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AFRICAN COMMUNITIES IN SOUTHEAST COASTAL PLANTATION SPACES IN
AMERICA

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Few studies focus on African communities in plantation spaces on specific and detailed levels from an anthropological perspective. I analyzed and profile plantations as dynamic spaces of intricate and intimately connected communities of people actively engaged in developing strategies for living, surviving, and managing life in racialized spaces. My study counters silences, gaps, and fixed representations of identity in public discourse of African people and communities in plantation spaces in America.

Colonial and antebellum accounts of plantation life typically caricature persons of African descent solely as slaves. Reducing discussion of Africans in plantation spaces to slave life portraits perpetuates a narrow vision of Africans in American history.

A survey of antebellum plantations in the southeast coastal region of the United States showed that they were largely populated by Africans and people of African descent. In South Carolina, census records from as early as 1790 confirm that Africans made up most of the population in plantation communities; and performed the wide range

of jobs and tasks that enabled plantation-based agricultural production centers to function relatively self-sufficiently.

Today, descendents of enslaved Africans, descendents of plantation owners, and others continue to interact and manage relations on a variety of levels and in a variety of ways in former antebellum plantation communities and elsewhere throughout America. This analysis of Jehossee Island and Snee Farm plantations in South Carolina and Kingsley Plantation in Florida profiles the scope, complexity, and heterogeneity of life in plantation spaces in America, in the past and in the present.

