

African American

This article is about the U.S. population of Americans of African ancestry. For the population of recent African origins, see [African immigration to the United States](#). For the African diaspora throughout the Americas, see [Afro-American peoples of the Americas](#).

African Americans, also referred to as **Black Americans** or **Afro-Americans**, is an ethnic group of citizens or residents of the [United States](#) with total or partial ancestry from any of the native populations of [Sub-Saharan Africa](#).^{[3][4]} The term may also be used to include only those individuals who are descended from African slaves.^{[5][6]} As a compound adjective, the term is usually hyphenated as [African-American](#).^{[7][8]}

African Americans constitute the second largest racial and ethnic minority in the [United States](#).^[9] Most African Americans are of [West and Central African](#) descent and are descendants of enslaved blacks within the boundaries of the present [United States](#).^{[10][11]} However, immigrants from [African](#), [Caribbean](#), [Central America](#), and [South American](#) nations and their descendants may or may not also self-identify with the term.^[8]

[African-American history](#) starts in the 16th century, with Africans forcibly taken as slaves to [Spanish America](#), and in the 17th century with African slaves taken to [English colonies](#) in [North America](#). After the founding of the [United States](#), black people continued to be enslaved and treated as inferiors. These circumstances were changed by [Reconstruction](#), development of the [black community](#), participation in the [great military conflicts of the United States](#), the elimination of [racial segregation](#), and the [Civil Rights Movement](#). In 2008, [Barack Obama](#) became the first African American to be elected president of the [United States](#).

1 History

Main article: [African-American history](#)

1.1 Slavery era

Main articles: [Slavery in the United States](#) and [Atlantic slave trade](#)

The first African slaves arrived in the present-day [United](#)

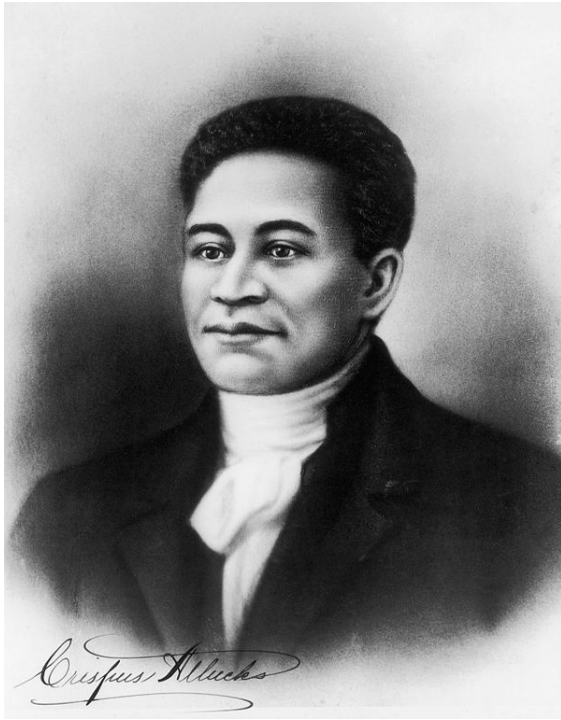
[States](#) as part of the [San Miguel de Gualdape](#) colony (most likely located in the [Winyah Bay](#) area of present-day [South Carolina](#)), founded by Spanish explorer [Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón](#) in 1526.^[12] The ill-fated colony was almost immediately disrupted by a fight over leadership, during which the slaves revolted and fled the colony to seek refuge among local [Native Americans](#). [De Ayllón](#) and many of the colonists died shortly afterwards of an epidemic and the colony was abandoned. The settlers and the slaves who had not escaped, returned to [Haiti](#), whence they had come.^[12]

In 1565, the colony of [Saint Augustine](#) in [Florida](#), founded by [Pedro Menendez de Aviles](#), became the first permanent European settlement in [North America](#). It included an unknown number of free and enslaved Africans that were part of this colonial expedition.

The first recorded Africans in [British North America](#) (including most of the future [United States](#)) were “20 and odd negroes” who came to [Jamestown, Virginia](#) via [Cape Comfort](#) in August 1619 as indentured servants. As English settlers died from harsh conditions, more and more Africans were brought to work as laborers. Typically, young men or women would sign a contract of indenture in exchange for transportation to the [New World](#). The landowner received 50 acres of land from the state ([headrights](#)) for each servant purchased (around £6 per person [equivalent to 9 months income in the 17th century]) from a ship’s captain. An indentured servant (who could be white or black) would work for several years (usually four to seven) without wages. The status of indentured servants in early [Virginia](#) and [Maryland](#) was similar to slavery. Servants could be bought, sold, or leased and they could be physically beaten for disobedience or running away. Unlike slaves, they were freed after their term of service expired or was bought out, their children did not inherit their status, and on their release from contract they received “a year’s provision of corn, double apparel, tools necessary” and a small cash payment called “freedom dues”.^[13]

Africans could legally raise crops and cattle to purchase their freedom.^[14] They raised families, marrying other Africans and sometimes intermarrying with [Native Americans](#) or [English settlers](#).^[15] By the 1640s and 1650s, several African families owned farms around [Jamestown](#) and some became wealthy by colonial standards and purchased indentured servants of their own. In 1640, the [Virginia General Court](#) recorded the earliest documentation of lifetime slavery when they sentenced [John Punch](#), a Negro, to lifetime servitude under his mas-

ter Hugh Gwyn for running away.^{[16][17]} One of Dutch African arrivals, Anthony Johnson, would later own one of the first black “slaves,” John Casor, resulting from the court ruling of a civil case.^{[18][19]}



An artist's conception of Crispus Attucks (1723–1770), the first “martyr” of the American Revolution.

The popular conception of a race-based slave system did not fully develop until the 18th century. The Dutch West India Company introduced slavery in 1625 with the importation of eleven black slaves into New Amsterdam (present-day New York City). All the colony’s slaves, however, were freed upon its surrender to the British.^[20] Massachusetts was the first British colony to legally recognize slavery in 1641. In 1662 Virginia passed a law that children of enslaved women (who were of African descent and thus foreigners) took the status of the mother, rather than that of the father, as under English common law. This principle was called *partus sequitur ventrum*.^{[21][22]} By an act of 1699, the colony ordered all free blacks deported, virtually defining as slaves all persons of African descent who remained in the colony.^[23] In 1670 the colonial assembly passed a law prohibiting free and baptized negroes (and Indians) from purchasing Christians (in this act meaning English or European whites) but allowing them to buy persons “of their owne nation.”^[24]

The earliest African-American congregations and churches were organized before 1800 in both northern and southern cities following the Great Awakening. By 1775, Africans made up 20% of the population in the American colonies, which made them the second largest ethnic group after the English.^[25] During the 1770s, Africans, both enslaved and free, helped rebellious English colonists secure American Independence by

defeating the British in the American Revolution.^[26] Africans and Englishmen fought side by side and were fully integrated.^[27]

James Armistead, an African American, played a large part in making possible the 1781 Yorktown victory, which established the United States as an independent nation.^[28] Baron Clostermann, a German officer in the French Royal Deux-Ponts Regiment, estimated the American army at Yorktown to be about one quarter black and it is estimated that more than a third of the Americans actually engaged were black.^[29] Other prominent African Americans were Prince Whipple and Oliver Cromwell, both of whom are possibly depicted in the front of the boat in the famous *Washington Crossing the Delaware* portrait.

