite for shrimp and okra, so she plans to make that tomorrow when he makes the drive back home to see her and feed his soul.

[257] Professor H.G. Parsa from the Ohio State University published a study in 2005 that used both quantitative and qualitative analysis to test the common myth that as many as 90% of restaurants fail in their first year. Parsa's data points to a 30% failure rate, as does the National Restaurant Association.

This sounds like the scene of any Gullah home – fish stew and rice on the stove, Gullah art on the walls, St. Helena Island, a son calling home for shrimp and okra, but Mary Mack's "Gullahness" is often questioned. Her light skin and birth in nearby Colleton County, which has fresh water sources as well as saltwater, led folks on St. Helena Island to ask, "but are you are true saltwater Geechee?" To this she responds:

> Mary Mack: Uh, a lot of people, I mean most people don't consider me that because I wasn't born in Beaufort County, but my roots are here and I grew up here. I consider myself a Gullah woman. I married a Gullah man. My children are Gullah so...It was a different experience growing up here, living here because the amount of miscegenation that took place in other sections of the state didn't occur in Beaufort county because the plantations in Beaufort County were primarily run by Africans. They didn't have a lot of owners present nor white overseers so the population was a darker population. Uh, so I mean although there had been some light-complexioned people, uh, my brothers most, well, three, four of my brothers are lighter than I am. They look much more Caucasian than I do. My brother Haywood had a terrible time. And people respond to things differently, too. Uh, you know kids used to call us white all of the time and say "you were in the wrong school" and "what are you doing here?" stuff like that. I worked in a prison in NY. I'm a registered nurse by basic profession. And uh, I worked, as the director of nursing of a 250 bed psychiatric division and we had a forensic unit and we had even up there they would say, "oh, I know what your mother was doing." You know stuff like that to try and incite anger. But, my parents were married. My father was a white-looking man who passed for white for many years in the northeast, but he had mixed parentage you know someplace down the line and uh, it just got passed on from generation to generation with light-skinned people marrying light-skinned people and our situation had occurred that way and some of my relatives married less darker people and uh, but that was...If you look different, people talk to you differently sometimes, so at least at some time they did, hopefully we are getting to a point, I say hopefully, we don't notice differences so much, but we do. I mean children uh, are much more prone to verbalize it.

Figure 16: Mary Inabinet Mack in her art gallery, Red Piano Too, St. Helena Island, SC, http://gullahgeecheenation.com/2013/03/01/penn-center-celebrates-we-be-women/

Anita Singleton-Prather who also has roots in Colleton County argues against the position that the Sea Islands are the beginning and end of Gullah culture.

> You know what? One of the things, Katie, that I've gotten away from is that I tell people, not that I always do it right, but I try not to judge. I don't always make it. So what I tell folks is the only thing I'm going to tell ya is I'm going to tell my story. You understand what I'm saying? Because I've had people even question me. People insinuate "well, if it's not off the island…" And I say, wait a minute, you don't know where we went when we escaped these plantations. You don't know where the masters took us from these plantations. There are Gullah speaking communities in the Caicos and Turk Islands that went there during the Revolutionary War with those masters who were still loyal to the King of England. We went all over. So, how are you going to put it in a box and say, if it isn't just off St. Helena then it ain't Gullah? You call yourself a nation. And at one time you say the nation is from Jacksonville, NC, all the way down to Jacksonville, FL. That's a contradiction. Wherever we went we took our culture. And we ended up everywhere. I didn't try and change being Gullah when I went to school in D.C. I've slowed my accent down since I've gotten back here. They thought I was from, they say, "You from the island?" and I say, "yeah!" They what island, St. Croix? St. Thomas? I say, St. Croix? St. Thomas? I'm from Lady's Island, whatchu talkin about?

> (Makes a blahblahblah babbling noise to signify Gullah) And they, "Girl, don't get that Geechee goin' here, I'm gonna cuss you out." So you know, I get crazy when people talk about that. What I've gotten, I came to the conclusion and it's this, even you have a Gullah experience you can talk about because you've been here. And just talkin. That's an experience. I tell people, when you pass gas, that's an experience. So to tell people they don't have Gullah experience, that's crazy. Gullah is not Gullah cuz it's all black. Gullah is Gullah because it is a blending of all of the cultures that came here together during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. That included European cultures, African cultures, and Native American cultures. It is the blending of all of that that came together. It didn't leave anybody out. So when I hear people try to make it [?], that's crazy! That's just like smotherin' the canary. So, I just try to tell my story. I grew up here. This is what happened with Anita. This is what I remember my mother and grandmother telling me. This is what I remember my grandmother doin'. This is what I remember my grandfather doin'. My dad's people are from Colleton County. So what are you gonna say people in Colleton County ain't Gullah? Go up there and talk to my cousins and you better take an interpreter because you can't understand them. I can't understand them. You understand me? So when I hear people talk I just say, let me tell you something if anybody tried to make, tried to pigeon-hole me, say ok, thank you and you leave that alone because Gullah is across the African diaspora. It is everywhere. Everywhere. It is the blending of all the cultures that came together. We go, we went everywhere. We got 'em up in Canada. We went everywhere. Some of us went back home to Africa. So all I do is tell folks, let me tell you my story.

And tell her story is exactly what Ms. Singleton-Prather does, both professionally and in casual conversation. She sees no other way to carry on the Gullah cultural legacy than to do just that. Both Ms. Mack and Ms. Singleton-Prather push for an understanding that Gullah culture transcends borders, a contention that needs to be embraced in for the cultural sustainability of the people, foodways, language, spirituality, and history. Both of these women bring to bear the question, who is and who ain’t Gullah, in much the same way that Riggs questions in his film *Black Is…Black Ain’t*. Ms. Mack and Ms. Singleton-Prather are claiming a more nuanced mixture or gumbo of identities in Gullah culture. From their perspective, Gullah can be light-skinned and from the mainland, just as it can mean dark-skinned and from

the Sea Islands. For these women, Gullah identity moves because Gullah people do. Implicit in these arguments is the reality that not all Gullah people have a vested interest in cultural sustainability, the GGNHC, or even Gullah foodways. Ms. Mack and Ms. Singleton-Prather are indicative of a group of people that are concerned with these issues, though, and are in fact, making it their life's work to tell the stories of Gullah people, art, foodways, and history.

