Lowcountry Visions: Foodways and Race in Coastal South Carolina

Abstract: The coastal region surrounding Charleston, South Carolina—commonly referred to as the Lowcountry—is a place famous for its foodways. Lowcountry cuisine is often portrayed as convivial and celebrated as multicultural. This article argues, however, that much of the Lowcountry’s food culture is marked by the region’s history of racism. It is important not only to recognize this dominant tendency, but also to acknowledge attempts to challenge it. Thus, this article also highlights recent efforts to articulate an alternative vision of the region and its cuisine. By investigating what is at stake when regional cuisines are contested, I attempt to place the future of Lowcountry food on firmer footing.

Keywords: Charleston, Lowcountry, race, foodways, cookbooks

MATT AND TED LEE, JAMES BEARD award-winning chefs, rightly point out in their recent cookbook that “people all over the world see Charleston [South Carolina] as a great food town, and it’s consistently cited by national magazines and television shows as a top dining destination in the United States” (Lee and Lee 2013: 12). The region’s booming tourist economy is, in fact, nourished by the cultural capital that surrounds its cuisine. The tropes of conviviality and multiculturalism that ground this culinary mystique, however, serve more often than not to obscure the realities of life in the South Carolina Lowcountry—the coastal region surrounding the port city of Charleston. The “Holy City”—as it is commonly known—has been at the center of national discussions about race and racism in 2015 after the murder of an unarmed black man, Walter Scott, by a white police officer in April and the massacre of nine black worshippers at Emanuel AME Church by an avowed white supremacist only two months later. These dramatic moments of overt racial violence demand much more scrutiny and redress, but also point out in their recent cookbook that “white silence is violence.” A few days later, activists used this “Black Brunch” strategy again at another Charleston restaurant that caters to those who want an upscale taste of “authentic” or “traditional” Lowcountry food. Their strategy is telling: by interrupting the everyday activity of eating, they aimed to dramatically make the point that the white-washing and commercialization of the region’s cuisine is linked to broader historical and racial inequalities.

This essay draws from work in cultural geography and food studies to investigate several competing visions of Lowcountry cuisine. I argue that many of the dominant ways of talking about Lowcountry cuisine reflect the region’s history of white supremacy, yet there are also hints of alternative ways to conceive of it. I examine popular regional cookbooks, which offer a unique window into the relationship between foodways and racial politics. The visions of Lowcountry cuisine embedded in these cookbooks are, in one way or another, claims about what it means to be of the Lowcountry. They are efforts to outline a place-based identity, and thus to produce a place. As Cook and Crang (1996: 140) argue, “foods do not simply come from places, but also make places as symbolic constructs.” This line of argument, then, reminds us that food, identity, and memory are always bound together through specific geographies.

Examining the politics of “Lowcountry cuisine”—a set of culinary practices and ingredients common to the coastal areas of Georgia and South Carolina—is a difficult but fruitful task. Rather than focusing on technical matters—how
certain ingredients and cooking methods come together in the kitchen—I emphasize the ways that the different meanings attached to Lowcountry cuisine are put to work ideologically: What kinds of politics do they support, and what explanations of the world do they offer? How do narratives about Lowcountry cuisine work to define place and identity?

As Susanne Freidberg (2003: 4; emphasis added) notes, “the reading of a food’s story reveals . . . a much bigger story—a cultural geography—of particular times and places.”

Cookbooks offer an especially illuminating window into the cultural politics of food, oftentimes highlighting in surprisingly transparent ways the assumptions, desires, and fears of their authors and intended audiences. I will draw on several cookbooks from the coastal South Carolina region, and focus primarily on the ways that race and racial difference are narrated therein. I argue that Lowcountry cuisine, often celebrated as convivial and multicultural, is in fact deeply marked by the region’s history of racial violence and exploitation. The dominant narratives of Lowcountry cuisine—those largely cultivated by wealthy whites—consistently portray a deep sense of anxiety about maintaining racial boundaries and hierarchies. Their claims to authority are rooted in static notions of “heritage” and “authenticity.” To challenge these self-serving claims to authority, we must first understand cuisine as an always unfolding struggle.

The cookbooks are also an important tool for preparing the landscape for consumption, both symbolically as readers visualize the region and literally as food is cooked and eaten. In this sense, then, regional cookbooks not only represent competing visions of the Lowcountry but actually work to create those landscapes in their own image. These efforts to represent and shape the region are not neutral and objective, and thus claims to know a place through its cuisine should be understood as place-making projects.