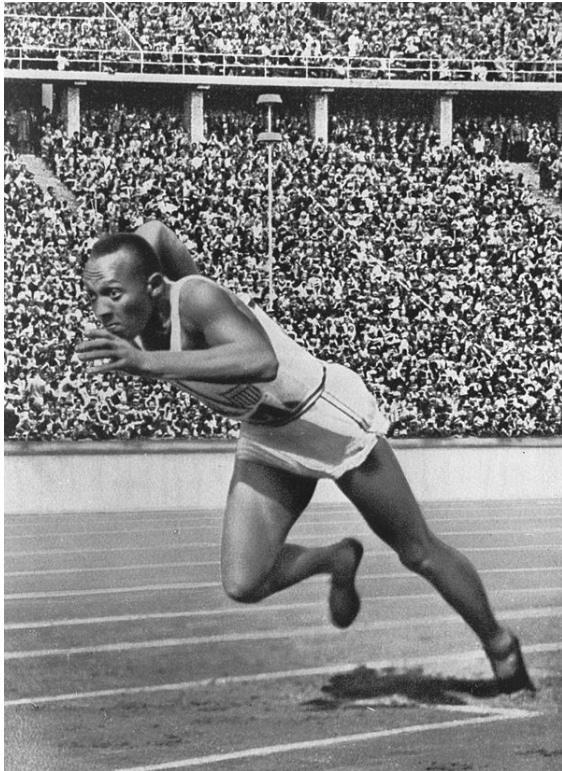
By 1860, there were 3.5 million enslaved African Americans in the United States due to the Atlantic slave trade, and another 500,000 African Americans lived free across the country.^[30] In 1863, during the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. The proclamation declared that all slaves in states which had seceded from the Union were free.^[31] Advancing Union troops enforced the proclamation with Texas being the last state to be emancipated in 1865.^[32]

1.2 Reconstruction and Jim Crow

Main articles: Reconstruction Era of the United States and Jim Crow laws

African Americans quickly set up congregations for themselves, as well as schools and community/civic associations, to have space away from white control or oversight. While the post-war reconstruction era was initially a time of progress for African Americans, in the late 1890s, Southern states enacted Jim Crow laws to enforce racial segregation and disenfranchisement.^[33] Most African Americans followed the Jim Crow laws, using a mask of compliance to prevent becoming victims of racially motivated violence. To maintain self-esteem and dignity, African Americans such as Anthony Overton and Mary McLeod Bethune continued to build their own schools, churches, banks, social clubs, and other businesses.^[34]

In the last decade of the 19th century, racially discriminatory laws and racial violence aimed at African Americans began to mushroom in the United States. These discriminatory acts included racial segregation—upheld by the United States Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896^[35]—which was legally mandated by southern states and nationwide at the local level of government, voter suppression or disenfranchisement in the southern states, denial of economic opportunity or resources nationwide, and private acts of violence and mass racial violence aimed at African Americans unhindered or encouraged by government authorities.



Jesse Owens shook racial stereotypes both with Nazis and segregationists in the USA at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

1.3 Great Migration and Civil Rights Movement

Main articles: [Great Migration \(African American\)](#) and [African-American Civil Rights Movement \(1955–1968\)](#)
The desperate conditions of African Americans in the



An African-American boy outside of Cincinnati, Ohio in the 1940s.

South that sparked the Great Migration of the early 20th century,^[36] combined with a growing African-American community in the Northern United States, led to a movement to fight violence and discrimination against African Americans that, like abolitionism before it, crossed racial lines. The Civil Rights Movement from 1954 to 1968 was directed at abolishing racial discrimination against

African Americans, particularly in the Southern United States. The [March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom](#) and the conditions which brought it into being are credited with putting pressure on President John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.



March on Washington, August 28, 1963, shows civil rights leaders and union leaders.

Johnson put his support behind passage of the [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) that banned discrimination in public accommodations, employment, and labor unions, and the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#), which expanded federal authority over states to ensure black political participation through protection of voter registration and elections. By 1966, the emergence of the [Black Power](#) movement, which lasted from 1966 to 1975, expanded upon the aims of the Civil Rights Movement to include economic and political self-sufficiency, and freedom from white authority.^[37]

During the postwar period, many African Americans continued to be economically disadvantaged relative to other Americans. Average black income stood at 54 percent of that of white workers in 1947, and 55 percent in 1962. In 1959, median family income for whites was \$5,600, compared with \$2,900 for nonwhite families. In 1965, 43 percent of all black families fell into the poverty bracket, earning under \$3,000 a year. The Sixties saw improvements in the social and economic conditions of many black Americans.^[38]

From 1965 to 1969, black family income rose from 54 to 60 percent of white family income. In 1968, 23 percent of black families earned under \$3,000 a year, compared with 41 percent in 1960. In 1965, 19 percent of black Americans had incomes equal to the national median, a proportion that rose to 27 percent by 1967. In 1960, the median level of education for blacks had been 10.8 years, and by the late Sixties the figure rose to 12.2 years, half a year behind the median for whites.^[38]

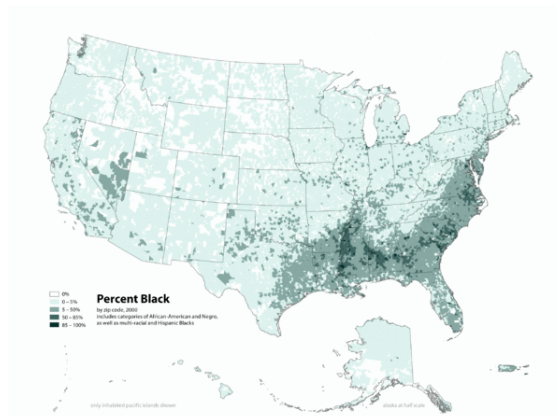
1.4 Post-Civil Rights era

Main article: [Post-Civil Rights era in African-American history](#)

Politically and economically, African Americans have made substantial strides during the post-civil rights era. In 1989, [Douglas Wilder](#) became the first African American elected governor in U.S. history. [Clarence Thomas](#) became the second African-American Supreme Court Justice. In 1992 [Carol Moseley-Braun](#) of Illinois became the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. Senate. There were 8,936 black officeholders in the United States in 2000, showing a net increase of 7,467 since 1970. In 2001 there were 484 black mayors.

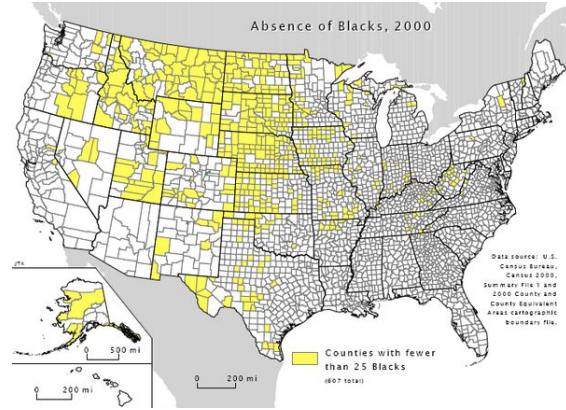
In 2005, the number of Africans immigrating to the United States, in a single year, surpassed the peak number who were involuntarily brought to the United States during the [Atlantic Slave Trade](#).^[39] On November 4, 2008, Democratic Senator [Barack Obama](#) defeated Republican Senator [John McCain](#) to become the first African American to be elected President. At least 95 percent of African-American voters voted for Obama.^{[40][41]} He also received overwhelming support from young and educated whites, a majority of [Asians](#),^[42] [Hispanics](#),^[42] and [Native Americans](#)^[43] picking up a number of new states in the Democratic electoral column.^{[40][41]} Obama lost the overall white vote, although he won a larger proportion of white votes than any previous nonincumbent Democratic presidential candidate since [Jimmy Carter](#).^[44] Four years later, Obama was reelected president by a similar margin on November 6, 2012.

2 Demographics

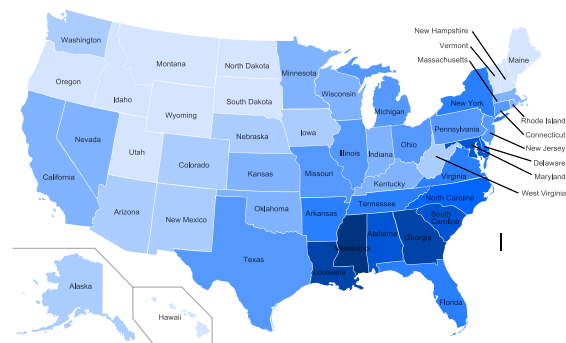


African Americans as a percentage of total population, 2000.