Outreach

Similarly, Ervena Faulkner has dedicated her life to educating Gullah children in Beaufort County schools, writing about Gullah foodways in her weekly column in *The Beaufort Gazette*, and participating in many ways as an historic preservationist on the board at the Penn Center. What makes Ms. Faulkner's contributions unique is that she is not Gullah. She was born in Columbia, South Carolina, and came to Beaufort in 1960 from 135 miles away to teach. Like Ms. Mack and Ms. Singleton-Prather, Ms. Faulkner wants the larger world to know about the distinct Gullah foodways.

> EF: There is IS Gullah cuisine. Gullah cuisine has the base of rice and the Africans who came here came here to plant rice. So, they've got their rice culture here and mixed with the English people here, that's their history. So things like hoppin' john, peas and rice, all those rice dishes, shrimp and rice, are truly Gullah cuisine. Um, they did it not knowing they were doing that. That was their way of survival…But, there is Gullah cuisine.
>
> KW: Um, so the question I get from people who don't know anything about Gullah food, culture anything is, how is that different from Lowcountry or southern? What's the difference?
>
> EF: See, I'm a Southerner. I came here from 135 miles away. The way mothers here prepared their meals, that's the way my mother prepared. My mother was a midlands person (?). See, there's a difference. They do more with um, say red rice, they'd never heard of red rice before.

> KW: In Columbia?
>
> EF: Yeah. The methods of cooking things were different than the way I learned how to cook. So I would say, yes.
>
> KW: How were the methods different?
>
> EF: They would cook theirs. The pots would stay on cooking longer.
>
> KW: Here?
>
> EF: Yeah. They use more, more pork was used than I had ever heard of in different ways. They knew how to use shrimp, and fish, and crab. Everything was served with rice. They eat rice every day.
>
> KW: So fish, shrimp and crab in Columbia wouldn't happen?
>
> EF: No, we didn't have any fish. We didn't eat rice every day. We eat rice here every day. So that is what makes it Gullah. I would argue with anybody that said there was not Gullah cuisine. Just like there is a Creole. A little intertwining, but not the same because Creole people don't do a lot with rice. They do a lot with beans there. They do a lot with peas here.
>
> KW: It's like people in Barbados and that part of the Caribbean, though dishes are similar.
>
> EF: There are [similarities]. The boat stopped there first. But, people in Barbados are doing more with sugarcane and sugar than they are doing here.

Walking through the towns of Beaufort, Port Royal, Lady’s Island, and St. Helena Island with Ms. Faulkner is like being accompanied by a celebrity. She has now taught multiple generations of family members, and most everyone in Beaufort County has at least heard of the prolific educator, even if they have never had her in class. She is always willing to stop and offer a Gullah history lesson for anyone who will listen and even those who will not! What she lacks in Gullah roots, she has more than made up for in her role as Gullah ambassador.

What Do You Want the World to Know About Gullah Culture?

To facilitate my charge to "keep talking about us," I deferred to my interviewees for the final question I asked in each interview. I asked what they wanted the larger world to know about Gullah culture. This is a question I tend to ask anyone in the Lowcountry in casual conversation as well as formal interviews, because my conjectures matter much less than the desires of the people informing the stories I tell. Many of the responses to this question were based on a similar theme: we are here and we are worth knowing about. Romeater Anderson waxed poetic about the sensory component of Gullah food and the goal she has for anyone who sits at her table:

> I would want them to know that hey, if you have had a stressful day or whatever and at the end of the day of you just want to come and sit down and eat some good comfortin' food it will really make you feel great, it will really take all the stress away from you. (Laughing). It is because basically it is just a comfortin' food. It's like, it's almost like mom is there because now if you notice you don't get that now where grandma used to be home cookin' all day and you used to come home and got off the school bus and I don't care some bully bully you all day, but when you got home to that table and she had some of that good Lowcountry Gullah food, you forgot about that day. It's just like wow, that never happened. You lookin' forward to gettin' there. You at school, but boy, I could just almost smell that tater and yams that she cookin' in that kitchen. I think man, hurry up and get home![258]

Romeater is using nostalgic memory to communicate Gullah culture to anyone who is unfamiliar with it. Even if you have never run off of a school bus to dig into a dish your grandmother made, you have likely felt comforted in some way by food or a memory made with food at the center. In this way, Anderson makes Gullah culture relatable and relevant.

[258] Romeater Anderson, Oral interview, August 2014.

Gullah men, like Chef David and Emory Campbell, both draw on memories of the women in their lives to discuss food. Chef David channels his grandmother in all of his culinary endeavors, and Campbell credits his mother and sisters for teaching him to cook and respect Gullah cuisine. They both want people to know that the islands, specifically their native Hilton Head, have changed over the years, but that the footprint of Gullah culture remains. Chef David has dreams of starting community gardens on the island to grow familiar crops that form the base of Gullah cuisine: okra, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes, to name a few. He envisions these gardens as catalysts for Gullah cooking demonstrations and for excess produce given back to the community via food banks, for example. Campbell speaks of the changing island in terms of growth:

> I tell you, we can't get used to this growth. Hard to believe. Hard to believe. And that's why we tell the memory of the area when we do our tour because it's hard to believe to most people. And we still have some of the old landscape…we can still kind of connect the dots. If you see the old landscapes you can say, ok, now I can see what was.[259]

Chef David and Campbell are just two Gullah people of many who are interested in the larger population's not only knowing who they are now, but understanding where they come from and how their culture is still imprinted in the land around them. Theirs is an important point that is taken up in greater detail in the following chapter on the future of Gullah culture and foodways.

Anita Singleton-Prather's response is that Gullah culture is everywhere. Although she agrees with people like Chef David and Campbell that the histories of the individual islands are important, she wants the world to know that Gullah culture

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[259] Emory Campbell, Oral Interview, August 2014.

permeates these borders through food, art, music, spirituality, family, oral tradition and storytelling and the movement of Gullah people into and out of these "original" locations. While one of the cultural and historical seats of the Gullah are the Sea Islands near Beaufort and Charleston, one could easily argue that similar locations like Sapelo Island and Savannah, Georgia deserve the same recognition.[260] Through Gullah food and the senses of Gullah people, the Gullah culture travels. I am not just studying a culture, a history, foodways. I am invested in helping a certain group of people – Gullah women – have their voices heard and underscoring the importance and power of storytelling, in some instances through the shared memories of their sons, brother, and grandsons.

