

AFRICANA STUDIES



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Africana Studies

Daniel Davis

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: What is African American Studies?

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Introduce students to fundamental concepts and theories within African American Studies, Africana Studies, Black Studies, African Diaspora Studies, and African Studies.

Upon completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.

This introductory week will be dedicated to defining Africana Studies (African American Studies) and discussing its importance to academe, society, and the general population--specifically people of African descent. Students will be introduced to the discipline by this week's readings "The Trouble with African American Studies," "What is Africana Studies?" "What is African American Studies" and viewing the video "Agents of Change."

[1.1: What is African American studies?-- Readings and Media](#)

[1.2: What is African American Studies?-- Classroom Activity](#)

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1.1: What is African American studies?-- Readings and Media

These selected readings and video are appropriate to introduce students to the field of African American Studies. The readings offer various definitions of what African American Studies is and different perspectives about its importance in higher education. The video *Agents of Change* provides a history of how African American Studies became included in academe.



Please read/view all of the linked texts below.

Readings and Videos

What is African American Studies?

"Black studies may be defined as an analysis of the factors and conditions which have affected the economic, psychological, legal and moral status of the African in

America as well as the African in diaspora. Not only is Black Studies concentrated with the culture of the Afro-American ethnic, as historically and sociologically defined by the traditional literature, it is also concerned with the development of new approaches to the study of the Black experience and with the development of social policies which will impact positively upon the lives of black people." --Vivian Gordon, 1981

"Africana studies is the multidisciplinary analysis of the lives and thought of people of African ancestry on the African continent and throughout the world. It embraces Africa, Afro America, and the Caribbean, but does not confine itself to those three geographical areas."--Robert L. Harris, Jr., 1990

"African American studies, broadly defined, is the systematic study of the black experience, framed by the socioeconomic, cultural, and geographical boundaries of sub-Saharan African and the black diaspora of North America, the Caribbean, Brazil, and Latin America, and increasingly Europe itself. At its core, it is also the black intellectual tradition as it has challenged and interacted with Western civilization and cultures. In the social sciences and humanities, that intellectual tradition has assumed a complex burden over many generations, seeking to engage in a critical dialogue with white scholarships on a range of complex issues, and most significantly, the definition and reality of race as a social construct, and the factors that explain the structures of inequality which, greatly define the existence of black people across the globe." --Manning Marable, 1995

"African American Studies is the study and analysis of the African diaspora's history and culture which is intended to promote the economic, psychological, educational, occupational, and familial progress of Black people. This is an activist discipline, and the spirit of this subject is committed to inspiring change. By circumstance, African American Studies is a challenge to the status quo as it counters the default Eurocentric bias of Western education."--Daniel R. Davis, 2012

"What is Africana Studies?"

University of Kansas [offers a succinct description](#) of African American studies on their website. This is a useful because it offers a rationale for the importance of the discipline.

University of Kansas. "What Is Africana Studies?" *WHAT AFRICANA STUDIES? | African and African-American Studies*, University of Kansas, afs.ku.edu/what-africana-studies. Accessed 9 Dec. 2025.

"The Struggle and Reward of Black Studies"

This [article](#) from a post-doctoral fellow from the Department of African & African American Studies at Washington University offers a unique and helpfully described perspective on the significance of African American Studies in higher learning institutions.

Mundell, J. A. (2024, September 30). *Department of African & African American Studies*. Retrieved from <https://artsci.washu.edu/https://afas.wustl.edu/news/struggle...-black-studies>

View Video *Agents of Change*

[Agents of Change](#) tells the timely and inspiring story of how successful protests for equity and inclusion led to establishing the first Black and Ethnic Studies departments at two very different universities: San Francisco State (1968) and Cornell (1969). San Francisco State students, their supporters on the faculty and in the community, including the increasingly influential Black Panther Party, launched the longest student strike in U.S. history. In addition to curricular changes, they demanded increased minority student recruitment and retention, and the hiring of minority faculty. Student activists, like actor Danny Glover, demonstrated and faced brutal police assaults and massive arrests unleashed by then-Governor Ronald Reagan. Despite these obstacles, Black, Latino and Asian student groups formed the Third World Liberation Front and emerged victorious, creating the first College of Ethnic Studies in the nation and igniting similar actions across the country.

This video is available through Kanopy and is licensed by the City Colleges of Chicago. To view the video, click on the link and enter your CCC username and password.

Dawson, F., & Ginzberg, A. (Directors). (2016). *Agents of Change* [Motion Picture].

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1.2: What is African American Studies?-- Classroom Activity

What is African American Studies - Classroom Activity - 'Why Do We Need African American Studies in Higher Education?'

After watching the videos below as a class, break students into groups of three and allow time to list five reasons why African American or Black Studies should be included in higher learning institutions. Then have each group share out to the entire class one at a time each voicing a new reason.