Further information: [Historical racial and ethnic demographics of the United States § Black Population as a Percentage of the Total Population by U.S. Region and State \(1790–2010\)](#), [List of U.S. communities with](#)



U.S. Census map indicating U.S. counties with fewer than 25 black or African-American inhabitants



Percentage of population self-reported as African-American by state in 2010:

[African-American majority populations](#), [List of U.S. counties with African-American majority populations](#) and [List of U.S. states by African-American population](#)

In 1790, when the first U.S. Census was taken, Africans (including slaves and free people) numbered about 760,000—about 19.3% of the population. In 1860, at the start of the [Civil War](#), the African-American population had increased to 4.4 million, but the percentage rate dropped to 14% of the overall population of the country. The vast majority were slaves, with only 488,000 counted as "freemen". By 1900, the black population had doubled and reached 8.8 million.

In 1910, about 90% of African Americans lived in the South. Large numbers began migrating north looking for better job opportunities and living conditions, and to escape [Jim Crow laws](#) and racial violence. The [Great Migration](#), as it was called, spanned the 1890s to the 1970s. From 1916 through the 1960s, more than 6 million black people moved north. But in the 1970s and 1980s, that trend reversed, with more African Americans moving south to the [Sun Belt](#) than leaving it.

The following table of the African-American population in the United States over time shows that the African-American population, as a percentage of the total popu-

lation, declined until 1930 and has been rising since then. By 1990, the African-American population reached about 30 million and represented 12% of the U.S. population, roughly the same proportion as in 1900.^[46] In 2010, 38.9 million Americans identified as “Black or African-American,” representing 12.6% of the population. Controversy has surrounded the “accurate” population count of African Americans for decades. The NAACP believed it was under counted intentionally to minimize the significance of the black population in order to reduce their political power base.

At the time of the 2000 Census, 54.8% of African Americans lived in the South. In that year, 17.6% of African Americans lived in the Northeast and 18.7% in the Midwest, while only 8.9% lived in the western states. The west does have a sizable black population in certain areas, however. California, the nation’s most populous state, has the fifth largest African-American population, only behind New York, Texas, Georgia, and Florida. According to the 2000 Census, approximately 2.05% of African Americans identified as Hispanic or Latino in origin,^[9] many of whom may be of Brazilian, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Haitian, or other Latin American descent. The only self-reported *ancestral* groups larger than African Americans are the Irish and Germans.^[47] Because many African Americans trace their ancestry to colonial American origins, some simply self-identify as “American”.

According to the 2010 US Census, nearly 3% of people who self-identified as black had recent ancestors who immigrated from another country. Self-reported non-Hispanic black immigrants from the Caribbean, mostly from Jamaica and Haiti, represented 0.9% of US population, at 2.6 million.^[48] Self-reported black immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa also represented 0.9%, at about 2.8 million.^[48] Additionally, self-identified Black Hispanics represented 0.4% of the United States population, at about 1.2 million people, largely found within the Puerto Rican and Dominican communities.^[49] Self-reported black immigrants hailing from other countries in the Americas, such as Brazil and Canada, as well as several European countries, represented less than 0.1% of the population. Mixed-Race Hispanic and non-Hispanic Americans who identified as being part black, represented 0.9% of the population. Of the 12.6% of United States residents who identified as black, around 10.3% were “native black American” or ethnic African Americans, who are direct descendants of West/Central Africans brought to the U.S. as slaves. These individuals make up well over 80% of all blacks in the country. When including people of mixed-race origin, about 13.5% of the US population self-identified as black or “mixed with black”.^[50] However, according to the U.S. census bureau, evidence from the 2000 Census indicates that many African and Caribbean immigrant ethnic groups do not identify as “Black, African Am., or Negro”. Instead, they wrote in their own respective ethnic groups in the “Some

Other Race” write-in entry. As a result, the census bureau devised a new, separate “African American” ethnic group category in 2010 for ethnic African Americans.^[51] Following lobbying led by the Arab American Institute, a national organization representing Arab Americans, the census bureau also announced in 2014 that it may establish an additional new ethnic category for populations from the Middle East, North Africa and the Arab world.^[52]

2.1 U.S. cities

Further information: List of U.S. cities with large African-American populations and List of U.S. metropolitan areas with large African-American populations

Almost 58% of African Americans lived in metropolitan areas in 2000. With over 2 million black residents, New York City had the largest black urban population in the United States in 2000, overall the city has a 28% black population. Chicago has the second largest black population, with almost 1.6 million African Americans in its metropolitan area, representing about 18 percent of the total metropolitan population.

Among cities of 100,000 or more, Detroit, Michigan had the highest percentage of black residents of any U.S. city in 2010, with 82%. Other large cities with African-American majorities include New Orleans, Louisiana (60%), Baltimore, Maryland (63%) Atlanta, Georgia (54%, see African Americans in Atlanta), Memphis, Tennessee (61%), and Washington, D.C. (50.7%).

The nation’s most affluent county with an African-American majority is Prince George’s County, Maryland, with a median income of \$62,467. Within that county, among the wealthiest communities are Glenn Dale, Maryland and Fort Washington, Maryland. Other affluent predominantly African-American counties include Dekalb County in Georgia, and Charles City County in Virginia. Queens County, New York is the only county with a population of 65,000 or more where African Americans have a higher median household income than White Americans.^[53]

Seatack is currently the oldest African American community in the United States.^[54] It survives today with a vibrant and very active civic community.^[55]

2.2 Education

Main article: African American education

By 2000, African Americans had advanced greatly. They still lagged overall in education attainment compared to white or Asian Americans, with 14 percent with four-year and 5 percent with advanced degrees, though it was higher than for other minorities.^[56] African Americans attend



Neil deGrasse Tyson is an astrophysicist.

college at about half the rate of whites, but at a greater rate than Americans of Hispanic origin. More African-American women attend and complete college than men. Black schools for kindergarten through twelfth grade students were common throughout the U.S., and a pattern towards re-segregation is currently occurring across the country.^[57]

Historically black colleges and universities, which were originally set up when segregated colleges did not admit African Americans, continue to educate students today. As late as 1947, about one third of African Americans over 65 were considered to lack the literacy to read and write their own names. By 1969, illiteracy as it had been traditionally defined, had been largely eradicated among younger African Americans.^[58]

US Census surveys showed that by 1998, 89 percent of African Americans aged 25 to 29 had completed high school, less than whites or Asians, but more than Hispanics. On many college entrance, standardized tests and grades, African Americans have historically lagged behind whites, but some studies suggest that the achievement gap has been closing. Many policy makers have proposed that this gap can and will be eliminated through policies such as affirmative action, desegregation, and multiculturalism.^[59]

The average graduation rate of blacks in the United States is 52%. Separating this statistic into component parts shows it varies greatly depending upon the state and the school district examined. 38% of black males graduated in the state of New York but in Maine 97% graduated and exceeded the white male graduation rate by 11 percentage points.^[60] In much of the southeastern United States and some parts of the southwestern United States the graduation rate of white males was in fact below 70% such

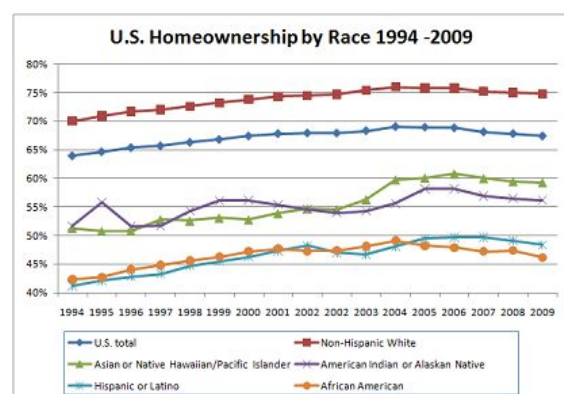
as in Florida where a 62% of white males graduated high school. Examining specific school districts paints an even more complex picture. In the Detroit school district the graduation rate of black males was 20% but 7% white males. In the New York City school district 28% of black males graduate high school compared to 57% of white males. In Newark County 76% of black males graduated compared to 67% for white males.^[60]

In Chicago, Marva Collins, an African-American educator, created a low cost private school specifically for the purpose of teaching low-income African-American children whom the public school system had labeled as being "learning disabled".^[61] One article about Marva Collins' school stated,

