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**African American Life and Culture
in the Georgia Lowcountry: 18th to the 20th Century
February 28-29, 2008, Savannah, Georgia**

On February 28-29, 2008, Savannah will host a symposium of special significance, "The Atlantic World and African American Life and Culture in the Georgia Lowcountry, 18th to the 20th Century." Sponsoring the event are Savannah State University, Armstrong Atlantic State University, Georgia Southern University, Georgia Historical Society and the Ossabaw Island Foundation. Partners include the King Tisdale Cottage Foundation and the Coastal Heritage Society.



When speaking of the African American experience in the lowcountry, most writers begin with a passing nod to the stretch of coast from Georgetown, South Carolina to Cumberland Island, Georgia and then focus their attention on South Carolina. The Georgia coast has been relatively neglected. And yet the experience of African Americans in the lowcountry, both urban and rural, was an important one, not only for the ways it replicated the traditions, culture and patterns of its neighbor but possessed its own unique identity. This symposium, featuring ten of the leading voices in the field, will provide a much-needed forum for new directions and new scholarship on African- American life in the Georgia lowcountry and its place in the larger Atlantic world.

Themes include the place of Georgia in the Black Atlantic, enslaved Georgia women during the Revolutionary era, African American religious survivals on the coast, the Muslim presence in the Georgia Lowcountry, human relations and family life as reflected in the archaeology of coastal plantations, Reconstruction on Ossabaw Island, community building in post-Civil War Savannah, and the sustainability of Gullah-Geechee culture in today's world.

*** The African American experience on the Georgia coast shaped in fundamental ways the experience of all African Americans in this state.**

*** That experience set a standard for this region in terms of cultural survival, acculturation and resistance.**

*** The story of the Georgia Lowcountry places the story of African Americans in the context of the Atlantic world, the world of west Africa, the Caribbean and**

Europe.

*** That story offers a means of gauging whether and to what extent traditional African American communities can survive in the twenty-first century.**

*** Ultimately, slavery, reconstruction and the Gullah/Geechee heritage is not a black story or a Georgia story or even a Southern story. It is an American story, and understanding it in all its regional varieties remains crucial to any understanding we hope to gain about race relations in this country and what it means to be an American.**

Participants include: Emory Campbell, Penn Center, St. Helena Island; Erskine Clarke, Columbia Theological Seminary; David Brion Davis, Yale University; Allison Dorsey, Swathmore College; Michael Gomez, New York University; Jacqueline Jones, Brandeis University; Phillip Morgan, Johns Hopkins University; Tim Powell, University of Pennsylvania; Theresa Singleton, Syracuse University; Betty Wood, Cambridge University.

The event will take place at the DeSoto Hilton Hotel. It is open to the public. At the reception Wednesday evening, Cornelia Bailey of Hog Hammock will give words of welcome, and the McIntosh County Shouters will perform. Ten speakers will address the audience over the following two days. On Thursday night, there is a Low Country Boil at the Owens Thomas House. For further information, go to www.ossabawisland.org or call 912- 233-5104.