Black History in Two Minutes or So. "Black Power and the Birth of Black Studies." YouTube video, 2:58. February 11, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=La3-IgfsE9E>.

Washington University in St. Louis. "Robert L. Williams on the birth of Black Studies." YouTube video, 2:54. August 28, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHH35Fk5j9A>.

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1.3: What is African American studies?-- Assignment

What is African American Studies? - Discussion Assignment - 'How Has My Racial Identity Impacted My Life?'



Before we go through the chronology of the African American story, it is important to think about how one's race and racial history impacts their lived experiences. To fully understand the magnitude of this course's content and purpose, we must challenge ourselves to be introspective and try to relate to this material on a personal level.

For your discussion posts assignments, you will read or watch the prompt and then make two posts: 1) a response to the prompt (minimum 250 words) and 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). This initial discussion will be a little different. Instead of something to view or read, I want you to be introspective and respond to the following question(s).

Prompt: How has your race and/or ethnicity impacted your life? Specifically, how has your race and/or ethnicity impacted your view of yourself? Your self-esteem? How do you think your race and/or ethnicity impacts how others view you?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Ancient Africa

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Introduce students to fundamental concepts and theories within African American Studies, Africana Studies, Black Studies, African Diaspora Studies, and African Studies.
- Provide students with the tools to analyze key issues affecting individuals and groups of African descent in the United States, the Americas, across the Diaspora, and throughout the world.

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.

This module focuses on Africa being the birthplace of humanity and civilization as well as the early formative years of some African dynasties. Students will learn about the greatness of classical African civilizations before the presence of Europeans and colonization. It's imperative that historical discussions and lessons about African Americans begin in ancient Africa and not the European and North American enslavement eras. Far too often, the story of African Americans, as told in popular culture and many educational institutions, begins in bondage and that inaccurately ignores the rich history their ancestors who's traditions, contributions, and innovations offered so much to the world and their modern day descendants.

[2.1: Ancient Africa - Readings and Media](#)

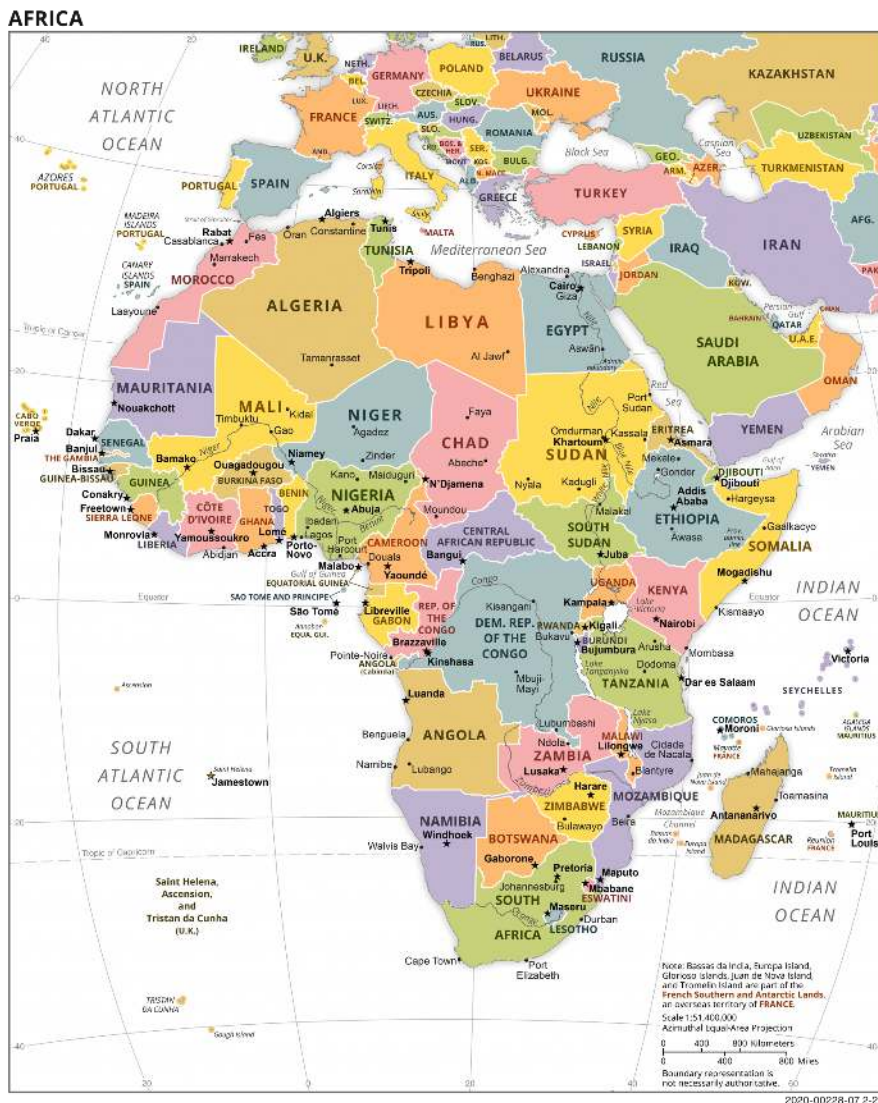
[2.2: Ancient Africa - Classroom Activity](#)

[2.3: Ancient Africa - Assignment](#)

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2.1: Ancient Africa - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will introduce students to the continent of Africa, the first people of the world, and the first civilizations.