Working with students having the worst of backgrounds, those who were working far below grade level, and even those who had been labeled as 'unteachable,' Marva was able to overcome the obstacles. News of third grade students reading at ninth grade level, four-year-olds learning to read in only a few months, outstanding test scores, disappearance of behavioral problems, second-graders studying Shakespeare, and other incredible reports, astounded the public.^[62]

During the 2006–2007 school year, Collins' school charged \$5,500 for tuition, and parents said that the school did a much better job than the Chicago public school system.^[63] Meanwhile, during the 2007–2008 year, Chicago public school officials claimed that their budget of \$11,300 per student was not enough.^[64]

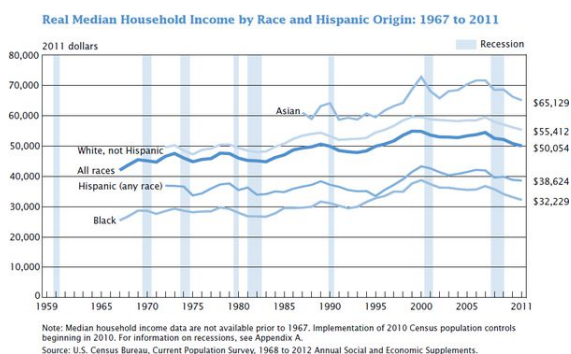
2.3 Economic status



The US homeownership rate according to race.^[65]

Economically, African Americans have benefited from the advances made during the Civil Rights era, particularly among the educated, but not without the lingering effects of historical marginalization when considered as a whole. The racial disparity in poverty rates has narrowed. The black middle class has grown substantially.

In 2010, 45% of African Americans owned their homes, compared to 67% of all Americans.^[66] The poverty rate among African Americans has decreased from 26.5% in 1998 to 24.7% in 2004, compared to 12.7% for all Americans.^[67]



This graph shows the real median US household income by race: 1967 to 2011, in 2011 dollars.^[68]

African Americans have a combined buying power of over \$892 billion currently and likely over \$1.1 trillion by 2012.^{[69][70]} In 2002, African American-owned businesses accounted for 1.2 million of the US's 23 million businesses.^[71] As of 2011 African American-owned business account for approximately 2 million US businesses.^[72] Black-owned businesses experienced the largest growth in number of businesses among minorities from 2002 to 2011.^[72]

In 2004, African-American men had the third-highest earnings of American minority groups after Asian Americans and non-Hispanic whites.^[73]

Twenty-five percent of blacks had white-collar occupations (management, professional, and related fields) in 2000, compared with 33.6% of Americans overall.^{[74][75]} In 2001, over half of African-American households of married couples earned \$50,000 or more.^[75] Although in the same year African Americans were over-represented among the nation's poor, this was directly related to the disproportionate percentage of African-American families headed by single women; such families are collectively poorer, regardless of ethnicity.^[75]

In 2006, the median earnings of African-American men was more than black and non-black American women overall, and in all educational levels.^{[76][77][78][79][80]} At the same time, among American men, income disparities were significant; the median income of African-American men was approximately 76 cents for every dollar of their European American counterparts, although the gap narrowed somewhat with a rise in educational level.^{[76][81]}

Overall, the median earnings of African-American men were 72 cents for every dollar earned of their Asian American counterparts, and \$1.17 for every dollar earned by Hispanic men.^{[76][79][82]} On the other hand by 2006, among American women with post-secondary educa-

tion, African-American women have made significant advances; the median income of African-American women was more than those of their Asian-, European- and Hispanic American counterparts with at least some college education.^{[77][78][83]}

The US public sector is the single most important source of employment for African Americans.^[84] During 2008–2010, 21.2% of all Black workers were public employees, compared with 16.3% of non-Black workers.^[84] Both before and after the onset of the Great Recession, African Americans were 30% more likely than other workers to be employed in the public sector.^[84]

The public sector is also a critical source of decent-paying jobs for Black Americans. For both men and women, the median wage earned by Black employees is significantly higher in the public sector than in other industries.^[84]

In 1999, the median income of African-American families was \$33,255 compared to \$53,356 of European Americans. In times of economic hardship for the nation, African Americans suffer disproportionately from job loss and underemployment, with the black underclass being hardest hit. The phrase “last hired and first fired” is reflected in the Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment figures. Nationwide, the October 2008 unemployment rate for African Americans was 11.1%,^[85] while the nationwide rate was 6.5%.^[86]

The income gap between black and white families is also significant. In 2005, employed blacks earned 65% of the wages of whites, down from 82% in 1975.^[67] *The New York Times* reported in 2006 that in Queens, New York, the median income among African-American families exceeded that of white families, which the newspaper attributed to the growth in the number of two-parent black families. It noted that Queens was the only county with more than 65,000 residents where that was true.^[53]

In 2011, it was reported that 72% of black babies were born to unwed mothers.^[87] The poverty rate among single-parent black families was 39.5% in 2005, according to Williams, while it was 9.9% among married-couple black families. Among white families, the respective rates were 26.4% and 6% in poverty.^[88]

2.4 Health

Further information: Race and health in the United States § African-Americans

The life expectancy for Black men in 2008 was 70.8 years.^[89] Life expectancy for Black women was 77.5 years in 2008.^[89] In 1900, when information on Black life expectancy started being collated, a Black man could expect to live to 32.5 years and a Black woman 33.5 years.^[89] In 1900, White men lived an average of 46.3 years and White women lived an average of 48.3 years.^[89] African-American life expectancy at birth is persistently

five to seven years lower than European Americans.^[90]

Black people have higher rates of obesity, diabetes and hypertension than the US average.^[89] For adult Black men, the rate of obesity was 31.6% in 2010.^[91] For adult Black women, the rate of obesity was 41.2% in 2010.^[91] African Americans have higher rates of mortality than does any other racial or ethnic group for 8 of the top 10 causes of death.^[92] The cancer incidence rate among African Americans is 10% higher than among European Americans.^[93]

Violence has an impact upon African-American life expectancy. A report from the U.S. Department of Justice states “In 2005, homicide victimization rates for blacks were 6 times higher than the rates for whites”.^[94] The report also found that “94% of black victims were killed by blacks.”^[94]

AIDS is one of the top three causes of death for African-American men aged 25–54 and for African-American women aged 35–44 years. In the United States, African Americans make up about 48% of the total HIV-positive population and make up more than half of new HIV cases. The main route of transmission for women is through unprotected heterosexual sex. African-American women are 19 times more likely to contract HIV than other women.^[95]

Washington, D.C. has the nation’s highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection, at 3%. This rate is comparable to what is seen in West Africa, and is considered a severe epidemic.^[96] Dr. Ray Martins, Chief Medical Officer at the Whitman-Walker Clinic, the largest provider of HIV care in Washington D.C., estimated that the actual underlying percent with HIV/AIDS in the city is “closer to five percent”.^[96]

2.5 Sexuality

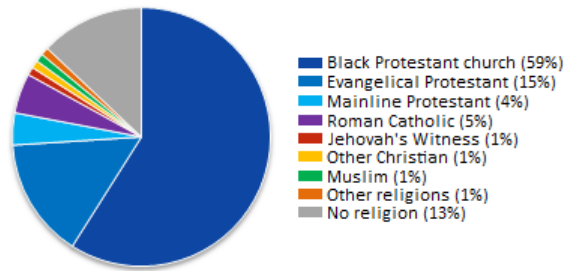
Further information: African-American culture and sexual orientation

According to a Gallup survey conducted from June to September 2012, it found that 4.6 percent of Black or African Americans self identify as LGBT; this is greater than the estimated 3.4 percent of American adults that self identify as LGBT in the total population.^[97]

3 Religion

Main articles: Black church, Nation of Islam and Black Hebrew Israelites

The majority of African Americans are Protestant of whom many follow the historically black churches.^[98] Black church refers to churches which minister predominantly African-American congregations. Black congregations were first established by freed slaves at the end



Religious affiliation of African Americans



Mount Zion United Methodist Church is the oldest African-American congregation in Washington, D.C.



