

PRESS RELEASE

Jannie Harriot and Michael Allen Given Governor's Awards in the Humanities

June 29, 2021 -- Two founding members of the SC African American Heritage Commission -- Michael Allen and Jannie Harriot -- have been given Governor's Awards in the Humanities for 2021. A ceremony will be held on Thursday, Oct. 21, in the Pastides Alumni Center at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. Table sponsorships are available as well as individual tickets. To make reservations, call 803-771-2477.

Michael Allen has served as Park Ranger, an Education Specialist, and a Community Partnership Specialist for the National Park Service, specifically for the Fort Sumter/Moultrie parks. He also is a founding member of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor and helped establish the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park in Beaufort.



A native of Kingstree, Allen earned a degree in History Education from South Carolina State University and began his career with the National Park Service in the summer of 1980. His career has been defined by his community activism and his deep-seated interest in our nation's spiritual growth as it relates to history and culture. He played a major role in the National Park Service's Gullah-Geechee Special Resource Study which examined the feasibility and suitability of establishing educational centers as well as determining ways to increase interpretation and preservation of this valuable culture. After five years of work, the final report was presented to Congress in 2005. Through the leadership of Congressman James E. Clyburn and the tireless support of Michael Allen, the U.S. Congress passed the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Act in 2006 to establish the United States' first and only African American National Heritage Area.

In 2014, the National Park Service appointed Allen as a lead team member on the NPS Special Resource Landmark Study exploring the history and legacy of the Reconstruction Era. As a result of this groundbreaking study, a new National Park Service site called the Reconstruction Era National Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation on January 12, 2017.

After more than 37 years in public service, Michael Allen retired from the National Park Service in December 2017. He currently lives in Mt. Pleasant, and is an Elder at Christ Temple Church of North Charleston.



Jannie Harriot is an educator, a community leader and a titan of cultural preservation. A native of Hartsville, Harriot earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from Fayetteville State University. After nearly two decades of teaching in public schools and community colleges in the Carolinas, New York, and New Jersey, she returned to South Carolina in 1990 and served as executive director of the Allendale County First Steps to School Readiness. She soon became instrumental in the 1991 founding of the Butler Heritage Foundation, an organization formed by alumni of Harriot's alma mater, Butler High School, with the mission of restoring the closed campus for public use as a community center. After they successfully petitioned the Darlington County Board of Education to deed Butler High School to the foundation for preservation, Harriot served as the founding chairperson.

In 1993 she was appointed as a charter member of the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission (SCAAHC) by Governor Carroll Campbell. During her 12-year tenure as chair, the SCAAHC has published the annual "African American Historic Places in South Carolina" guide; a "Teacher's Guide to African American Historic Places in South Carolina and its "Arts Integration Supplement"; a survey of historic African American schools of the Jim Crow era in South Carolina titled "How Did We Get to Now?"; an introductory resource guide for entrepreneurs titled "The Business of Rural Heritage, Culture and Art"; and a project capturing the experiences of African Americans in South Carolina during the pandemic titled "Black Carolinians Speak: Portraits of a Pandemic." Among other awards, Harriot has been honored with "The Order of the Palmetto," the highest civilian award in the State of South Carolina, and was inducted into the first class of the Ernest A. Finney Hall of Fame.

More information about the SC Humanities awards program can be found here <https://schumanities.org/featured/2021-governors-awards-in-the-humanities-announced/>.

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