The Lowcountry and Its Cuisine

Both the Lowcountry as a place and the foodways that are frequently used to define it have contested and multiple histories (Yuhl 2005; Edelson 2011). The purpose of this essay is to grasp the relations of power that are mobilized through claims to know food and place. Thus I focus on the common and competing representations of the Lowcountry and its food rather than on empirically outlining the boundaries of the Lowcountry as a region, or offering my own definition of its cuisine. In broad strokes, the Lowcountry is generally understood as the coastal region of South Carolina and/or Georgia. It is also generally framed as a “Southern” place—oftentimes even granted a special rank within the hierarchy of subregional landscapes. Antebellum plantations and Fort Sumter, the site of the first shots of the Civil War, are two of the most popular landmarks in the Lowcountry, for example.
This geographic imaginary is aggressively constructed and promoted by social elites and the tourism industry. These dominant visions are contested, of course. As historians have recently made clear, conflicts over the Lowcountry past and its instantiation in the landscape stretch back to the era of slavery (Roberts and Kytle 2012). For all these reasons and more, the Lowcountry is often presented and understood as fundamentally "Southern." It is also arguable, however, that the Lowcountry (and especially the city often cited as its capital, Charleston) is just as central to the national imagination. For the first 200 years of its existence, Stephanie Yuhl (2005: 2) argues, "Charleston enjoyed a prominent place in the American narrative." In her compelling analysis of the making of modern "historic" Charleston, Yuhl shows how elite, white Charlestonians of the early twentieth century highlighted the colonial, Revolutionary, and antebellum periods of the region in order to avoid parochial associations and to promote the city as "the ultimate repository of nationalist history" (ibid., 14).

It is hard to deny that the foundations of the modern Lowcountry were forged out of eighteenth-century landscapes of labor. The region arguably first cohered under the forces of slave-based rice cultivation (Carney 2001). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the plantations that stretched along the Georgia and South Carolina coast tied the region into the Atlantic World economy, while the labor of enslaved Africans generated the wealth necessary to make the Lowcountry planter class one of the richest social enclaves in the world (Edelson 2011). The rice plantation economy also produced a region that was not only largely agricultural, but was also a population of majority African descent (Wood 1996). Although emancipation forever altered the shape of rice cultivation in the region, it did not end the Lowcountry’s agricultural economy (Strickland 1985: 141–78). Many of the recently freed slaves remained in the former coastal plantation districts and established successful truck farming operations, supplying fresh vegetables to urban areas in Northern states (Stewart 2002). The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century success of truck farming—especially when combined with subsistence agriculture and market gardening—allowed for relatively high levels of black land-ownership, and several scholars argue that it afforded Lowcountry rural blacks an autonomy which, however precarious, provided the foundations for a rich political culture from Reconstruction into the Civil Rights era (Hahn 2005).

Like many other rural areas in the United States, the Lowcountry has changed significantly since the 1970s. Declining farm profits coupled with skyrocketing demand for residential and commercial property have ended the dominance of agriculture in the regional economy. "Where we once had tomato packing houses and open fields," Gary Cohn of the American Farmland Trust observed in 2008, "we’re seeing a new crop of houses going up for retirees and vacationers" (Hallacr 2012: 223). Tourism now primes the region’s economic engine and is arguably the most significant force on the landscape. In 2012 Condé Nast travel magazine named Charleston the top tourist destination in the world, after naming it the top tourist destination in the United States the previous year.

As with many tourist destinations, the Lowcountry offers an official visage that obscures much of the conflict and oppression in the region. The constructed tourist geography of conviviality, elegance, and genteel pastoralism is a facade.
that papers over the Lowcountry’s many layers of social division. This sanitation work is crucial to preparing the landscape for tourist consumption. In order to compete as a prime destination, Charleston and the Lowcountry landscape must be packaged, branded, and sold to prospective tourists. Food myths are a central part of marketing the Lowcountry as a tourist destination, and the reality of a food history fundamentally marked by violence does not sell well. Thus Lowcountry cuisine is constructed and promoted as authentic, exotic, and happily multicultural.