Mosque No. 7 in Harlem, New York City

of the 17th century, and later when slavery was abolished more African Americans were allowed to create a unique form of Christianity that was culturally influenced by African spiritual traditions.^[99]

According to a 2007 survey, more than half of the African-American population are part of the historically black churches.^[100] The largest Protestant denomination among African Americans are the Baptists,^[101] distributed mainly in four denominations, the largest being the National Baptist Convention, USA and the National Baptist Convention of America.^[102] The second largest are the Methodists,^[103] the largest sects are the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.^{[102][104]}

Pentecostals are distributed among several different religious bodies with the Church of God in Christ as the largest among them by far.^[102] About 16% of African-American Christians are members of white Protestant communions,^[103] these denominations (which include the United Church of Christ) mostly have a 2 to 3% African-American membership.^[105] There are also large numbers of Roman Catholics, constituting 5% of the African-American population.^[100] Of the total number of Jehovah's Witnesses, 22% are black.^[98]

Some African Americans follow Islam. Historically, between 15 to 30% of enslaved Africans brought to the Americas were Muslims, but most of these Africans were converted to Christianity during the era of American slavery.^[106] However during the 20th century, some African Americans converted to Islam, mainly through the influence of black nationalist groups that preached with distinctive Islamic practices; these include the Moorish Science Temple of America, though the largest organization was the Nation of Islam, founded during the 1930s, which attracted at least 20,000 people as of 1963,^{[107][108]} prominent members included activist Malcolm X and boxer Muhammad Ali.^[109]

Malcolm X is considered the first person to start the movement among African Americans towards mainstream Islam, after he left the Nation and made the pilgrimage to Mecca.^[110] In 1975, Warith Deen Mohammed, the son of Elijah Muhammad who took control of the Nation after his death, guided majority of its members to orthodox Islam.^[111] However, few members rejected these changes, in particular Louis Farrakhan, who revived the Nation of Islam in 1978 based on its original teachings.

African-American Muslims constitute 20% of the total U.S. Muslim population,^[112] the majority are Sunni or orthodox Muslims, some of these identify under the community of W. Deen Mohammed.^{[113][114]} The Nation of Islam led by Louis Farrakhan has a membership from 20,000–50,000 members.^[115]

There are relatively few African-American Jews; estimates of their number range from 20,000^[116] to 200,000.^[117] Most of these Jews are part of mainstream groups such as the Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox branches of Judaism; although there are significant numbers of people who are part of non-mainstream Jewish groups, largely the Black Hebrew Israelites, whose beliefs include the claim that African Americans are descended from the Biblical Israelites.^[118]

4 Language

Main article: African American Vernacular English

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a variety (dialect, ethnolect, and sociolect) of American

English, commonly spoken by urban working-class and largely bi-dialectal middle-class African Americans.^[119] Non-linguists sometimes call it *Ebonics* (a term that also has other meanings and connotations).

African American Vernacular English evolved during the antebellum period through interaction between speakers of 16th and 17th century English of Great Britain and Ireland and various West African languages. As a result, the variety shares parts of its grammar and phonology with the Southern American English dialect. Where African American Vernacular English differs from Standard American English (SAE) is in certain pronunciation characteristics, tense usage and grammatical structures that were derived from West African languages, particularly those belonging to the Niger-Congo family.^[120]

Virtually all habitual speakers of African American Vernacular English can understand and communicate in Standard American English. As with all linguistic forms, AAVE's usage is influenced by various factors, including geographical, educational and socioeconomic background, as well as formality of setting.^[120] Additionally, there are many literary uses of this variety of English, particularly in African-American literature.

5 Genetics

5.1 Y-DNA

According to a Y-DNA study by Sims et al. (2007), the majority (~60%) of African Americans belong to various subclades of the E3a (E1b1a) paternal haplogroup. This is the most common genetic paternal lineage found today among West/Central African males, and is also a signature of the historical Bantu migrations. The next most frequent Y-DNA haplogroup observed amongst African Americans is the R1b clade, which around 15% of African Americans carry. This lineage is most common today among Northwestern European males. The remaining African Americans mainly belong to the paternal haplogroup I (~7%), which is also frequent in Northwestern Europe.^[121]

5.2 mtDNA

According to an mtDNA study by Salas et al. (2005), the maternal lineages of African Americans are most similar to haplogroups that are today especially common in West Africa (>55%), followed closely by West-Central Africa and Southwestern Africa (<41%). The characteristic West African haplogroups L1b, L2b,c,d, and L3b,d and West-Central African haplogroups L1c and L3e in particular occur at high frequencies among African Americans. As with the paternal DNA of African Americans, contributions from other parts of the continent to their maternal gene pool are insignificant.^[122]

5.3 Autosomal DNA

According to an autosomal DNA study by Bryc et al. (2009), the overall ancestry of African Americans was formed through historic admixture between West/Central Africans (mainly females) and Europeans (mainly males). Consequently, African Americans have a genome-wide average of 78.1% West African ancestry and 18.5% European ancestry, with very large variation among individuals. The West African ancestral component in African Americans is also primarily affiliated with speakers from the non-Bantu branches of the Niger-Congo (Niger-Kordofanian) family.^[123]

6 Traditional names

Main article: African-American names

African-American names are part of the cultural traditions of African Americans. Prior to the 1950s and 1960s, most African American names closely resembled those used within European American culture.^[124] Babies of that era were generally given a few very common names, with children using nicknames to distinguish the various people with the same name. With the rise of 1960s civil rights movement, there was a dramatic increase in names of various origins.^[125]

By the 1970s and 1980s, it had become common among African Americans to invent new names, although many of the invented names took elements from popular existing names. Prefixes such as La/Le, Da/De, Ra/Re, or Ja/Je and suffixes like -ique/iqua, -isha, and -aun/-awn are common, as are inventive spellings for common names. The book *Baby Names Now: From Classic to Cool--The Very Last Word on First Names* places the origins of "La" names in African American culture in New Orleans.^[126]

Even with the rise of inventive names, it is still common for African Americans to use biblical, historic, or European names. Daniel, Christopher, Michael, David, James, Joseph, and Matthew were thus among the most frequent names for African American boys in 2013.^{[124][127][128]}

The name LaKeisha is typically considered American in origin, but has elements of it drawn from both French and West/Central African roots. Other names like LaTanisha, JaMarcus, DeAndre, and Shaniqua were created in the same way. Punctuation marks are seen more often within African-American names than other American names, such as the names Mo'nique and D'Andre.^[124]

7 Contemporary issues

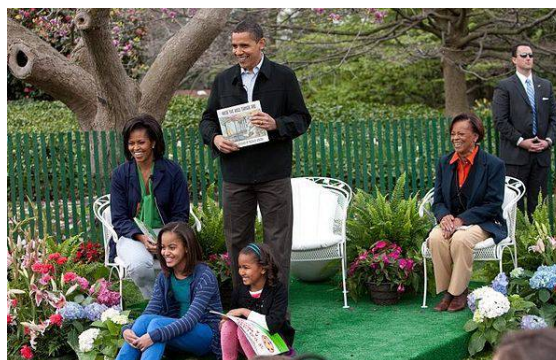
African Americans have improved their social and economic standing significantly since the Civil Rights Move-

ment and recent decades have witnessed the expansion of a robust, African American middle class across the United States. Unprecedented access to higher education and employment in addition to representation in the highest levels of American government has been gained by African Americans in the post-civil rights era.

Nevertheless, due in part to the legacy of slavery, racism and discrimination, African Americans as a group remain at a pronounced economic, educational and social disadvantage in many areas relative to European Americans. Persistent social, economic and political issues for many African Americans include inadequate health care access and delivery; institutional racism and discrimination in housing, education, policing, criminal justice and employment; crime, poverty and substance abuse.