Readings and Videos

Overview

The early history of Africa and the development of ancient African civilizations is tied closely to three major factors: geography, the spread of Islam and contact with Middle Eastern societies, and the development of trade routes across East and West Africa. Beginning in the 6th century CE and continuing through the 16th century, Africa underwent a dramatic series of changes as empires rose and fell, contact with other civilizations increased, and trade routes multiplied. The Africa of antiquity was quite cosmopolitan as its close contact with the Middle East made for a rich intermingling of cultures and religions.

The Nile and the Sahara

The geography in Africa, a land of extremes, had a significant effect on the development of ancient civilizations there. In the east, along the [Swahili](#) coast, the Nile River was the major determining factor that dictated how and where societies emerged. The Nile allowed for the cultivation of such life-sustaining crops as wheat and papyrus and the raising of farm animals like sheep and goats. Farmland developed in the Nile Valley, where subsequently, several sacral chiefdoms—areas ruled by leaders with religious or

divine authority—appeared. Chiefdoms seem to have emerged because of the need to regulate farming, as competition for farmland increased as populations in this region of Africa grew. The ancient Egyptian pyramids stand as records of the massive growth that emerged along the Nile during this time, as pharaohs came into power and built such infrastructure as irrigation systems and canals to support the expansion of civilizations.

While water was key for the development of East Africa, the Sahara Desert was the major determining factor for civilizations in West Africa. The largest hot desert in the world, the Sahara stretches over an area comparable to the entire continental United States. The Sahara covers most of North Africa, and so sub-Saharan Africa, the region directly below the Sahara, became the location of many civilizations in West Africa. Crossing the Sahara was and still is extremely treacherous, but nevertheless many trade routes developed across the desert during antiquity. It was in this region just south of the Sahara that many ancient city-states developed and flourished.

Trade Routes in West Africa

In sub-Saharan Africa, Berber tribes from the north who crossed the desert met the routes of Sudanese traders from the south. In these cities, including Ghana, Mali, and [Songhai](#), wealth grew immensely as trade increased throughout antiquity. This wealth was primarily generated through the mining of salt and gold, which were highly valuable commodities in ancient and medieval times. Salt mines in places like Taghaza, a rare city-state located within the Sahara, and gold mines primarily in Ghana accounted for the accumulation of large amounts of wealth in West Africa. As wealth in West African cities grew, leaders gained control of more and more territories, eventually forming empires.

Ghana especially flourished as an empire during this time, as it seized a monopoly on the gold trade and came to control the most important trading cities. By the 11th century, however, opposing forces conquered many of Ghana's key cities, weakening the empire and leading to a decline in trade from which the empire never recovered. Following the fall of Ghana, the [Mali Empire](#) emerged in Ghana's central territory, which also gained massive amounts of wealth by utilizing the same trade routes as Ghana. Expanding Ghana's trade practices while increasing its land holdings at the same time, Mali became one of the largest and most powerful empires of medieval Africa, peaking in the early 14th century.

The Spread of Islam

Because of its geographical nearness to the Middle East, African populations mingled frequently with Middle Eastern ones. Throughout antiquity and into the medieval period, Arab Muslims began to settle permanently along the Swahili coast in East Africa. This Arab and African cultural blending led to an Islamization of the coast, with Islam expanding inwards from coastal villages into towns and cities in central Africa. This continued throughout the development of African civilizations, culminating during the Mali Empire when most of Mali's kings were Muslim.

While many ancient Africans kept their pagan beliefs and rituals, the spread of Islam nevertheless affected African culture and society. Especially in East Africa, the intermingling of Arab Muslims with native Africans created entirely new African civilizations, primarily the Swahili, a cultural group inhabiting the area on the eastern coast of Africa. Beginning in the 9th century, Islam became more and more prevalent in this area, finally emerging as a unifying force between foreign Arab traders and local African populations and contributing to the formation of a unique Swahili identity. This intermingling of cultures with Islam as the connecting factor also occurred in other regions of Africa throughout the ancient and medieval periods, leading to the emergence of a richly diverse and cosmopolitan African culture.