Narratives of Lowcountry cuisine, like those of the region itself, are multilayered. Most of them offer vague allusions to the importance of history and geography; for instance, the region’s proximity to the sea or its “multicultural” (read “colonial”) past. These historical-geographical factors are generally treated in a rather superficial manner and celebrated as producing an intoxicating effect. “It is not European, African, or West Indian dishes specifically that characterize Lowcountry cooking,” John Martin Taylor (2012: 6) testifies in his popular cookbook, “rather, it is the nuances of combination and a respect for the past that make the cuisine unique.” The claim that Lowcountry cuisine somehow embodies “a respect for the past” is a common one, yet what that means is never quite clear. Similarly, another Lowcountry food booster gushes that “there are just a handful of cities in the United States that can vividly tell their story and show off their personality with their cuisine. Places where, with just one bite, centuries of cultural amalgamation rush through the palate and come alive. Charleston is one of them.” These recent commentaries on Lowcountry food draw on and reproduce celebratory discourses about the convivial and “multicultural” nature of the region produced by elite whites in the era of slavery. The fact that Lowcountry cuisine is a product of history and geography is uncontested, and I do not aim to challenge it here. What is contested, and what I will explore here, are the multiple ways in which understandings of Lowcountry food construct visions of the place and its past. Interpretations of Lowcountry cuisine that rest on multiculturalism fail because they sanitize these visions and then suggest that they organically coalesce into a singular form. They celebrate commonalities and proclaim unity where there is in fact difference and contestation. In doing so, of course, they obscure the fact that some voices have historically been given more authority and a broader audience than others. By challenging these myths and further exploring the genealogy of Lowcountry cuisine, this essay aims to provide a firmer footing for the future of food in the region.

I will map the points of overlap and divergence in the cultural politics of Lowcountry cuisine through a close reading of Charleston Receipts, a canonical cookbook first published in 1937 by several of Charleston’s wealthy white women; Cooking the Gullah Way Morning, Noon, and Night, published in 2007 by Sallie Ann Robinson, a black woman who grew up on a rural coastal island; and The New Low-Country Cooking, compiled in 2000 by Marvin Woods, a self-described “northern-born” black chef who spent several formative childhood summers eating his grandmother’s food in the Lowcountry.

There are many more cookbooks relevant to Lowcountry cuisine, of course. These four, however, are representative of several of the threads that will be traced in the body of this essay. Charleston Receipts and Two Hundred Years of Charleston Cooking are often cited as the “classics” of the genre and remain popular today among tourists and regional boosters. More importantly, they are also emblematic of many of the central claims of the elite (upper-class) white discourses of Lowcountry cuisine and are generally understood as authoritative and “authentic” accounts. On the other hand, Cooking the Gullah Way and The New Low-Country Cooking are the two most serious and provocative attempts to challenge the dominant versions of Lowcountry food.

These four cookbooks are obviously from very different eras. Charleston Receipts and Two Hundred Years of Charleston Cooking were initially published before the Civil Rights era,
African Americans and Lowcountry Cuisine

In the cookbooks of the white elite, African Americans’ contributions to Lowcountry cuisine are both minimized and fetishized through the mode of paternalism common in the pre-Civil Rights South. While elite whites routinely suggest that African and African American influences give Lowcountry cuisine exceptional “flair,” they just as consistently deny the active and purposeful contributions of their black neighbors. In contrast, Robinson’s and Woods’s cookbooks place the skills, knowledge, and labor of people of African descent at the center of their narratives.

Most commentators on Lowcountry cuisine start by emphasizing its transnational origins, and this point of departure clearly highlights the diverging interpretations of African American contributions. One version of the white-washed myth, found in Two Hundred Years of Charleston Cooking, argues that “it was by a romantic accident that rice was first successfully grown in South Carolina” (emphasis added; Gay 1976: 44). In this narrative, a ship from Madagascar (a place supposedly “as remote in the thought of America as Mars might seem today”) was blown off course and landed in Charleston for repairs (ibid.). In gratitude, the captain of the ship gave Landgrave Thomas Smith—a Charleston resident who had boarded the ship (and since he is named and honored one can only assume he is white)—“a small package of rough rice for seed.” Supposedly, Mr. Smith planted it “in the proper marshy soil and there sprang up a crop so large that he was able to supply the whole colony” (ibid.). Not only, according to this Edenic origin myth, did the “romantic accident” turn out to be a miraculously successful experiment but this encounter sealed the future fate of the place: “Thus from this storm-tossed ship grew the enormous rice wealth of South Carolina” (ibid.). Not only does this myth limit the African origins of this Lowcountry staple exclusively to physical geography, the rice itself—not enslaved peoples from Africa—produced the enormous wealth of the coastal economy. It is useful here to invoke Raymond Williams’s (2006: 67) oft-repeated insight that “the idea of nature contains, though often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history.” The “bounty of nature” motif, which in this Lowcountry version presents rice as producing, in and of itself, the cultural and economic landscape of the region, neatly erases not only the enslaved labor of African Americans but also the skills and knowledge that they brought to the place.

