

Victoria A. Smalls

Emcee / Gullah Cultural Ambassador / Artist / Land Justice Advocate

Victoria A. Smalls is a St. Helena Island native and an internationally acclaimed ambassador of Gullah Geechee culture. As an artist, cultural preservationist, national advocate for land justice, and founder and CEO of Smalls Cultural Resources, LLC, she blends heritage, art, and activism to uplift her community. Victoria's radiant presence, deep cultural knowledge, and magnetic storytelling light up every stage she graces. For the second year in a row, as the Emcee of the Original Gullah Festival, she brings an infectious energy and cultural pride that will elevate our celebration to new heights.

For over two decades, Victoria has been a driving force in preserving and honoring Gullah Geechee history and land. As Executive Director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, she expanded its outreach across four states and reauthorized the Corridor through 2037. She has championed the protection of sacred Gullah Geechee sites – from praise houses and cemeteries to historic schools – while guiding families through heirs' property challenges and empowering Gullah descendants to share their own stories. Now, as South Carolina State Coordinator for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, she continues to fight for Black farmers and landowners, preserving family lands, building generational wealth, and keeping cultural traditions alive in the face of change.

Victoria's impact also shines through history, art and Culture. At the historic Penn Center on St. Helena Island, she wore many hats – from museum director to cultural curator – developing youth workshops, curating exhibits, and preserving archives to keep Gullah history alive for future generations. Victoria also proudly served as a National Park Ranger with Reconstruction Era National Historical Park. Outside of her preservation work, Victoria is an accomplished visual artist and explores spirituality and identity, her art has been showcased in galleries nationwide. Through every endeavor, she beautifully bridges past and present, educating and inspiring with contagious passion.

A charismatic leader with a heart for her people, Victoria has earned numerous accolades for her contributions, including the prestigious 2024 Governor's Award in the Humanities, the President's Lifetime Achievement Award, and recognition as one of South Carolina's top cultural leaders (named among the "12 Black Leaders to Know" and the "50 Most Influential" in her region). Whether strategizing to save historic land, speaking on a national stage, or painting a canvas, she pours love and purpose into every effort to honor the Gullah Geechee legacy and empower others to cherish it. Her life's work is a joyous tribute to the strength of her ancestors and a rallying call for future generations to preserve their inheritance with pride.

Do yourself a favor and follow her on Facebook at We Be Gullah or at the Gullah Goddess on Instagram.

Short Bio

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Victoria A. Smalls is a proud native of St. Helena Island, SC, and a nationally recognized advocate and voice for Gullah Geechee people and culture. She's an accomplished artist, cultural strategist, land advocate, and the founder and CEO of Smalls Cultural Resources, LLC. For the second year in a row, she brings her powerful stage presence and deep cultural pride as Emcee of the Original Gullah Festival.

With more than 20 years of experience, Victoria has preserved sacred sites, led descendant-focused programs, and supported Black land ownership across the South. She served as Executive Director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor and is currently the South Carolina State Coordinator for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. A former National Park Ranger, she interpreted Civil War and Reconstruction Era history and helped thousands connect to the roots of freedom and resilience.

Victoria's creativity shines as a visual artist and former museum director at Penn Center, where she led history, art and culture programming. Her many honors include the 2024 Governor's Award in the Humanities, the President's Lifetime Achievement Award, and being named one of South Carolina's 12 Black Leaders to Know and 50 Most Influential Leaders.

Do yourself a favor and stay connected with Victoria's powerful work, vibrant storytelling, and cultural insights by following her online. Find her on Facebook at We Be Gullah or on Instagram at The Gullah Goddess.