In 1989 The Personal Narratives Group, in *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives,* stated: "Listening to women's voices, studying women's writings, and learning from women's experiences have been crucial to the feminist reconstruction of our understanding of the world."[261] Beyond listening, women's lives should be considered in context: "Neglecting the context from which a life is narrated invites the risk of misunderstanding and misinterpretation."[262] Voice is also a crucial component of context. None of the authors in the Personal Narratives Group are comfortable with traditional scholar's

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[260] For a history of the Georgia Sea Islands, see *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*.

[261] The Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) 4.

[262] The Personal Narratives Group 19.

assumption of voice, of authority in creation or interpretation. They would much rather see a shared ownership of the final written product.

By using the full names of my interviewees and printing their conversations verbatim, I see Romeater Anderson, Sara Bush, Emory Campbell, Valerie Erwin, Ervena Faulkner, Charlotte Jenkins, Mary Mack, Sallie Ann Robinson, and Anita Singleton-Prather as co-authors. Even though, "when talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong,"[263] even though what is revealed may not be a whole truth, they are speaking from their experience, which as previously discussed is valuable when narrating the lives of women. These voices are the most important ingredient in *Food on the Move* and in the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Corridor, which is the focus of the next and final chapter.

[263] The Personal Narratives Group 61.

Fifth Course: Momma's Homegrown Collards

Nutritionists call collards a perfect food, offering nearly everything you need to survive. While they're easy to grow year-round in Daufuskie's climate, winter collards are sweeter and more tender. Besides, they were the only thing, other than turnips and rutabagas, in our winter garden.

Momma called them "greens fo' da soul." She would cook up a batch for nearly every Sunday dinner – with fried chicken, red rice, and tad salad. Church was at noon and dinner followed at 2:00 or 3:00. If Momma didn't go to church, she be finishing the meal when we walked in the door. If Momma did go, she'd get up early and cook, then have dinner waiting on the back burner. As we walked into the yard, the simmering collards would greet us with their distinct aroma. We couldn't get out of our Sunday clothes fast enough to sit down to Momma's collards (not to mention the rest of the meal).

1 large bunch collards (about a third of a bushel basket if you pick your own)
2 pieces smoked pork neck bone
2-3 pieces fresh pig tail
½ fresh pig's foot
1 ham hock
1 large onion, diced
Salt and black pepper to taste

Cut the collards into 1 to 2-inch pieces, wash them in warm to hot water at least two or 3 times, then leave them in warm water until needed. Place all the meat in a large pot, two-thirds filled with water, cover, then boil 20 to 30 minutes. Drain the water and refill the pot, then cover and boil the meat again for about an hour. Drain the collards, add them to the cooked meat and stock, along with onion, salt, and pepper. Cook the whole potful for another 30 to 45 minutes. Some people like greens cooked less, so they're chewy. The longer you cook them, the tenderer they get. Serve alone, over rice, grits, or potatoes, or as a side dish.

- Sallie Ann Robinson, *Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way* 44-45

Conclusion: Tied Together with a Corridor: A Sustainable Future for Gullah Foodways

"…remember that we all have to live in this country together, and I believe that the Negro people have enough land to get by with right now. As a matter of fact, did you know that one Geechee after another is selling little parcels of land right off those islands? The white folks are going to build resorts and hotels like in Puerto Rico; won't that be something?[264]

- Hilda Effania to Sassafras in *Sassafras, Cypress, and Indigo*

What and how we cook is the ultimate implication of who we are. That's why I know my God can cook – I'm not foolish enough to say that I could do something the gods can't do. So if I can cook, you know God can.
- Ntozake Shange, Epilogue, *If I Can Cook/You Know God Can*[265]

Food on the Move offers a new riff on a familiar tale of culinary practice. Ntozake Shange's contention that her God must be able to cook because she can, points to a larger conversation about the mark that Black people have left and continue to leave on the American cultural landscape, particularly through foodways. As Shange says, "…We've done more than survive. We've found bounty in the foods the gods set before us, strength in the souls of black folks…,"[266] which parallels the idea that Gullah people made and continue to make "something out of nothing" across diaspora.

This project began with the framing question: how does Gullah food travel? Through the preceding four chapters we have seen how a dynamic cuisine has been built largely as a result of migration and movement and the creativity and indigenous

[264] Shange 119.

[265] Shange 103.

[266] Shange 103.

and sustaining knowledge of Gullah people. Chapter 1 took us through the history of a people and a cuisine, beginning with the forced migration of West Africans to the Carolinas and the earliest rice crops dredged and tended by slaves, through the present moment to the goal of *Food on the Move*: the cultural sustainability of Gullah culture and foodways along the GGNHC. The challenges of the GGNHC and potential proposals for use are explained as mechanisms for sustainability. Chapter 2 introduced the publication of cookbooks used as conduits for the passing on of recipes and culinary knowledge to a public outside of the Geechee Corridor. Although it was illegal for the majority of enslaved people in the United States to be literate, some black women found ways to publish via dictation. Or white women from the South took it upon themselves to write down the recipes that were created by their enslaved domestics and later, in post emancipation, their servants in the Lowcountry.

In Chapter 3 I argued for fictive representations of Gullah women as credible narrative examples of transmitters of culture, particularly via foodways. The character in *Daughters of the Dust*, particularly Yellow Mary, serve as fictive yet illustrative representations for the Gullah people I interviewed in real life. Yellow Mary has deep roots in the Lowcountry, and food is a major connection to home for her. Dash's exemplary narrative comes to "real life" in Chapter 4, with the feminist food stories based on semi-structured interviews with nine Gullah people. Food moves in and out of these narratives, and the participants engaged their nostalgic and sensory memories by producing foodstuffs to sample as proof. The last, concluding chapter ties together the themes of culinary history, cookbooks and film as affective production, and the

power of narrative, as mechanisms for storytelling and crucial elements needed for the cultural sustainability of Gullah foodways within the GGNHC. More importantly, possible sustainable practices, conceived through an intersectional lens, are suggested in the spirit of hope that this federally recognized heritage area will offer space for celebration, reflection, and remembrance.

