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# Georgia Southern students awarded first scholarships from Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center

October 28, 2021



*Georgia Southern political science major Rachal Phillips, left, and elementary education major Leah Mikell, right, have each been awarded a \$2,500 Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center Social Justice Scholarship, funded by the Quarterman & Keller Found*

Two \$2,500 Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center Social Justice Scholarships funded by the Quarterman & Keller Foundation Inc. have been awarded to Georgia Southern University political science major Rachal Phillips and elementary education major Leah Mikell.

The students' research, which will examine the effects of a Eurocentric education system on the Black community and why many Black Americans are not aware of the Gullah Geechee community, respectively, will be presented at Georgia Southern's Research Symposium in April 2022.

"The Gullah Geechee research scholarship is important to me because I want to bring much-needed attention to the Gullah Geechee community," said Mikell, who is from Savannah. "The Gullah Geechee have unique roots on U.S. soil. The examination of the community will provide new knowledge of the African community and culture in the U.S. and will also provide awareness to the Gullah Geechee of their overlooked community."

Phillips, who is from Covington, Georgia, finds the opportunity doubly compelling.

"The research scholarship is important to me because while it is an honor to receive it, it also challenges and inspires me to learn more than I have before about those around me," she said. "It is also important to me because due to being a first-generation college student, I feel like there are so many first-time accomplishments that I want to experience, this scholarship being one of them."

Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center director Maxine Bryant, Ph.D., hopes this inaugural scholarship will be the first of many opportunities to support underrepresented students and promote research of the Gullah Geechee culture.

"We are excited to be able to offer this scholarship that is made possible through the donation of the Quarterman & Keller Foundation," said Bryant. "The financial benefits of the scholarship are obvious. However, the benefits are more than financial. This scholarship creates an avenue to

further expose students to Gullah Geechee culture; it highlights the value of studying Gullah Geechee culture; and it demonstrates our commitment to the Gullah Geechee community. The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center is not a fleeting endeavor. We are here to stay and are committed to supporting and promoting the legacy of the Low Country Gullah Geechee community.”

Quarterman & Keller Foundation is committed to promoting scholarship in Gullah Geechee communities and serves as an example of how reparations can work for the betterment of the Gullah Geechee community and the descendants of slave owners. Sarah Eishner, a descendant of the Keller Family, who owned land and enslaved Blacks, recently launched an extensive effort to locate descendants of the family enslaved by her ancestors. She found Randy Quarterman, a descendant of that family, who joined her in forming the foundation.

Georgia Southern’s Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Center is designated as part of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, which stretches across 27 counties in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Florida and was established by the U.S. Congress to recognize the unique culture of the Gullah Geechee people.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/R2 institution founded in 1906, offers approximately 140 different degree programs serving almost 27,000 students through 10 colleges on three campuses in Statesboro, Savannah, Hinesville and online instruction. A leader in higher education in southeast Georgia, the University provides a diverse student population with expert faculty, world-class scholarship and hands-on learning opportunities. Georgia Southern creates lifelong learners who serve as responsible scholars, leaders and stewards in their communities. Visit [GeorgiaSouthern.edu](http://GeorgiaSouthern.edu).

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