One of the most serious and long standing issues within African-American communities is poverty. Poverty itself is a hardship as it is related to marital stress and dissolution, health problems, low educational attainment, deficits in psychological functioning, and crime.^[129] In 2004, 24.7% of African-American families lived below the poverty level.^[67] In 2007, the average African-American income was \$33,916, compared with \$54,920 for whites.^[130]

7.1 Politics and social issues



President Barack Obama at White House Easter Egg Roll, with Michelle, Malia and Sasha, and Michelle's mother, Marian Robinson

Collectively, African Americans are more involved in the American political process than other minority groups in the United States, indicated by the highest level of voter registration and participation in elections among these groups in 2004.^[131] African Americans collectively attain higher levels of education than immigrants to the United States.^[131] African Americans also have the highest level of Congressional representation of any minority group in the U.S.^[132]

The large majority of African Americans support the Democratic Party. In the 2004 Presidential Election, Democrat John Kerry received 88% of the African-American vote compared to 11% for Republican George

W. Bush.^[133] Although there is an African-American lobby in foreign policy, it has not had the impact that African-American organizations have had in domestic policy.^[134]

Until the New Deal, African Americans were supporters of the Republican Party because it was Republican President Abraham Lincoln who helped in granting freedom to American slaves; at the time, the Republicans and Democrats represented the sectional interests of the North and South, respectively, rather than any specific ideology, and both right and left were represented equally in both parties.

The African-American trend of voting for Democrats can be traced back to the 1930s during the Great Depression, when Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program provided economic relief to African Americans; Roosevelt's New Deal coalition turned the Democratic Party into an organization of the working class and their liberal allies, regardless of region. The African-American vote became even more solidly Democratic when Democratic presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson pushed for civil rights legislation during the 1960s.

After over 50 years, marriage rates for *all* Americans began to decline while divorce rates and out-of-wedlock births have climbed.^[135] These changes have been greatest among African Americans. After more than 70 years of racial parity black marriage rates began to fall behind whites.^[135] Single-parent households have become common, and according to US census figures released in January 2010, only 38 percent of black children live with both their parents.^[136]

In 2008, Democrats overwhelmingly voted 70% against California Proposition 8, African Americans voted 58% in favor of it while 42% voted against Proposition 8.^[137] On May 9, 2012, Barack Obama, the first African-American president, became the first US president to support same sex marriage. After Obama's endorsement there is a rapid growth in support for same sex marriage among African Americans. Now 59% of African Americans support same sex marriage, which is higher than support among the national average (53%) and white Americans (50%).^[138]

Polls in North Carolina,^[139] Pennsylvania,^[140] Missouri,^[141] Maryland,^[142] Ohio,^[143] Florida,^[144] and Nevada^[145] have also shown an increase in support for same sex marriage among African Americans. On November 6, 2012, Maryland, Maine, and Washington all voted for approve of same-sex marriage, along with Minnesota rejecting a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. Exit polls in Maryland show about 50% of African Americans voted for same-sex marriage, showing a vast evolution among African Americans on the issue and was crucial in helping pass same-sex marriage in Maryland.^[146]

Blacks hold far more conservative opinions on abortion, extramarital sex, and raising children out of wed-

lock than Democrats as a whole.^[147] On financial issues, however, African Americans are very much in line with Democrats, generally supporting a more progressive tax structure to provide more government spending on social services.^[148]

7.2 News media and coverage



BET founder Robert L. Johnson with former U.S. President George W. Bush

Some activists and academics contend that news media coverage of African-American news concerns or dilemmas is inadequate^{[149][150][151]} or the news media present distorted images of African Americans.^[152] To combat this, Robert L. Johnson founded Black Entertainment Television, a network that targets young African Americans and urban audiences in the United States. Most programming on the network consists of rap and R&B music videos and urban-oriented movies and series. The channel also shows syndicated television series, original programs, and some public affairs programs. On Sunday mornings, BET broadcasts a lineup of network-produced Christian programming; other, non-affiliated Christian programs are also shown during the early morning hours daily. BET is now a global network that reaches 90 million households in the United States, Caribbean, Canada, and the United Kingdom.^[153]

In addition to BET there is Centric, which is a spin-off cable television channel of BET, created originally as *BET on Jazz* to showcase jazz music-related programming, especially that of black jazz musicians. Programming has been expanded to include a block of urban programs as well as some R&B, soul, and world music.^[154]

TV One is another African-American-oriented network and a direct competitor to BET, targeting African American adults with a broad range of programming. The

network airs original lifestyle and entertainment-oriented shows, movies, fashion and music programming, as well as classic series such as *227*, *Good Times*, *Martin*, *Boston Public* and *It's Showtime at the Apollo*. The network primarily owned by Radio One. Founded and controlled by Catherine Hughes, it is one of the nation's largest radio broadcasting companies and the largest African-American-owned radio broadcasting company in the United States.^[155]

Other African-American networks scheduled to launch in 2009 are the Black Television News Channel founded by former Congressman J. C. Watts and Better Black Television founded by Percy Miller.^{[156][157]} In June 2009, NBC News launched a new website named The Grio^[158] in partnership with the production team that created the black documentary film, *Meeting David Wilson*. It is the first African-American video news site which focuses on underrepresented stories in existing national news. The Grio consists of a broad spectrum of original video packages, news articles, and contributor blogs on topics including breaking news, politics, health, business, entertainment and Black History.^[159]

7.3 Cultural influence in the United States

Further information: African-American culture

From their earliest presence in North America, African



A traditional soul food dinner consisting of fried chicken with macaroni and cheese, collard greens, breaded fried okra and cornbread.

Americans have contributed literature, art, agricultural skills, foods, clothing styles, music, language, social and technological innovation to American culture. The cultivation and use of many agricultural products in the United States, such as yams, peanuts, rice, okra, sorghum, grits, watermelon, indigo dyes, and cotton, can be traced to African and African-American influences. Notable examples include George Washington Carver, who created 300 products from peanuts, 118 products from sweet potatoes, and 75 from pecans; and George Crum, who invented the potato chip in 1853.^[160] Soul food is a variety of cuisine popular among African-Americans. It is closely related to the cuisine of the Southern United

States. The descriptive terminology may have originated in the mid-1960s, when *soul* was a common definer used to describe African-American culture (for example, soul music).

7.3.1 In music



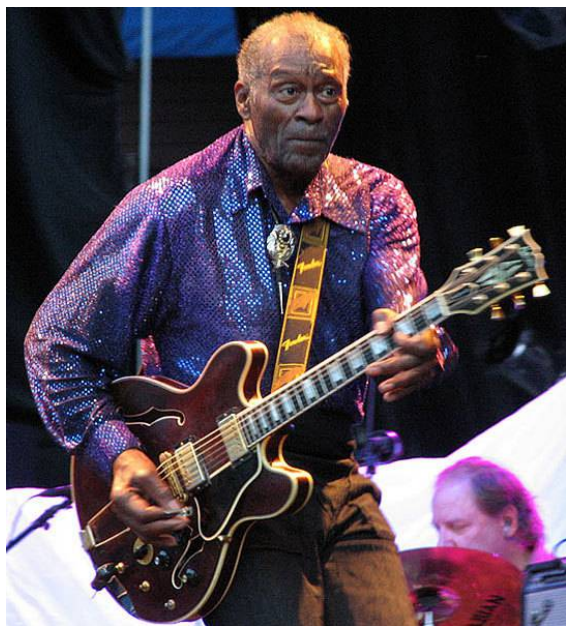
The King & Carter Jazzing Orchestra photographed in Houston, Texas, January 1921

African-American music is one of the most pervasive African-American cultural influences in the United States today and is among the most dominant in mainstream popular music. Hip hop, R&B, funk, rock and roll, soul, blues, and other contemporary American musical forms originated in black communities and evolved from other black forms of music, including blues, doo-wop, barbershop, ragtime, bluegrass, jazz, and gospel music.

African-American-derived musical forms have also influenced and been incorporated into virtually every other popular musical genre in the world, including country and techno. African-American genres are the most important ethnic vernacular tradition in America, as they have developed independent of African traditions from which they arise more so than any other immigrant groups, including Europeans; make up the broadest and longest lasting range of styles in America; and have, historically, been more influential, interculturally, geographically, and economically, than other American vernacular traditions.^[161]

African Americans have also had an important role in American dance. Bill T. Jones, a prominent modern choreographer and dancer, has included historical African-American themes in his work, particularly in the piece "Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land". Likewise, Alvin Ailey's artistic work, including his "Revelations" based on his experience growing up as an African American in the South during the 1930s, has had a significant influence on modern dance. Another form of dance, Stepping, is an African-American tradition whose performance and competition has been formalized through the traditionally black fraternities and sororities at universities.^[162]

7.3.2 In literature and academia



Chuck Berry in Örebro, Berry is considered a pioneer of American Rock and roll.