Next Steps

A second issue that has been considered throughout *Food on the Move* and one that will see it into the future is, how are Gullah foodways sustained? Is it through restaurants, festivals, or small operations such as Romeater Anderson's lunch trailer or Aunt Pearlie Sue's catering? Is it through organizations such as the Lowcountry Rice Culture Project, or larger entities such as the GGNHC? The simplest answer to this question right now means ascertaining how best to use GGNHC's resources, in terms of the demarcation of space, as well as the federal monies and leadership development. Ideally, *Food on the Move* will help push the GGNHC Commission to consider the importance of including people dedicated to the cultural sustainability of Gullah foodways in its discussions and appointing them to leadership positions. Food is not on the periphery; rather, it is an essential aspect of an entire culture that is being sustained.

Although the Commission is making traction with the management plan, not all people invested in the preservation and sustainability of Gullah culture are represented on the governing body. Nor has the call for citizens of the Corridor to respond to the management and construction of the interpretive sites been heard as widely as many in leadership roles may think. In my conversation with Sallie Ann

Robinson and Ervena Faulkner, Robinson indicated that she has not been asked to participate and has not seen the calls for community meetings that Faulkner said have appeared in local newspapers. Robinson did know that no one from Daufuskie Island was on the Commission, and she felt that they should be, given that it remains one of the few places within the Corridor that remains largely undeveloped. Mary Mack is not on the Commission either, which seems like a strange omission, given her role as Gullah art curator on St. Helena Island. Many of the members of the Commission hold respected positions as educators, historians, consultants and politicians, but I wonder if the occasional solicitation of ideas from the larger community is enough to ensure that the heart and soul of Gullah culture is embedded in the selection and interpretation of important sites. For example, will the current Commission consider Gullah foodways as an interpretive site, in the same vein as UNESCO is designating foodways around the globe as intangible heritage sites?

I offer the following proposal as my dream for interpretive sites along the GGNHC. As a food scholar, I most concerned with how Gullah foodways are represented within the GGNHC. Along with foodways, the proposed outline illustrates ways in which the Penn Center, as an interpretive center for the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage could increase awareness and appreciation for the historical, cultural, natural and scenic resources of the GGNHC. The suggestions outlined in this proposal are meant to be a wish list of sorts, with the understanding that funding is an issue for both the Penn Center and the GGNHC.

Historical Sites

1.) The Penn Center already has many programs in place that work to preserve the history of Gullah culture specifically on the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia. The York W. Bailey Museum at the Penn Center could commit to a series of exhibits focusing on Gullah foodways. The exhibits could feature Gullah cookbook authors, Gullah artists who draw inspiration from food, and attention could be drawn to exhibits already in the museum that highlight food. The exhibits could be timed with the yearly Gullah Heritage Days festival, held every November. The promotion of these exhibits on the Sea Islands and Beaufort County will hopefully spread knowledge of Gullah connections throughout the GGNHC.

As the flagship interpretive center for the GGNHC, Penn Center, along with the Commission, could choose the area of the Corridor to spotlight in each exhibit. This spotlight area could become the focus of each interpretive center erected along the GGNHC for a specific period of time. Depending on the resources, perhaps the spotlight area could be changed every six months or a year. This would mean changing literature, signage, advertisements, billboards, etc, so while it would be an effective way to bridge the history of the Gullah on the Sea Islands with other places along the Heritage Corridor, it would be costly.

2.) Once a spotlight region has been chosen, the Penn Center and the Heritage Corridor Commission could work with school systems in the GGNHC to implement programs in schools to coincide with programming around foodways conducted at the Penn Center and other interpretive sites. It is extremely beneficial to involve young

people in the process of uncovering and preserving the rich history of this region. Both students of Gullah descent, as well as students who simply live in the GGNHC would gain valuable knowledge through this collaboration. Ervena Faulkner has successfully secured grants to add Gullah studies, particularly around her work with food, into Beaufort County schools in the past. The GGNHC could work to ensure that these types of programs continue.

The Gullah Studies Institute currently offered at Penn Center during the month of July could be extended to several weeks, which may make it possible for more teachers to attend. An institute specific to the mission of the GGNHC could be implemented as well, to compliment the current program at the Penn Center which draws attendees from all over the country. Another way to expand the program would be to create an institute specific to teachers of grades K-12 and one for college professors and graduate students. Gullah food is already served daily at the Penn Center, but there is little discussion had about each meal or the people who prepare them. Facilitating informal discussions about Gullah foodways over each meal would add a richness to the experience.

Culture

3.) A project that could benefit both the Penn Center and the Heritage Corridor would be an oral history project similar to the Federal Writer's Project of the late 1930's and the work done by linguist and Father of Gullah Studies, Lorenzo Dow Turner. There was much wrong with the former project because the interviews were done in large part by white men who, as evidenced in recordings, asked leading

questions, and at times offered very little respect to the former slaves whom they interviewed. As stated in the preface of *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*:

> By their person and their approach, such interviewers invoked carefully hedged responses. Black men and women, drawing on a tradition that reached back into slavery, answered in a way that obliged the interviewer. Some interviewees preferred not to dredge up painful memories, much less share them with a white interviewer.[267]

The oral history project that I envision would attempt to document the personal histories and cultural experience of Gullah people around foodways, so their stories can be continually passed from generation to generation. The interviewers could be hand-selected and credentialed by Penn Center in an effort to make the interviewees feel more comfortable to answer questions honestly. The interviews could take place throughout the GGNHC and full transcripts, videos, sound bites, and pictures could be placed in the various interpretive sites throughout the GGNHC.

Documenting the stories and personal histories of living Gullah people in surviving Gullah communities is essential to preserving, conserving and creating awareness and appreciation for Gullah culture. Lorenzo Dow Turner was able to uncover a rich language, culture, and history simply by visiting Gullah communities beginning in the 1930's and talking to people. This process must continue so the stories they hold are not lost.

Oral histories are important because they provide illustrations of cultural identity, which is, as Stuart Hall describes, "not a fixed essence at all…It is *something*

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[267] Berlin et al. xx-xxi.

– not a mere trick of the imagination. It has histories – and histories have their real, material, and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us."[268] The past does continue to speak, but is often misunderstood when there are gaps in the story. Conducting consistent interviews with Gullah people and descendants of Gullah will keep the stories going strong through generations to come. This project should take into account both the strengths and weaknesses of both the Federal Writer's Project and the work of Lorenzo Dow Turner to avoid pitfalls and assure success. This dissertation could serve as an initial foray into the development of an interpretive site concerned with Gullah foodways, particularly on the Sea Islands.

