

The practice of transporting cheap black labour from western Africa to the New World was begun by the Spaniards in the 16th Century, and it had been also used by the Portuguese, Dutch and French, but it was adopted in earnest by the British in the early 17th Century. Most of the African slaves made landfall at Sullivan Island, near Charleston, South Carolina, and even today Gullah can be heard in many of the Sea Islands off the coast of the Carolinas and Georgia. Once established in the Americas, these pidgins developed into stable creoles, forms of simplified English combined with many words from a variety of African languages. Gullah is an English–African patois (the name is possibly derived from the word Angola), thought to be remarkably unchanged from that spoken by African slaves two or three centuries ago. The resulting strippeddown language may be crude but it is usually serviceable and efficient.