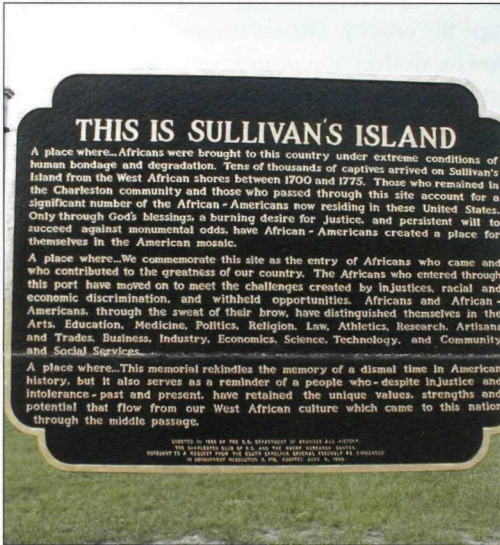
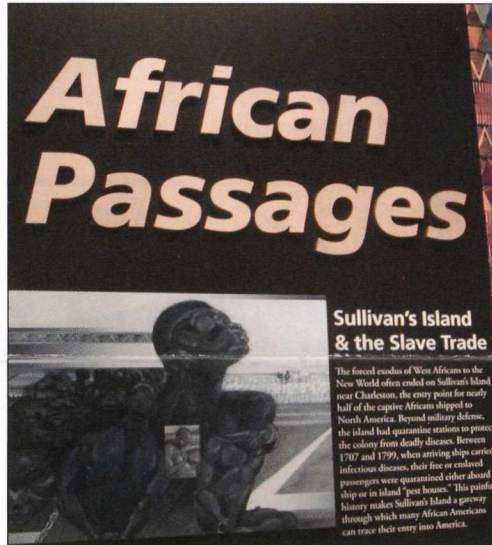




African Passages



Commemorative Marker, Cannon Row



Exhibit, Fort Moultrie Visitor Center



Toni Morrison's Bench by the Road, creek side

Sullivan's Island and the Atlantic Slave Trade

The forced exodus of West Africans to the New World often ended on Sullivan's Island near Charleston, the entry point for nearly half of the captive Africans shipped to North America. Beyond military defense, the island had quarantine stations to protect the colony from deadly diseases. Between 1707 and 1799, when arriving ships carried infectious diseases, their free or enslaved passengers were quarantined either aboard ship or in island "pest houses." This painful history makes Sullivan's Island a gateway through which many African Americans can trace their entry into America.

Atlantic Slave Trade

Between 1500 and 1870, an estimated 10–12 million Africans were shipped to the Western Hemisphere in the largest forced migration in history. The vast majority were taken to the Caribbean and Brazil. Historians estimate that only 4–6% of the survivors were brought to North America between 1619 and 1808. Of these, 40% arrived in Charleston.

Historians estimate that slave ships brought 200–360 thousand men, women and children into Charleston until the international slave trade was abolished in 1808. Some captives served quarantine, but how many Middle Passage survivors set foot on Sullivan's Island is unknown.

The Middle Passage

Powerful West Africans also enslaved the people they conquered, but bondage wasn't always permanent. That changed when Europeans began to purchase Africans for forced labor in the New World's mines and plantations. Vast commercial networks, powered by profits of the Atlantic slave trade, linked Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas. Africans shipped to Carolina were captured from Senegambia to Sierra Leone and south to the Congo River region.

For those Africans captured in the slave trade their lives changed forever. Marched inland, the prisoners were placed in "factories" or "slave castles" on the coast to await the Atlantic crossing. They experienced inhuman conditions on ships where death and disease ran rampant. The six- to eight-week ocean voyages tested the limits of human endurance. Only those who were strong in body, spirit, and mind survived the horrifying ordeal, known as the Middle Passage.

Arrival in Carolina



1776 map showing pest house location

In Charleston, port physicians inspected incoming ships to protect the settlement from contagious diseases. If a ship was suspected of carrying infection, passengers were isolated. Africans and white passengers arriving from Europe or other American colonies were quarantined. They were isolated aboard ship, in homes or in pest houses. Slave ship captains at times evaded quarantine. Africans were held the shortest time because they were to be auctioned in Charleston.

The first public pest house or "lazaretto" was constructed on Sullivan's Island around 1707. During the next 80 years four public pest houses were built between Fort Moultrie and the western end of the island. But following complaints from island residents, the last pest house was closed and sold in 1796. The role of quarantine station moved to James Island, and in the 1830's to Morris Island.