4.) Language is an incredibly important aspect of culture and can only survive if it is used consistently. Gullah language is on the verge of extinction because it is spoken very little, especially by the younger generations. As an interpretive site, Penn Center could begin to offer Gullah language courses, as well as use their resources to incorporate language components at interpretive sites in other parts of the Heritage Corridor. Gullah cookbooks and recipes could be shared in the Gullah language via exhibits, presentations, or cooking demonstrations.

The best case scenario would be for Penn Center to provide satellite language classes for members of the community who are beyond school age and for the school systems within the Heritage Corridor to offer Basic Gullah as part of the curriculum. Perhaps this could be a goal for Penn Center and the Heritage Corridor Commission as the Corridor takes shape. It seems that spending time on Gullah language in the

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[268] Hall 237.

classroom would add an element of credibility to an otherwise endangered language, as well as reveals some of the African roots of Gullah culture.

Turner stated in *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, "Such recreational forms among the Gullahs as singing (frequently accompanied by dancing and hand-clapping) and story-telling often reveal significant African survivals."[269] This quote indicates that language is a major gateway into a culture. A Gullah language course need not be taught in a traditional academic form of memory and recall, rather it can include story-telling, song, dance, folklore, etc, which would allow the language and culture to come alive for students. As evidenced the history of the early schools on the Sea Islands in Chapter 1, the drive for black women to publish cookbooks even in the face of illiteracy in Chapter 2, and the significance of artistic production of black women in Chapter 3, language is power and more people should know that the Gullah people found a way to communicate their collective voice.

Natural and Scenic

5.) One of the major projects of the Penn Center is land preservation and protection for Gullah landowners in the Sea Islands. In that spirit Penn Center could work with the GGNHC Commission to establish eco-friendly ways to travel through the GGNHC to reduce harm to the land the Commission and Corridor are attempting to conserve. Kayak tours specific to Gullah culture heritage could be implemented in the Sea Islands and at other points along the coast. Parks could be used as interpretive sites rather than large buildings that would require the unnecessary

[269] Turner 254.

clearing of land. Walking tours of rice plantations and Gullah communities could be devised and accompanied by maps.

Locations that already exist such as The Lowcountry Trail at Brookgreen Gardens in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina can be included as interpretive sites so more land is not disturbed in the construction of the GGNHC. It also seems important to acknowledge former Gullah communities that have been dispersed because of coastal development, particularly the beaches of Brunswick County, North Carolina, and the Grand Strand and Hilton Head in South Carolina, as well as all of the land that lines Highway 17 throughout the region. Real estate agents, as well as developers in these areas need to know the history of the hallowed ground they tear up and sell so they can pass this information on to the people who purchase the land. How many people vacation and buy homes in this part of the country and have no idea of the history and culture associated with the beaches, cuisine, and culture of the region? The answer is likely too many.

To better facilitate programming around foodways, particularly heirloom crops like Carolina Gold rice, Penn Center could join forces with the Lowcountry Rice Culture Project or Glenn Campbell from Anson Mills, chef Sean Brock from Charleston and scholar David Shields from the University of South Carolina who are all invested in the repatriation of heirloom crops that are part of the Gullah culinary lexicon. The Lowcountry Rice Culture Project is the brainchild of Gullah artist Jonathan Green that focuses on the Gullah Geechee contribution to Art, Foodways, and History/Culture in the Lowcountry. From their mission statement:

> The purpose of this project is to serve as a clearing house and partnership builder for activities that explore, reveal, and reclaim the shared cultural inheritance of the southeastern Lowcountry rice industry as a basis for promoting community development and advancing the cause of human dignity. An emphasis of this organization is to examine the consequences of history and the meaning of heritage, as they are manifested in human interaction, through oral history projects, and other research and educational initiatives.[270]

The organization held its first Rice Forum in September of 2013 in Charleston, bringing together a host of scholars, farmers, food practitioners, restaurateurs, students, and community members to discuss the past, present, and future role of rice in Gullah culture. While Campbell, Brock, and Shields share similar investments, it is critical to point out that they are all white men and not of Gullah descent. This does not mean that partnerships should not be considered, rather it should serve as an impetus for organizations such as the Penn Center to reach out and become involved in their efforts to preserve heirloom seeds and crops.

6.) In 1982 Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe published *Daufuskie Island: A Photographic Essay* in which she captured images of the people and places of Daufuskie Island prior to it being developed in the early 1980's. The photo essay would be a perfect exhibit for the Penn Center to use to highlight a location in the GGNHC while illustrating the horrors of development on Gullah people and culture. In a chapter titled "Daufuskie Island – Gullah Communities Gone" Thomas Pyatt writes:

> Development brought condominiums, golf courses, tennis courts, paved roads, and a luxury resort community with a good life for those who can afford such a lifestyle. Development always brings in things that the natives don't want,

[270] See www.lowcountryricecultureproject.org

> can't afford, or need with their way of life; and therefore they become displaced.[271]

Twenty-six years after the publishing of Moutoussamy-Ashe's photos Daufuskie Island has been hit with major change and most of the Gullah families once living there have been forced to move, but the photos provide us with a bit of history. In Alex Haley's foreword to the photo essay he quotes Moutoussamy-Ashe saying, "I think taking photographs is an experience and looking at photographs is like a journey. I'd like people to feel this book takes them to an island and its inhabitants who are living history."[272] Using these photos of Daufuskie in interpretive sites along the GGNHC would provide a glimpse of what future exhibits may look like if the previously mentioned oral history project was implemented. The photos from the cookbooks discussed in Chapter 2 could also be used as an exhibit to highlight Gullah foodways. The past does continue to speak to us and we must listen and build upon the stories we hear.

7.) The Penn Center can offer much information not only on ways to preserve the land, but also to appreciate and create awareness of what comes from the land inside the GGNHC. Eco-tours could be designed to visit farms throughout the region. Cooking demonstrations by community members can be held at Penn Center and other interpretive sites. Lowcountry cuisine could be added into school lunch programs if it is not already. Visitors to the region could take guided tours of shrimp boats or schedule to go out on the open water with a shrimping crew. These are all

[271] Pyatt in Moutoussamy-Ashe 45.

[272] Haley in Moutoussamy-Ashe xv.

examples of options for tourists that likely exist if they find the right local to ask, but the Penn Center could serve the role of facilitator.