The cookbooks by Robinson and Woods offer a rich counter-narrative about the transnational and multicultural origins of Lowcountry cuisine. Their framing still celebrates the transatlantic collision of food cultures, but it clearly reinterprets the role of African Americans and begins the process of...
redressing the white-washed myths of the Lowcountry. Woods opens his cookbook by suggesting that not only is the African influence important to the region’s cooking, but that it is in fact “the roots” of the contested cuisine. Perhaps in an effort to highlight the persistence of problematic myths about Lowcountry cuisine, Woods opens with a pointed directive: “First, let’s talk about rice.” Drawing explicitly from historical scholarship, Woods points out that English settlers knew little about rice, “but they knew of the skills of the West Africans.” Counter to the Edenic “bounty of nature” myth that appeared in Two Hundred Years of Charleston Cooking, Woods correctly identifies the role of enslaved African labor in the creation of the Lowcountry landscape and its foodways. It was no “romantic accident” that created the wealth of the region, but the abilities of Africans who knew how to “construct the canals and dikes, as well as manage the intricate flood-and-drain systems.” Woods (2000: 3–4) insists that it was only through Africans’ brains and brawn that “the large profits [for elite whites] of the rice called ‘Carolina Gold’ were produced.”

The diverging interpretations of African American contributions to Lowcountry cuisine are not limited to the question of rice cultivation, but can be read between the lines on nearly every page of Lowcountry cookbooks. The broader importance, of course, is not the technical issue of whether Landgrave Thomas Smith was the first person to toss a rice seed in the coastal mudflats of the American South. Instead, the critical point is to understand the implications of how talking about Lowcountry food is bound up with larger historical-geographical projects that make claims (however explicitly) about race and racial difference.

**Food and Identity in the Lowcountry**

Foodways, as glimpsed here through the lens of cookbooks, often contain powerful visions about a people and place. As the case of Lowcountry rice myths shows, the seemingly mundane can actually smuggle in powerful claims about what a place is, how it came to be, who belongs, and what their role is therein. Many of the claims made about Lowcountry cuisine are, in one way or another, claims about what it means to be *of* the Lowcountry. They are efforts to outline a place-based identity, to *produce* a place. It is useful to think of place-based identities as falling somewhere on a continuum between progressive and inclusive or reactionary and exclusive. Many of the elite white cookbooks draw a bold and tight line around who is properly of the place. On the other hand, Sallie Ann Robinson’s vision in *Gullah Home Cooking* is a radically open and progressive one.

The elite white definition of place offered in *Two Hundred Years of Charleston Cooking* promotes an organic myth of the region’s cultural geography. In a section indicatively titled “How This Came to Be,” the authors celebrate the culture as a “flower scented” and “complex outgrowth of a long, slow mixture of peoples” (Gay 1976: ix). This depoliticized narrative of place has clear parallels to the “romantic accident” rice myth: the Lowcountry is a product of a smooth, natural process.

The text consistently uses the words “Charleston” and “Charlestonians” as stand-ins for elite white society. “In Charleston,” the cookbook proclaims, “they still eat dinner at three o’clock in the afternoon” (ibid.: 1). This, of course, was the habit of those few with such a leisured lifestyle, not “Charleston.” The status of non-elites is clearly not one of belonging to the place. Again using the place-name as an exclusive euphemism for elite society, the cookbook argues that “Charleston does not like change” (ibid.). If these authors had included non-elites as a meaningful part of “Charleston,” they could obviously not have made such a generalization. The symbolic erasure of all difference, of all non-elites, is totalizing in the central white-washed food myth. The place and its people, the authors claim, “grew fat and rich on rice” (ibid., 42). For elite whites, foodways were clearly a way of defining who belonged.

