



The Gullah People and Their African Heritage

William S. Pollitzer

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The Gullah people are one of our most distinctive cultural groups. Isolated off the South Carolina-Georgia coast for nearly three centuries, the native black population of the Sea Islands has developed a vibrant way of life that remains, in many ways, as African as it is American. This landmark volume tells a multifaceted story of this venerable society, emphasizing its roots in Africa, its unique imprint on America, and current threats to its survival.

With a keen sense of the limits to establishing origins and tracing adaptations, William S. Pollitzer discusses such aspects of Gullah history and culture as language, religion, family and social relationships, music, folklore, trades and skills, and arts and crafts. Readers will learn of the indigo- and rice-growing skills that slaves taught to their masters, the echoes of an African past that are woven into baskets and stitched into quilts, the forms and phrasings that identify Gullah speech, and much more. Pollitzer also presents a wealth of data on blood composition, bone structure, disease, and other biological factors. This research not only underscores ongoing health challenges to the Gullah people but also helps to highlight their complex ties to various African peoples.

Drawing on fields from archaeology and anthropology to linguistics and medicine, *The Gullah People and Their African Heritage* celebrates a remarkable people and calls on us to help protect their irreplaceable culture.

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