Tours of rice plantations could be taken and seminars held on the history of rice cultivation throughout the GGNHC. In the information provided about the land it is essential to mention the historical gendered division of labor and how that has changed over the past couple hundred years. The discussion of rice cultivation can lead full circle back to the topic of history and the Gullah connection to the Rice Coast of West Africa. In the Senegambia region of Africa rice cultivation was considered women's work and they brought this specialized knowledge with them across the Atlantic. This knowledge garnered them a higher purchase price than many enslaved men entering through the ports of Savannah or Charleston. Looking into gendered forms of labor in relation to the land and providing this information in the Gullah/Geechee interpretive sites along the GGNHC will allow visitors to delve deeper into the culture and come away with more than a surface understanding.

These suggestions provide a framework for discussion of the potential relationship between the Penn Center and the GGNHC, particularly to feature foodways. Penn Center is a rich resource and will undoubtedly prove valuable to the establishment of other interpretive sites. The main goal of the GGNHC should be to tell a story of Gullah/Geechee cultural heritage and invite visitors to listen. As Josephine Beoku-Betts states in reference to Gullah women whom she spent time with during her research:

> Through their recollections of stories and songs and in their performances of dances and enactments of past traditions, they create a frame of reference

> alternative to those promoted in dominant culture, while at the same time transmitting collective memory to the next generation.[273]

The history, culture, and language, is in the stories of the past and present, and the future will be determined by those who listen. Listening can lead architects of the GGNHC to consider the place-making aspects of the archive and use the wisdom embedded in the places that make up the GGNHC as inspiration for interpretive sites.

Gullah Restaurants along the GGNHC

I am interested in why Gullah restaurants have been closing so often, after a rash of closings during my research process, though I have no clear answers. When I interviewed Valerie Erwin in August 2014, there was no indication that her restaurant would close. In fact, she forecast excellent sales, including the sale of a 2015 recipe calendar. The close of Erwin's restaurant comes just a couple months after Charlotte Jenkins's Gullah Cuisine closed in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina. Of the Gullah cooks I interviewed, only Roastfish and Cornbread, owned by a man, on Hilton Head Island remained open at the time of my dissertation defense. However, I learned during the revision process that Young's restaurant closed, and he is opening a new venture in a new location.[274]

As evidenced with a study by Parsa, et al, in an earlier chapter, restaurants are fickle and the industry is risky, but it is not insurmountable or even a given that you will fail. This sea change of shuttered Gullah eateries is of interest, particularly as the culture is growing in recognition due to the GGNHC. A few signs direct our attention

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[273] Beoku-Betts 544

[274] Ashley Fahey, "Roastfish and Cornbread Chef Opening New Restaurant in Bluffton." *The Island Packet*. April 30, 2015. http://www.islandpacket.com/2015/04/30/3725440/roastfish-cornbread-chef-opening.html?rh=1

to a disconcerting disconnection. First, there is the issue of increased attention to Gullah cuisine in fine dining spaces. Second, there is significant investment in the production of heirloom crops, mostly by a group of white male restaurateurs. Finally, there is heightened scholarly interest in South Carolina, such as the Lowcountry Rice Culture Project and a documentary film in production on the life of Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor by Julie Dash, in concert with the South Carolina Humanities Council. All of these signage points indicate a climate where restaurants specializing in Gullah cuisine should be thriving, but in reality that is not happening.

Sean Brock, a white chef from southern Virginia, has restaurants in Charleston and Nashville which focus on Lowcountry cuisine and are thriving. His cookbook *Heritage* is a New York Times Best-Seller and 2015 James Beard Award Winner. He is featured on the Food Network, Bravo Television's Top Chef, and served as keynote speaker and guest chef for the inaugural Atlantic Foodways Conference at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro in January 2014, and his recognition and awards abound. I was fortunate to sample Brock's food in Greensboro and see him speak on multiple occasions. He is deeply committed to resurrecting crops native to South Carolina and sources the ingredients for his restaurants from 100% local vendors. He does business with one boat to get seafood for Husk, his flagship restaurant in Charleston. Whatever that fisherman brings in is what is on the menu. If the catch is bleak, Brock has one sustainable seafood farm he works with in South Carolina. All of the grains and produce are grown in or near the state. He has made trips to West Africa, specifically Sierra Leone, to visit farms and talk with people about their culinary history. There is no question that he practices

what he preaches about the importance of respecting local heritage and commerce in his food. That said, why is his restaurant empire thriving and the likes of Jenkins's and Erwin's restaurants floundering?

Valerie Erwin's Geechee Girl Rice Café in Philadelphia attracted the Food Network shows "Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives" and "On the Road." She was regularly featured in Philadelphia news broadcasts and local papers, did segments on NPR, and was an active member in the Southern Foodways Alliance, a mark of success for any southern chef, food writer or scholar. Charlotte Jenkins was regularly featured in local and national news publications such as the *Charleston Post and Courier*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*. She went on a book tour when her *Gullah Cuisine* cookbook was published, and made stops in Washington, D.C., including the Food and Folklore series at Eatonville restaurant in 2010, which I attended. When I spoke with her in 2014, I asked about her relationship with the restaurant Eatonville and with Busboys and Poets owner, Andy Shallal, who hosted her reading at his restaurant. She said that he was very supportive of Gullah cuisine and wanted Jenkins to come back to Washington, D.C., to support him during his campaign for mayor. This story is shared to emphasize that these women restaurateurs are savvy, respected, and influential.

The Gullah Grub restaurant on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, owned by Bill and Sara Green has not closed, but it struggles. Its more remote location may be the main problem, since even with an influx of people to the Sea Islands via retirement and vacation, the traffic may not be enough to sustain it. There are people like Romeater Anderson, featured in Chapter 4, who are finding ways to cook the

food they love and make money. Perhaps this type of "pop-up" operation is the prescription for the future of successful niche food businesses.

Along with an increased focus on Gullah restaurants, I am most interested in figuring out the ways in which is makes most sense for stakeholders within the GGNHC to highlight foodways. I will continue to follow the plans for interpretive sites along the GGNHC and, when possible, find ways to hold the administrators accountable to their mission of telling a story of Gullah heritage that truthfully represents the main stakeholders. Doing so may require pitching stories to non-academic news publications and setting the foundation for myself as a public intellectual. If I am to meet my main goal for this project, which is to produce something useful in the effort to sustain Gullah culture and share it widely, then I need to think about expanding outside of an academic audience. My commitment to craft and focus on feminist food stories is a step in this direction. By labeling this a middle class study, I am signifying whole groups of people who are not represented based on class alone. If I am to expand my audience, I need to think about the ways in which I am soliciting interviews, how and where I am focusing my research, and how my sampling techniques may have circumscribed the boundaries of this project. My desire to expand presumes that there are people I have not yet spoken to who wish to speak with me, though this very well may not be the case, at least not without more sustained contact on my part. Regardless, I think that finding new ways of talking to Gullah people about foodways and new ways of talking about Gullah foodways to a variety of people will remain on my list of future goals for *Food on the Move*.