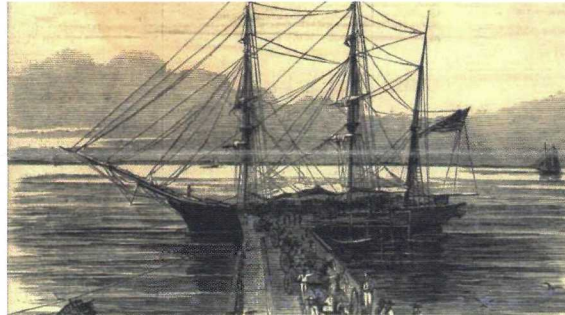
Africans in Carolina

From the beginning, Africans were the backbone of Carolina's economy. English colonists brought a plantation system perfected on the sugar island of Barbados. Africans cleared the land for agricultural production. They made tar and pitch to keep ships afloat. They stirred the indigo pots, herded cattle, and fished the waters. But their labor and ancient ingenuity growing rice was prized the most. They skillfully tamed the freshwater swamps to grow a fickle crop that required a balanced flow of water for

profitable yields. The Africans grew the "white gold" that made Carolina rich.

The horror of slavery wasn't limited to captivity. It included a constant fear of being sold and ripped from one's family forever. Some Africans ran away to escape the cruelty. Others resisted with work slowdowns, destruction of property, poisoning their masters, or insurrections like the Stono Rebellion of 1739 and the Denmark Vesey conspiracy of 1822.

The Echo Incident



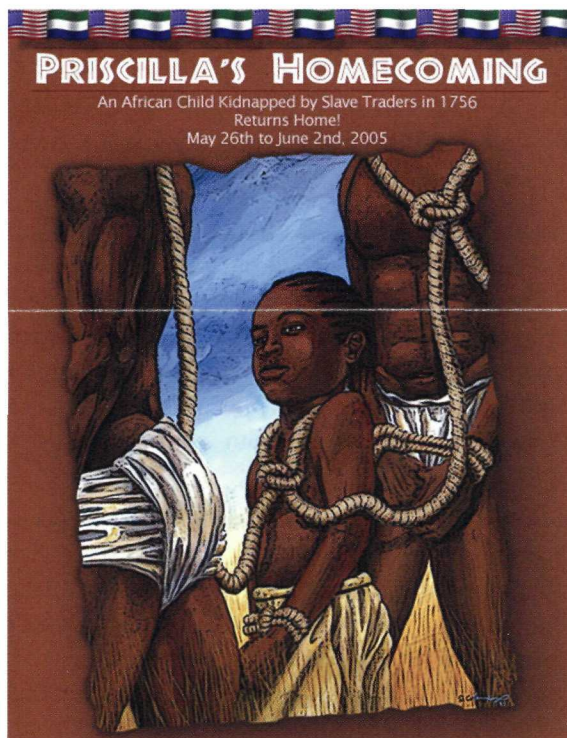
Abolished in 1808, the Atlantic slave trade continued illegally. In 1858 the slave ship *Echo* arrived in Charleston so that its American captain and crew could stand trial for illegally trading in captive Africans. The ship was headed to Cuba when captured in the Caribbean. The 300 survivors of the Middle Passage were held at Fort Sumter. Eventually the federal government resettled the 271 surviving Africans in Monrovia, Liberia. The captain and crew were acquitted.

13th Amendment Ends U.S. Slavery

The Civil War forced an end to slavery, ushering in the period of Reconstruction, during which a newly freed people enjoyed a brief period of near equality.

But it would take over a century for the promises of a social revolution to become a reality for people whose ancestors came to America in chains.

Priscilla's Story



Art by Dana Coleman

This girl's African name has been lost in time and bondage. She was captured off Sierra Leone's coast and placed on the *Hare*, a slave ship. The *Hare* stopped at the slave fortress on Bunce Island, Sierra Leone, before the trade winds pushed it west across the Atlantic. In a June 25, 1756 letter to the *Hare's* owners in Newport, Rhode Island, the ship's captain Caleb Godfrey reports that he arrived with 71 captives. Three had died. Those who survived were in poor condition when the crew dropped anchor at Sullivan's Island. She was only 10 years old, but she survived. Rice planter Elias Ball II purchased the ten year old girl and took her to his Comingtee Plantation on the West Branch of the Cooper River. She was renamed Priscilla.

Two and a half centuries after Priscilla's exile, one of her descendants, Thomalind Martin-Polite, a North Charleston school teacher, traveled with her husband Antawn Polite to Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2005. Sierra Leoneans embraced her as a lost relative who brought Priscilla's spirit home.

The Gullah-Geechee Connection



Diedre Laird Photograph

The mixing of African and European cultures gave rise to the Gullah/Geechee culture that still exists today along the Atlantic coast of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Gullah-Geechee people have retained more of their African traditions of language, food, religion, crafts, and folklore than any other African American community. Congress recognized this culture and people by creating the Gullah-Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor that extends from Wilmington, North Carolina to Jacksonville, Florida.

About Your Visit

Fort Moultrie is part of Fort Sumter National Monument, administered by the National Park Service, US Department of the Interior. The site is located at 1214 Middle Street, Sullivan's Island, South Carolina. Hours of operation are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, except for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Days.

For more information, write the Superintendent, Fort Sumter National Monument, 1214 Middle Street, Sullivan's Island, SC 29482, call (843) 883-3123, or visit us on the World Wide Web:

<http://www.nps.gov/fosu>