The newest editions of the Charleston Junior League’s cookbook removed many of the paternalistic references to black servants and cooks, but it still offers a clear, and clearly exclusive, vision of who counts as a Charlestonian. The opening words of the 1994 edition are remarkably (even if unintentionally) appropriate, dripping with irony: “Some things about life in the Charleston area do not change” (ibid.: 3). The continuity to which the authors refer is a “noble” history of “gracious entertaining” and “lively arts.” The Junior League argues that the recipes in their cookbook reflect both the “sophisticated” and “casual” elegance that has “marked Charleston throughout its 300-year history” (ibid.: 3). This narrative of the Lowcountry draws unabashedly from the white-washed myths about the region and fails to acknowledge that many—arguably most—in the area are not privilege to Charleston’s “gracious entertaining” and “lively arts” (Junior League of Charleston 1994: 3). The place-based identity laid out through elite white accounts of Lowcountry foodways excludes those who are not fortunate enough to lead such a “noble” life.

In contrast, Sallie Ann Robinson ties food and place together in an identity that is designed to cultivate an inclusive and progressive future. Perhaps to emphasize her racial and cultural position, Robinson does not define herself, her place, or the cuisine she promotes as “Lowcountry.” Instead, she uses the term “Gullah”—a common one preferred by
many descendants of slaves on the region’s coastal islands.⁷ For Robinson (2007: xv-xvi), place is a lens through which to engage the contradictions and complexities of everyday life: “goodness and danger”; “joy, pain, spirituality, love.” Her place is a frame for coming to know, and for constructing, an ethical worldview. “Home,” she attests. “For some it is a place where they were born and grew up, and then moved away from. But for others, like me, it is a place where your navel cord was cut, and your heart often wanders to the good and bad times you lived there” (ibid., xv; emphasis added). Food is at the center of this vision of place. It is a mode of defining place through food that is radically different from that of the Charleston Junior League.

Perhaps surprisingly, Robinson does not highlight race as a central component of her identity or her place. She does, of course, point out that Daufuskie Island was a black community, and that after being connected to the mainland with roads many residents became much more aware of the wider, and “whiter,” world. She also wrestles with the changes brought about by the resort-style development that has recently engulfed her home-place, bringing in many more wealthy, white people. In the main, she identifies as Gullah, although also, as a child of the rural and coastal South. Reflecting back on her childhood in 2007, Robinson writes: “Living on Daufuskie when I was young wasn’t about the color of people’s skin or whether they were rich or poor” (ibid.). Though race and class were undoubtedly an integral part of this experience, she identifies much more explicitly with her place and the lifestyle that she knew there.

Food and place come together, or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that they are in fact inseparable, for Robinson to define an ethic, a way of understanding the world, and a vision for the future. To start, good food—Gullah food—is home-cooked. And, as such, it requires hard work, not just in the kitchen but also in the fields, forests, and waterways. “We gave our time and labor,” she recounts, “and made it all work for us” (ibid., xvi). Good food is not commodified for Robinson, it is the product of communal labor and knowledge. Food in and of place is about connection to the broader world.

These Lowcountry cookbooks suggest that there is no monolithic or uniform “Lowcountry cuisine.” While there are similarities and overlapping points, the differences are too significant to overlook. Foodways are much more than just the raw ingredients of cooking. The seemingly mundane does all kinds of ideological work. The different visions of Lowcountry food examined here offer a good example of this point. The Junior League used Lowcountry cuisine as a way to define themselves and their place as exceptional, or, in their words, “noble.” The only Charleston that matters in this understanding of Lowcountry food is the elite, white one. The main purpose and style of their cuisine is to reaffirm status through conspicuous consumption. “Charlestonians,” the Junior League claims, like nothing better than the “casual elegance of outdoor entertaining beneath drooping wisteria.” Their (read: “elite, white”) spacious porches and grounds “lend themselves to a grand gathering with silver trays, white-coated butlers and sumptuous hors d’oeuvres.⁸⁹

A dynamic and experiential geography lies at the heart of Lowcountry cuisine for Marvin Woods. He argues that Lowcountry food should be understood as a part of the broader phenomenon of “diaspora cooking.” Instead of a fixed place, this food culture is rooted in a historical process—the geographies of slavery and the great migration. For Woods, food and cooking are vehicles for exploring the past and present, for experiencing new things. As a chef, he emphasizes cooking as a “dynamic art” where one can indulge in and express “love and passion.” Learning about African American culinary traditions, not as a child but later in life, was obviously a formative experience for Woods,
and he offers a vision for food and cooking as vehicles for similarly enlightening experiences (Woods 2000: 2–4).