Writing about people with whom I have been fortunate to maintain relationships was a challenge that I accepted, yet I will always wonder whether or not I have done their stories justice. In an introduction to a new connection, Ervena Faulkner told them, "She does right by us." I put pen to paper knowing that I have built a certain level of trust with each person, because I emphasize that, like the finest Gullah cooks, I start from a place of love and care. This may mean that my analysis of people and places comes across as uncritical at times. As a scholar, I am learning to navigate these ethical spaces. For the purposes of this project, however, the level of trust I built served me well, and I stand behind it.

Gullah folklore asserts that love and care can be felt in good food, and it is arguably a cornerstone of sustainability for Gullah people. The culinary memories of cookbooks authors, the fictional characters of *Daughters of the Dust*, along with contemporary stories of the men and women told through ethnography echo what Veronica Davis Gerald, author of *The Ultimate Gullah Cookbook*, maintains:

> Love is one of the best kept secrets but main ingredients in Gullah food. However, of all the ingredients, it is the most difficult to explain and to pass on in a recipe. For this reason, few books on this food culture attempt to give it consideration. Some call it cooking from the heart; others just call it 'luv'…Around the Gullah table, it is common to hear someone say, 'e put e foot en um dis time' or 'dey's a lot of luv in dis food.' Expressions such as these mean that the cook has put so much of her or his energy and spirit into the preparation of the food, that they transfer the food onto the recipient.[275]

For the Gullah, food is more than a necessity for survival. It is life. Since the beginning of the Gullah existence food has played a major role in everyday life. Gullah food cannot be poured from a store bought package. It must be prepared with

[275] Gerald and Gantt 19.

love, and perhaps more importantly, with hundreds of years of ritual behind each stir of the pot and pinch of spice added.

Dessert: Pecan Crunch Cookies

Makes about 2 ½ dozen
2 sticks butter
1 ½ cups 10x confectioners' sugar
1 large egg
¾ teaspoon baking soda mixed in 1 tablespoon hot water
2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
1 cup pecan pieces

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a bowl, cream the butter and sugar together. Add the egg and beat well. Add the hot water and baking soda mixture. Add the flour a little at a time. Stir in pecan pieces. Roll the dough out to about ¼ inch thick on a flat, floured surface. Use a cookie cutter or a jelly jar or water glass to cut the dough. Re-form the scraps and cut again until all the dough is used. Place ¼ inch apart on lightly greased cookie sheets. Bake for about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove and let cool. Enjoy 'em.

- Sallie Ann Robinson, *Cooking the Gullah Way, Morning, Noon & Night* 121.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Topics in Feminist Food-Centered Stories

Feminist Food-Centered Stories are tape-recorded structured interviews with willing participants, focusing on experiences and memories about food. The goal is to use the data to articulate intersectional life stories that center women. Below are sample interview questions.

1. Do you cook? Who taught you how to cook? How did you learn?
2. With what or whom do you associate food?
3. Can you describe some examples of traditional Gullah foods or meals?
4. What is your favorite recipe and/or food?
5. Can you describe a particular memory involving food?
6. Do all Gullah women know how to cook? Do any men cook?
7. Are there particular dishes associated with a particular gender?
8. Does being a great cook give a woman status or influence in your household? Your community?
9. What are the most important celebrations in your community (neighborhood, family, church, etc)? What do you cook and eat on those occasions?
10. Do you cook alone or with other people? If with other people, are they relatives? friends? How much time do you spend preparing a meal on these occasions? How would you describe those events? Are those celebrations important to you? To your family? To your community? If so, why?
11. How do you pass along your culinary knowledge?
12. How are culinary traditions and rituals passed on?

Appendix 2: List of Participant Observation Sites

- Gullah Studies Institute, Penn Center – July 2008
    - Performance by Anita Singleton-Prather as Aunt Pearlie Sue, Gullah storyteller
    - Discussion with former students of the Penn School
    - Sweetgrass basket workshop with Jeri Taylor
    - Bateau and cast net-making tutorial
    - Lectures on the history of rice in the Lowcountry
    - Gullah meals prepared by local Gullah cooks
    - Keynote address by Emory Campbell, former director of the Penn Center – open to the public
    - Keynote address by Margaret Wade-Lewis, author of *Lorenzo Dow Turner: Father of Gullah Studies*
    - Viewing of *Family Across the Sea* and *The Language You Cry In* alongside attendees of the Institute and the larger community.
    - Tour of downtown Beaufort
    - Tour of Parris Island Museum
    - Gullah Caribbean Connections Celebration, Land's End Woodland Bash
    - Tour of St. Helena Island, Lady's Island, Hunting Island, and Harbor Island with Ervena Faulkner and Melba Cooper including praise houses and old church ruins
    - Service in Brick Baptist Church
- Visit to Dempsey's U-Pick Farm and Barefoot Farm – July 2008, January 2009, November 2010, August 2012, August 2013, February 2014
- Evening at De Watering Hole bar on Wasaw Island – July 2008
- Beaufort Water Festival – July 2008
- Visits to Gay Fish Company, St. Helena Island – July 2008, January 2009, November 2010, August 2012, August 2013, and February 2014
- Visit to the Shrimp Shack Restaurant – July 2008, August 2012
- Visits to the Red Piano Too Gullah art gallery on St. Helena Island – July 2008, January 2009, November 2010, August 2012, August 2013, and February 2014
- Solo visits to many restaurants in Beaufort County
    - Blackstone's
    - Wren
    - Lowcountry Produce
    - Emily's Restaurant & Tapas
    - Panini's Cafe
    - 11th Street Dockside Restaurant, Port Royal
    - Lady's Island Dockside
    - Brick's on Boundary
    - Bella Luna Café
    - Bruster's Ice Cream