Many African-American authors have written stories, poems, and essays influenced by their experiences as African Americans. African-American literature is a major genre in American literature. Famous examples include Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison, and Maya Angelou.

African-American inventors have created many widely used devices in the world and have contributed to international innovation. Norbert Rillieux created the technique for converting sugar cane juice into white sugar crystals. Moreover, Rillieux left Louisiana in 1854 and went to France, where he spent ten years working with the Champollions deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics from the Rosetta Stone.^[163] Most slave inventors were nameless, such as the slave owned by the Confederate President Jefferson Davis who designed the ship propeller used by the Confederate navy.^[164]

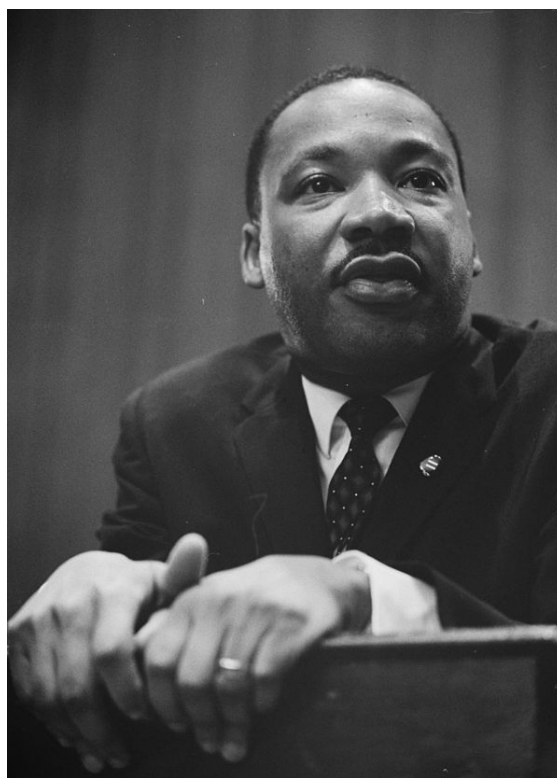
By 1913 over 1,000 inventions were patented by black Americans. Among the most notable inventors were Jan Matzeliger, who developed the first machine to mass-produce shoes,^[165] and Elijah McCoy, who invented automatic lubrication devices for steam engines.^[166] Granville Woods had 35 patents to improve electric railway systems, including the first system to allow moving trains to communicate.^[167] Garrett A. Morgan developed the first automatic traffic signal and gas mask.^[168]

Lewis Howard Latimer invented an improvement for the incandescent light bulb.^[169] More recent inventors include Frederick McKinley Jones, who invented the movable refrigeration unit for food transport in trucks

and trains.^[170] Lloyd Quarterman worked with six other black scientists on the creation of the atomic bomb (code named the Manhattan Project).^[171] Quarterman also helped develop the first nuclear reactor, which was used in the atomically powered submarine called the Nautilus.^[172]

A few other notable examples include the first successful open heart surgery, performed by Dr. Daniel Hale Williams,^[173] and the air conditioner, patented by Frederick McKinley Jones.^[170] Dr. Mark Dean holds three of the original nine patents on the computer on which all PCs are based.^{[174][175][176]} More current contributors include Otis Boykin, whose inventions included several novel methods for manufacturing electrical components that found use in applications such as guided missile systems and computers,^[177] and Colonel Frederick Gregory, who was not only the first black astronaut pilot but the person who redesigned the cockpits for the last three space shuttles. Gregory was also on the team that pioneered the microwave instrumentation landing system.^[178]

7.4 Political legacy



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. remains the most prominent political leader in the American Civil Rights Movement and perhaps the most influential African-American political figure in general.

African Americans have fought in every war in the history of the United States.^[179]

The gains made by African Americans in the 1950s

and 1960s Civil Rights Movement and in the Black Power movement not only obtained certain rights for African Americans, but changed American society in far-reaching and fundamentally important ways. Prior to the 1950s, Black Americans in the South were subject to de jure discrimination, or *Jim Crow*. They would often be the victims of extreme cruelty and violence, sometimes resulting in deaths: by the post WWII era, African Americans became increasingly discontented with their long-standing inequality. In the words of *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, African Americans and their supporters challenged the nation to “rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed that all men are created equal ...”^[180]

The Civil Rights Movement marked a sea-change in American social, political, economic and civic life. It brought with it boycotts, sit-ins, nonviolent demonstrations and marches, court battles, bombings and other violence; prompted worldwide media coverage and intense public debate; forged enduring civic, economic and religious alliances; and disrupted and realigned the nation’s two major political parties.

Over time, it has changed in fundamental ways the manner in which blacks and whites interact with and relate to one another. The movement resulted in the removal of codified, *de jure* racial segregation and discrimination from American life and law, and heavily influenced other groups and movements in struggles for civil rights and social equality within American society, including the Free Speech Movement, the disabled, the women’s movement, Native Americans, and migrant workers.

8 Terminology

8.1 Political overtones



This parade float shows a use of the word “Afro-American” in 1911.

The term *African American* carries important political overtones. Earlier terms used to describe Americans of African ancestry referred more to skin color than ancestry, and were conferred upon the group by colonists

and Americans of European ancestry; people with dark skins were considered inferior in fact and in law. The terms (such as *colored*, *person of color*, or *negro*) were included in the wording of various laws and legal decisions which some thought were being used as tools of white supremacy and oppression.^[181] There developed among blacks in America a growing desire for a term of self-identification of their own choosing.



Michelle Obama is the First Lady of the United States; she and her husband, President Barack Obama, are the first African Americans to hold these positions.

With the political consciousness that emerged from the political and social ferment of the late 1960s and early 1970s, blacks no longer approved of the term *Negro*. They believed it had suggestions of a moderate, accommodationist, even “*Uncle Tom*” connotation. In this period, a growing number of blacks in the United States, particularly African-American youth, celebrated their blackness and their historical and cultural ties with the African continent. The Black Power movement defiantly embraced *Black* as a group identifier. It was a term social leaders themselves had repudiated only two decades earlier, but they proclaimed, “*Black is beautiful*”.

In this same period, a smaller number of people favored *Afro-American*, a common shortening (as is ‘*Anglo-American*’). However, after the decline in popularity of the ‘*Afro*’ hairstyle in the late 1970s, the term fell out of use.

In the 1980s the term *African American* was advanced on

the model of, for example, *German-American* or *Irish-American* to give descendants of American slaves and other American blacks who lived through the *slavery era* a *heritage* and a cultural base.^[181] The term was popularized in black communities around the country via word of mouth and ultimately received mainstream use after *Jesse Jackson* publicly used the term in front of a national audience. Subsequently, major media outlets adopted its use.^[181]

Some such as *Maulana Karenga* and *Owen Alik Shahadah* argue *African-American* is more appropriate, because it accurately articulates geography and historical origin. Thus linking a people to a continent as opposed to an abstract color.^[182] Others believe the term *black* is inaccurate because African Americans have a variety of skin tones. Surveys show that the majority of Black Americans have no preference for “African American” versus “Black,”^[183] although they have a slight preference for “Black” in personal settings and “African American” in more formal settings.^[184]

Many African Americans expressed a preference for the term, as it was formed in the same way as names for others of the many ethnic groups in the nation. Some argued further that, because of the historical circumstances surrounding the capture, enslavement and systematic attempts to de-Africanize blacks in the United States under chattel slavery, most African Americans are unable to trace their ancestry to a specific African nation; hence, the entire continent serves as a geographic marker.

