

# The Sound of Freedom and Protest in the South Carolina Sea Islands



## Gullah Spirituals: The Sound of Freedom and Protest in the South Carolina Sea Islands by Eric Sean Crawford

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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The Gullah people of the South Carolina Sea Islands have a rich history of music that has been used for both protest and celebration. This article explores the different ways that music has been used to express the Gullah people's experiences of slavery, oppression, and freedom.

## Music as Protest

Music has been a powerful tool for protest throughout history, and the Gullah people are no exception. During the era of slavery, Gullah people used music to express their pain and suffering, as well as their hopes for freedom. One of the most famous examples of this is the song "Follow the Drinking Gourd," which was used as a code to help slaves escape to freedom. The song's lyrics describe the Big Dipper constellation as a "drinking gourd" that slaves could follow to reach the North Star, which would lead them to freedom.

After the Civil War, Gullah people continued to use music to protest against oppression. In the early 20th century, the Gullah people were subjected to Jim Crow laws, which enforced segregation and discrimination against African Americans. In response, Gullah musicians wrote and performed songs that protested these laws and called for equality.

## **Music as Celebration**

In addition to being a tool for protest, music has also been used by the Gullah people to celebrate their culture and heritage. Gullah music is often joyful and upbeat, and it reflects the Gullah people's love of life and their strong sense of community. One of the most popular forms of Gullah music is the ring shout, a call-and-response song that is often accompanied by dancing and clapping.

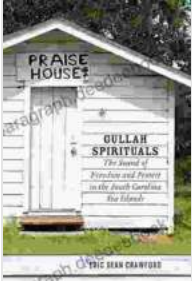
Gullah music has also been used to celebrate important events in the Gullah community, such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms. These songs often tell stories about the Gullah people's history and culture, and they help to strengthen the bonds between community members.

## **The Legacy of Gullah Music**

The music of the Gullah people is a powerful testament to their resilience and spirit. Despite centuries of slavery and oppression, the Gullah people have maintained their unique culture and heritage, and their music is a vital part of that heritage. Today, Gullah music is still being performed and enjoyed by people all over the world, and it continues to inspire and uplift those who hear it.

The music of the South Carolina Sea Islands is a rich and diverse tapestry that reflects the Gullah people's experiences of slavery, oppression, and

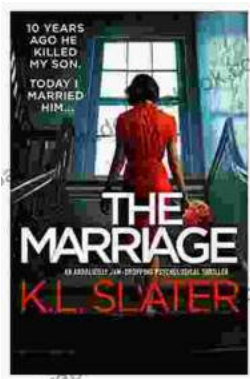
freedom. This music has been used to protest against injustice, celebrate culture, and build community. It is a reminder of the power of music to inspire, uplift, and heal.



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