

A Gullah Kinfolk Christmas

Written by Margaret Evans

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Experience the spirit of the season with a big weekend of Gullah feasts, live music, theatre, storytelling, dancing, art and holiday celebrations.

On Friday, December 6, Aunt Pearlie Sue and the Gullah Kinfolk will perform their soul-stirring original musical , Gullah Kinfolk Christmas Wish... Freedom Comin' at 7 p.m. at the University of South Carolina-Beaufort's Performing Arts Center.

The show is intended for people of all ages and races. It tells the story of the Christmas, 1860 just before the start of the Civil War and shortly after South Carolina seceded from the Union. It takes place in the "Quarters" and "Big House" of a Sea Island plantation where the hope of freedom among the Gullah people was expressed through storytelling and song.

The historically-based performance was crafted by Anita Singleton Prather, who stars as Aunt Pearlie Sue. Prather is retired school teacher, ordained minister and nationally acclaimed storyteller. She has appeared on SCETV and other television networks. She also produced and starred in the film, My Man Done Me Wrong, which was screened at film festivals around the nation.

The Gullah Kinfolk, led by Prather, is a twenty-member group of singers and actors who specialize in the hymns, spirituals, dances and traditions of the Gullah people. Many are known individually for their vocal gifts and performance skills.

Admission to the show includes a "Taste of Gullah Soul Food Buffet" and "Da' Market Place

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Artists Showcase." A variety of paintings, crafts, jewelry and other items will be available for sale directly from the artists.

Prather said the food is irresistible and the quality of the artwork is exceptional. "This event is a glorious opportunity to taste, feel and partake of the gifts of the Gullah culture which are joyfully experienced with all citizens - regardless of their heritage. We feel so blessed to share our history, food, art and culture with everyone. Glory be to God, she said!

Tickets are \$30 in advance and \$35 at the door. Admission is \$10 for those aged 7 to 17. The celebration continues Saturday, December 7 at 7 p.m. with a contemporary Gullah Caribbean Christmas Cabaret at the York W. Bailey Museum at historic Penn Center on St. Helena Island. There will be a live variety show, comedy acts, a Gullah Caribbean dinner and dancing to rhythm and blues and reggae bands. Tickets are \$40.

Reservations for Friday and/or Saturday shows may be made through the Beaufort County Black Chamber of Commerce at (843) 986-1102 or www.bcbcc.org. Sponsors recommend making reservations soon as the celebrations attract many out of town visitors. Information regarding hotel and meal packages is also available through the BCBCC.

A portion of the weekend proceeds will benefit the Community Circle of Hope Coalition's Youth Program which sponsors educational and enrichment programs for inner-city youth and the non-profit Gullah Traveling Theater which provides an international showcase for the Gullah culture.

The events compliment other annual yuletide activities in Beaufort, including the popular Night on the Town, Light up the Night and the annual Christmas parade. For more information on these events, contact www.downtownbeaufort.com .