

FORT WORTH MUSEUM

SCIENCE AND HISTORY

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NEWS RELEASE

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Fort Worth Museum of Science and History Presents *Tales From The Land Of Gullah* **On View Through Sept. 7, 2009**

Journey Back to Gullah **To Discover The Roots Of Familiar Songs And Folktales**

FORT WORTH, TEXAS – The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History is reviving the arts and practices of the Gullah people in a powerful exhibition titled *Tales from the Land of Gullah*, which runs through Monday, Sept. 7, 2009. Because of Museum construction, the exhibition is on view in the lower-level galleries of the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame (1720 Gendy Street).

The moralistic story of the *Tortoise and the Hare* and the rejoicing lyrics of *Kumbayah* are part of a distinctive piece of Americana that may be slowly dissipating into mainstream culture. Its inspiring and candid folktales and songs have gone beyond borders and ways of life. The roots of these mysterious, pleasant pieces of folklore can be traced back in time to a place where traditions thrived in a new setting. This was in the Land of Gullah.

Gullah is a West African culture that survived the hardships of slavery and has remained almost unscathed since the 1600s. During the 1600s to the 1800s, millions of West Africans were enslaved throughout the Western Hemisphere. Of those taken to the United States, most were stripped of their culture, language and customs and as a result, lost their homeland traditions.

Africans living on the Sea Islands, along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, remained relatively isolated from mainland America. Thus, they were able to form and preserve a unique way of life that blended their West African heritage with European-American and slave traditions. This became known as the Gullah culture.

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Tales From The Land Of Gullah
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“*Tales from the Land of Gullah* brings together a rich cultural history and age-appropriate activities to enhance our guests’ learning experience, said Museum of Science and History Vice President of Education Kit Goolsby. “Many contributions from this Gullah culture have influenced folktales and popular songs like *This Little Light of Mine* and *Michael Row Your Boat Ashore*. Folktales like *Brer Rabbit* are also Gullah in origin,” she added.

Tales from the Land of Gullah builds bridges into the ancestral home that exists in the hearts and minds of many Gullah people today. The exhibition takes us back to the 1940s, long before the existing bridges were built to connect the islands to the mainland and the culture began to blend. In today’s society, values and traditions are assimilating into one as advances in technology bring the world together. This exhibition aims to preserve and provide cultural understanding of Gullah traditions, as well as develop an appreciation for one’s own culture and background.

In *Tales From The Land Of Gullah*, children experience the rhythms of Gullah life through sounds, crafts and musical traditions. Visitors begin their voyage in time with a brief introduction via an interactive kiosk by Aunt Pearlie Sue (a character portrayed by native Sea Lander and actress Anita Singleton-Prather). They enter a recreated, traditional Gullah home in *Gullah Livin’* where they engage in everyday practices, including rice cooking and quilt making, just like they did in the 1940s. Then, guests head outside the home and experience how the Gullah people survived through shrimp catching, gardening and rice processing in *Livin’ off the Land*. Children and parents alike experience how the Gullah folks entertained themselves through lively, storytelling in *The Tellin’ Forest*.

Tales from the Land of Gullah was created and developed by the Children’s Museum of Houston for the Youth Museum Exhibit Collaborative (YMEC). Admission is included with exhibition admission to the National Cowgirl Museum, which is \$8 for adults, \$7 for children and seniors. Admission is free for Museum members.

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About The Museum

Dedicated to life-long learning and anchored by its rich collections, the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History engages its diverse community through creative, vibrant programs and exhibits interpreting science and the history of Texas and the Southwest. Since the mid-1980s, the Museum has annually welcomed nearly a million visitors, making it one of the most popular cultural attractions in North Texas.

The Museum is currently in the process of building a new facility in the heart of Fort Worth's Cultural District. The world-class facility, designed by internationally renowned architects, Legorreta + Legorreta, will open in November 2009 and will feature a collection of new exhibits and programs developed by the Museum's staff and a team of nationally recognized designers.

