



VCCJA Cultural Awareness Committee
Cultural Spotlight

Caretha Jennings, Pretrial Officer with Henrico Community Corrections and Pretrial Services shares some info on her cultural heritage.



1. What is something unique about your culture that most people probably don't know?

My culture is unique because many people are unaware of all the contributions that African Americans have made to enhance the lives of all people. One of the major contributions that African Americans have made to society lies in the area of inventions. (www.blackinventions101.com/inventionslist.html). The gas mask and the stop light were invented by Garrett A. Morgan; a farmer's almanac was created by Benjamin Banneker, while the motor, air conditioner unit, and the thermostat control for trucks were invented by Frederick M. Jones. These are only a few of the numerous inventions that were made by African Americans. The most unique characteristic of these inventors is the fact that the majority of them was born into slavery and had minimum to no education at all.

2. What are some myths/facts about your culture?

Some myths that are associated with my culture are that we lack motivation and ambition.

However, my culture has proven to be able to excel in various areas such as sports, entertainment, science, and technology. This alone takes ambition, drive, and motivation to surpass all obstacles.

3. What are some popular foods/rituals/hobbies?

Some popular foods that I enjoy are Macaroni Cheese, Pork Chops, Cornbread, Turnip Greens, and Sweet Potato Pie. Some of the rituals that I enjoy are going to church and attending family gatherings.

4. Are there any holidays/observances that celebrate or recognize your culture?

We have several holidays that are observed each year. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is observed on the 3rd Monday of each January, Black History Month is celebrated throughout the entire month of February, and Kwanzaa is celebrated from December 26th to January 1st.

5. What country does your family originate from?

My immediate family originates from the United States.

6. What prompted you to work in your current position?

I was prompted to work in my current position because I have always been passionate about assisting others with making positive changes in their lives. I am a firm believer that if people are provided the appropriate tools, change is possible. As a Pretrial Officer, it is important to me to lead by example, maintain a positive attitude, and to give offenders the same respect that I would like to be given. In order to be a part of the solution instead of being part of the problem, one key factor is to encourage and not discourage. As we have learned through Evidence Based Practices, it is important to hold offenders accountable but is also necessary to develop strategies to promote change and decrease recidivism. Rapport building is a significant component of supervision and it has been shown that it can contribute to a decrease in violation reports and an increase in successful case closures. Many professionals would be surprised at the powerful impact that something so small as saying "Good Job", "Thank You for Coming In", and "I Appreciate Your Compliance" could have on an offender's attitude. Sometimes we take for granted that some of those small things are the only compliments that they will ever receive. In moving forward into the New Year, let us not forget how we impact those that we come in contact with on a daily basis.