- City Java and News
    - Breakwaters
    - Q on the Bay
    - Plum's Restaurant
    - Saltus River Grill
    - Sweetgrass Restaurant, in gated community of Dataw Island
    - The Original Steamer's
- Many visits to the Publix and Piggly Wiggly grocery stores on Lady's Island and in downtown Beaufort, respectively.
- Visit to the Piggly Wiggly on Hilton Head Island – August 2012
- Land's End Fish Fry –November 2010
- Visits to Hunting Island State Park – July 2008, January 2009 (I was alone on the beach), November 2012, August 2012, August 2013
- Learned about bait shops on the island, how to bank sweet potatoes, and how to cut collard greens at the home of Ernestine Atkins – January 2009
- Overnight-stay at the Martin Luther King, Jr. cottage on Penn Center's campus – January 2009
- Lunch at Gullah Grub with Liz Santigati – January 2009
- Tea with Anita Singleton-Prather at MLK, Jr. Cottage – January 2009
- Tea with Ervena Faulkner at MLK, Jr. Cottage – January 2009
- Tea and discussion about organic farming with Sara Reynolds-Green at her home, St. Helena Island – January 2009
- Gullah Heritage Days Festival and Parade – November 2010
- Penn Center York W. Bailey Museum Visits – July 2008, November 2010, August 2012, August 2013, February 2014
- Housing on at the home of Anne Courmouzis, a comeyah or someone who was not born, but now lives in the Lowcountry, on Cat Island, SC. – August 2012 and February 2014
- Tour of St. Helena Island by car with Mr. Robert Mitchell, docent from the Penn Center and native of St. Helena – August 2012
- Weeklong residence in the Beaufort County Historical section of the Beaufort County Library – August 2012
- Saturday evening service at St. Peter Catholic Church, Lady's Island – August 2012
- Visited several different farmers' markets in Beaufort County – downtown Beaufort, Port Royal, Bluffton, and Hilton Head – August 2012, August 2013, and February 2014
- Birthing Circle of the Lowcountry meeting with Ifetayo White – August 2012
- Dinner at the home of Ervena Faulkner, Port Royal, SC – August 2012
- Dinner with Melba and Paul Cooper, fellow Gullah Studies Institute graduates and comeyahs, Dockside Restaurant, Lady's Island – August 2012
- Gullah Tour of Hilton Head Island – August 2012
- Gullah Museum of Hilton Head – August 2012
- Dinner at Roastfish and Cornbread Gullah restaurant – August 2012

- Honey Horn Musuem on Hilton Head Island – unexpected conversation with artist Amiri Ferris and Carrie Hirsch, Sallie Ann Robinson's agent – August 2012
- Silver and Gold Senior Citizen Service, Song, and Luncheon, Baptist Church of Beaufort, Guest of Ervena Faulkner – August 2012
- Calibogue Ferry to Daufuskie Island – August 2012
- Self-guided golf cart tour of Daufuskie Island – August 2012
- Lunch at Daufuskie Crab Company – August 2012
- Visit to Iron Fish Art Gallery, Daufuskie Island – August 2012
- Visit to the Billie Burn Museum, Daufuskie Island – August 2012
- Romeater Anderson's Lunch Trailer – August 2013
- Golden Corral lunch with Anita Singleton-Prather and her granddaughter, Beaufort, SC – August 2013
- Dinner at the home of Mary Mack, Gullah artist and gallery owner, Coffin Point – August 2013
- Conversation with Victoria Smalls, Director of History and Culture, Penn Center – August 2013
- Lunch with Ervena Faulkner at Lowcountry Produce Market and Café, Beaufort, SC– February 2014
- Lunch and conversation in the home of Sallie Ann Robinson, Savannah, GA – February 2014
- Coffee with Emory Campbell at a Dunkin Donuts on Hilton Head Island – February 2014
- Conversation with Chef David Young in his restaurant kitchen at Roastfish and Cornbread, Hilton Head Island – February 2014
- Road Trip to Savannah, GA with Ervena Faulkner – February 2014
- Road Trip to Charleston, SC with Ervana Faulkner – February 2014
- Lunch with Ervena Faulkner at Gullah Cuisine, Mt. Pleasant, SC – February 2014
- Conversation with Gullah Cuisine Chef, Owner, and cookbook author, Charlotte Jenkins – February 2014
- Foodways Group at the Beaufort County Library – St. Helena Branch on Lowcountry Food Day – February 2014
- Dinner at the home of Sara Bush, Bluffton, SC – February 2014
- Visit both locations of Lowcountry Produce Markets – downtown Beaufort and Seabrook, SC (There is a now a Hilton Head Island location) – February 2014
- Dinner and conversation with Anne Courmouzis and Pat Cowen, photographer featured in the Red Piano Too art gallery at the Courmouzis home on Cat Island – February 2014
- Throughout the project I have remained in contact with many of the people I have encountered, through social media outlets, email, and via handwritten letters and postcards with Ervena Faulkner, specifically.

Appendix 3: Sea Islands of the Gullah Geechee Corridor

This project is invested primarily in the South Carolina Sea Islands, but the Gullah Geechee Corridor is dotted with islands for hundreds of miles along the Atlantic seaboard. The following is a list of the major Sea Islands[276] in this region to provide a scope beyond the crude borders of the corridor from North Carolina to Florida and 40 miles inland.

South Carolina

Sea Islands in Charleston County

- Bear Island
- Bull Island
- Daniel Island
- Dewees Island
- Edisto Island
- Folly Island
- Isle of Palms
- James Island
- Johns Island
- Kiawah Island
- Monis Island
- Seabrook Island
- Sullivan's Island
- Wadmalaw Island

Sea Islands in Beaufort County

- Cane Island
- Cat Island
- Coosaw Island
- Daufuskie Island
- Distant Island
- Fripp Island
- Gibbes Island
- Hilton Head Island
- Hunting Island
- Lady's Island
- Morgan Island
- Parris Island
- Port Royal Island
- Prtichards Island
- St. Helena Island

[276] Wilbur Cross, *Gullah Culture in America* (John Blair Publishing: Winston-Salem, NC, 2012) 174-175.

- St. Phillips Island

Georgia

The Golden Isles of Georgia

- Cumberland Island
- Jekyll Island
- Little St. Simon's Island
- Ossabaw Island
- Sapelo Island
- Sea Island
- St. Catherine's Island
- St. Simon's Island
- Tybee Island

Florida

- Amelia Island
- Fernandina Beach

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