For many, “African American” is more than a name expressive of cultural and historical roots. The term expresses pride in Africa and a sense of kinship and solidarity with others of the *African diaspora*—an embrace of pan-Africanism as earlier enunciated by prominent African thinkers such as *Marcus Garvey*, *W. E. B. Du Bois* and *George Padmore*. Rarely used terms include *Afro-Usonian*^[185] and *African-Usonian*,^[186]

8.2 Identity

Since 1977, in an attempt to keep up with changing social opinion, the United States government has officially classified black people (revised to *black* or *African American* in 1997) as “having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.”^[187] Other federal offices, such as the *United States Census Bureau*, adhere to the *Office of Management and Budget* standards on race in its data collection and tabulations efforts.^[188] In preparation for the United States 2010 Census, a marketing and outreach plan, called *2010 Census Integrated Communications Campaign Plan* (ICC) recognized and defined African Americans as black people born in the United States. From the ICC perspective, African Americans are one of three groups of black people in the United States^[189]

The ICC plan was to reach the three groups by acknowl-

edging that each group has its own sense of community that is based on geography and ethnicity.^[190] The best way to market the census process toward any of the three groups is to reach them through their own unique communication channels and not treat the entire black population of the U.S. as though they are all African Americans with a single ethnic and geographical background. The U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation categorizes black or African-American people as “A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa” through racial categories used in the UCR Program adopted from the *Statistical Policy Handbook* (1978) and published by the Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards, U.S. Department of Commerce, derived from the 1977 Office of Management and Budget classification.^[191]

8.3 Admixture

See also: *Miscegenation § United States*, *Multiracial American* and *One-drop rule*

Historically, “race mixing” between black and white people was taboo in the United States. So-called *anti-miscegenation laws*, barring blacks and whites from marrying or having sex, were established in colonial America as early as 1691.^[192] The taboo among American whites surrounding white-black relations can be seen as a historical consequence of the oppression and racial segregation of African Americans.^[193] Historian David Brion Davis notes the racial mixing that occurred during slavery was frequently attributed by the *planter class* to the “lower-class white males” but Davis concludes that “there is abundant evidence that many slaveowners, sons of slaveowners, and overseers took black mistresses or in effect raped the wives and daughters of slave families.”^[194] A famous example was Thomas Jefferson’s mistress, *Sally Hemings*.^[195]

Harvard University historian Henry Louis Gates, Jr. wrote in 2009, “African Americans ... are a racially mixed or mulatto people—deeply and overwhelmingly so.”^[196] For example, after the *Emancipation Proclamation* Chinese American men married African-American women in high proportions to their total marriage numbers due to few Chinese American women being in the United States.^[197] African slaves and their descendants have also had a history of cultural exchange and intermarriage with *Native Americans*^[198] although they did not necessarily retain social, cultural or linguistic ties to Native peoples.^[199] There are also increasing intermarriages and offspring between non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanics of any race, especially between Puerto Ricans and African Americans (American-born blacks).^[200]

Racially mixed marriages have become increasingly accepted in the United States since the Civil Rights movement and up to the present day.^[201] Approval in national

opinion polls have risen from 36% in 1978, to 48% in 1991, 65% in 2002, 77% in 2007.^[202] Scientific analysis indicates that current African Americans inherit about 14–17.7% of their ancestry from Europeans.^[203]

8.4 The African-American experience

In her book *The End of Blackness*, as well as in an essay on the liberal website *Salon*,^[204] author Debra Dickerson has argued that the term “black” should refer strictly to the descendants of Africans brought to America as slaves, and not the sons and daughters of black immigrants who lack that ancestry. In her opinion, President Barack Obama, who is the son of a Kenyan immigrant, although technically black, is not African-American.^{[204][205]} She makes the argument that grouping all people of African descent together regardless of their unique ancestral circumstances would inevitably deny the lingering effects of slavery within the American community of slave descendants, in addition to denying black immigrants recognition of their own unique ancestral backgrounds. “Lumping us all together”, Dickerson wrote, “erases the significance of slavery and continuing racism while giving the appearance of progress”.^[204]

Similar viewpoints have been expressed by Stanley Crouch in a *New York Daily News* piece, Charles Steele, Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference^[206] and African-American columnist David Ehrenstein of the *LA Times* who accused white liberals of flocking to blacks who were “Magic Negroes”, a term that refers to a black person with no past who simply appears to assist the mainstream white (as cultural protagonists/drivers) agenda.^[207] Ehrenstein went on to say “He’s there to assuage white ‘guilt’ they feel over the role of slavery and racial segregation in American history.”^[207]

Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (who was famously mistaken for a “recent American immigrant” by French President Nicolas Sarkozy),^[208] said “descendants of slaves did not get much of a head start, and I think you continue to see some of the effects of that.” She has also rejected an immigrant designation for African Americans and instead prefers the term “black” or “white” to denote the African and European U.S. founding populations.^[209]

8.5 Terms no longer in common use

The terms *mulatto* and *colored* were widely used until the second quarter of the 20th century, when they were considered outmoded and generally gave way to the use of *negro*. By the 1940s, the term commonly was capitalized, *Negro*, but by the mid-1960s it was considered disparaging. By the end of the 20th century “Negro” had come to be considered inappropriate and was rarely used and perceived as a pejorative.^{[210][211]} The term is rarely used by younger black people, but remained in use by many older

African Americans who had grown up with the term, particularly in the southern U.S.^[212]

The word *negro* is the Spanish and Portuguese word for the color *black*. In regions such as *Latin America* where these languages are spoken, *negro* (pronounced slightly differently from *Negro* in English), is a normal word used without disparaging intent in relation to black people.

There are many other deliberately insulting terms. Many were in common use (e.g., “nigger”), but had become unacceptable in normal discourse before the end of the 20th century.

9 See also

- African American art
- African-American literature
- African-American music
- African American National Biography Project
- African-American neighborhood
- African American Vernacular English
- African-American upper class
- African-American middle class
- Anglo-African term
- Black feminism
- Black Loyalist
- Military history of African Americans
- African-American names

10 Notes

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- [2] “Pew Forum: A Religious Portrait of African-Americans”. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. January 30, 2009. Retrieved October 31, 2012.
- [3] ““Black or African American” refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. The Black racial category includes people who marked the “Black, African Am., or Negro” checkbox. It also includes respondents who reported entries such as African American; Sub-Saharan African entries, such as Kenyan and Nigerian; and Afro-Caribbean entries, such as Haitian and Jamaican.” <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf>

- [4] <http://definitions.uslegal.com/a/african-americans/> "African Americans are citizens or residents of the United States who have origins in any of the black populations of Africa. In the United States, the terms are generally used for Americans with at least partial Sub-Saharan African ancestry."
- [5] Carol Lynn Martin, Richard Fabes (2008). *Discovering Child Development*. Cengage Learning. p. 19. ISBN 1111808112. Retrieved 25 October 2014. "most (but not all) Americans of African descent are grouped racially as Black; however, the term *African American* refers to an ethnic group, most often to people whose ancestors experienced slavery in the United States (Soberon, 1996). Thus, not all Blacks in the United States are African American (for example, some are from Haiti and others are from the Caribbean).
- [6] Don C. Locke, Deryl F. Bailey (2013). *Increasing Multicultural Understanding*. SAGE Publications. p. 106. ISBN 1483314219. Retrieved 23 October 2014. African American refers to descendants of enslaved Black people who are from the United States. The reason we use an entire continent (Africa) instead of a country (e.g., Irish American) is because slave masters purposefully obliterated tribal ancestry, language, and family units in order to destroy the spirit of the people they enslaved, thereby making it impossible for their descendants to trace their history prior to being born into slavery.
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13 External links

- Richard Thompson Ford Name Games, *Slate*, September 16, 2004. Article discussing the problems of defining *African American*
- "Of Arms & the Law: Don Kates on Afro-American Homicide Rates"
- *Scientific American Magazine* (June 2006) Trace Elements Reconnecting African Americans to an ancestral past
- "The Definition of Political Absurdity", *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 2, 2007
- African American archaeology in Sacramento, California pdf
- African American archaeology in Oakland, California —See Part III, Chap 10
- Black History related original documents and photos
- President Obama's Speech to the NAACP on July 16, 2009—full video by *MSNBC*
- Black or African American?, Frank Newport. Gallup, September 28, 2007
- The Long Journey of Black Americans – slideshow by *The First Post*

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