The Gullah home-cooking that Sallie Ann Robinson outlines is perhaps the richest of all these foodways. It has a depth that clearly comes from a labored attachment, one that explicitly challenges the pretensions of status-seeking or commodification. Robinson’s attachment formed through the experience of a daily life centered on the demanding but equally rewarding tasks of growing, gathering, and preparing countless meals. From this experience she knows of hardship and work, but also unrivaled contentment and blessings. It would be easy, but also a grave mistake, to dismiss her narrative as a naïve longing for the bygone past. The tendency for scholars to label any appeal to the rural past as hopelessly romantic or even reactionary perhaps says more about their own positionality than it does about the complex and contradictory realities of rural life and those who live it. Though many modern commentators idealize the pastoral, all invocations of the rural are not the same. Robinson clearly longs for parts of the past, but she is no starry-eyed romantic. She acknowledges the challenges of her childhood and the advantages of the present. Through her experiences cultivating Gullah home-cooking, and, just as importantly, moving away from Daufuskie Island, Robinson has developed a food and place-based ethic that translates well across time and space. She argues that working collectively to grow and prepare home-cooked food is one of the most solid foundations for a truly convivial society.

**Contradictions and the Need for Correctives**

How can we make sense of Lowcountry cuisine then, if it appears as so many different things? Does the multiple and contested nature of Lowcountry food collapse into itself, leaving us with nothing to grasp? I think not. We should, however, understand Lowcountry food not as a thing, but a process built on relationships of all kinds. Understood this way, Lowcountry cuisine is a part of long-standing processes of colonialism and racial slavery, and of integration into global capitalist markets and an urban consumer society. More recently, Lowcountry cuisine has been enlisted in efforts to market the region as a tourist destination through the revival of “authentic Southern cooking” (Bilger 2011). In all of these moments, claims about Lowcountry cuisine are bound up in struggles over the making of the place itself.

Lowcountry food is a powerful myth, and like the most powerful of myths it is deeply rooted in historical realities. As such, Lowcountry food is a contested field where race and racial difference continue to play important roles. The works of Robinson and Woods offer promising avenues for challenging the superficial and exclusive understandings of Lowcountry food crafted by elite whites. They are by no means purely oppositional, though. They too occasionally lapse into celebratory forms of multiculturalism (though a much-tempered version), and as with any vision they have their own contradictions and constitutive exclusions. Robinson’s challenge to the commodification of good food sits in an uneasy tension, for instance, with the fact that it is presented in the form of a commodity itself—a cookbook. My purpose in analyzing these cookbooks is to understand the ways that they represent divergent conceptualizations of Lowcountry cuisine, not to judge them as fixed and individual products. While there may be tensions in Robinson’s argument regarding commodification, and her cookbook is definitely intertwined with the marketing of the region, it can still provide a spark for rethinking Lowcountry cuisine. Those wishing to do so should take it as a starting point, not a manifestation of a “pure” or “authentic” cuisine. The most solid starting point that Woods and Robinson offer is the awareness that claims to know the region and its food must be grounded in an honest reckoning with the continuing legacies of racialized labor that created the Lowcountry and its foodways.

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**NOTES**

1. My approximation here is given only to orient the reader, as the purpose of this essay is to understand the contradictory and contested nature of place-making. Even this broad definition would be contested by some who argue that it extends into North Carolina, or others who argue that it does not reach into Georgia. There is also disagreement about how far inland it reaches. All of this, of course, is due to the fact that the concept of “Lowcountry” is socially constructed.  
2. For an important review of the marketing and consumption of landscapes, see Domosh (2013).
4. There is now a well-developed line of historical and geographical research which shows that African skills and knowledge were critical to the successful establishment of the Lowcountry rice plantation economy. For example, see Carney (2001).
6. For an extended examination of the potential for radically inclusive and progressive identities see Collins (1999).
7. There is a wealth of popular and academic (especially anthropological) literature on the Geechee and Gullah communities of the US South’s coastal islands. Especially in the Civil Rights era, the sea islands gained attention as isolated pockets with distinctive and rare African cultural elements. See Pollitzer and Moltke-Hansen (1999).


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