Lauren Gallow

Lauren Gallow is an independent scholar currently working as an arts consultant and freelance writer based in Seattle, Washington. She is also the cofounder of Desert Jewels, an art project devoted to creating immersive art experiences grounded in storytelling. Gallow graduated summa cum laude from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, where she received her BA with dual majors in English and visual culture. She completed her MA in Art & Architectural History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Gallow has taught and assisted with a variety of university courses in art and architectural history. She has contributed to such works as *Race and Racism in the United States: An Encyclopedia of the American Mosaic* (Greenwood, 2014).

East Africa: Swahili City-States

From southern Somalia to the northern parts of Mozambique, the coast of East Africa is dotted with the ruins of abandoned cities, towns, and cemeteries. Some of these, such as the ruined town of Gedi in Kenya, cover many acres and are littered with the remains of stone-built monumental buildings such as mosques, palaces, and mansions. Others, such as Ras Mkumbuu on the island of Pemba, cover a large area, but most of the remains, except for a few tombs, are visible only to the trained eye of an archaeologist.

From the 10th to the 14th century CE, various city-states emerged and flourished along the coast of East Africa. Given their location, the [Swahili](#) city-states became a major hub between the African interior and transoceanic Indian Ocean trade networks. These cities developed into centers of international trade that attracted merchants from East Asia, Southeast Asia, Persia, India, Arabia, and the Ottoman Empire. Over time, Arab Muslims began to settle permanently along the coast and intermarried with the local African populations, thus bringing an influx of culture and religion from their own homelands and creating an entirely new African civilization centered in East Africa.

Swahili Coast: Arab and African Cultural Blending

The people who built these East African city-states are known as the Swahili. The word "Swahili" derives from the Arabic word for "coast"; it is not clear when the people of the coast began to use this term to describe themselves or even when, if ever, they began to think of themselves as a coherent group of people. That the standard name for the people who built the cities and towns of the East African coast derives from Arabic indicates that although the Swahili are African and speak an essentially [Bantu](#) language, they also participated in the larger cosmopolitan world of the Indian Ocean, and these oceanic connections are as much a part of their story as are their local African origins.

Emergence of the Swahili City-States

The towns that formed the core of the Swahili world at its peak—between 1000 and 1500—had their roots in smaller fishing and trading towns, some of which date back to the middle of the first millennium. But around 1000 the coast seems to have become more firmly embedded in Indian Ocean trade networks and culture. The result was the Islamization of the coast and the expansion of the coastal villages into towns and cities. Initially these towns were built mostly out of perishable materials (most often mud and wood) with a few public buildings made of stone. Thus, the congregational mosque and the ruler's palace might be made of stone, while the rest of the city would be constructed from sun-dried mud reinforced with termite-resistant mangrove wood.

Like many maritime trading cities, the cities of the Swahili coast were city-states. That is to say, there was no Swahili empire or any other overarching political structure on the coast. Each city was self-governing and controlled its own hinterland, but the political reach of the city leaders rarely extended far beyond the gates of the city. Occasionally one town would conquer another, but immediately the leaders of the conquered city would begin plotting a return to independence, and few defeated cities remained politically subordinated for long. City-states, such as [Kilwa](#), [Mogadishu](#), [Mombasa](#), [Zanzibar](#), and Malindi, became prominent as flourishing centers of commerce and culture along the Swahili coast.

The cities were usually ruled by kings, but the powers of the kings seem to have been rather limited and in many instances symbolic. Some towns would go for long periods of time without a king, suggesting that kingship was not central to government. Rather, the real power lay with elite merchants, who are usually described as *waungwana* in Swahili. Parts of each city were reserved exclusively for patricians, and it was they who chose one of their number to be king or leader. Many of these Swahili patricians had the leisure to participate in Muslim scholarship and because of their commercial contacts with Arab merchants often intermarried with visiting or immigrant Arab families. Over time, many of these families began to claim ancestral origins in either Persia or the Arabian Peninsula, which added greatly to the confusion of scholars in the 19th century trying to determine the origins of the Swahili world.

Material Wealth and International Trade

The growing wealth of the patrician merchants resulted in a major transformation of Swahili cities in the middle of the 14th century. They began to build their homes of stone rather than mud. The houses they built were large and were meant to demonstrate their creditworthiness to potential business partners. They included guest apartments where visiting merchants could live and storage areas where their guests could keep their trade goods. Inside the houses were carved plaster niches, called *zidaka*, where imported Chinese porcelain and other signs of wealth could be displayed. Thus, by 1500 the Swahili cities were thriving

commercial centers, with both public buildings and elite residences built in stone as well as many commoners' houses built from mud and wood.

Decline of Swahili Civilization

By the late 16th century, Portuguese expansion into the region led to the eventual decline of Swahili civilization. Once they became aware of the wealth of the region, the Portuguese seized Indian Ocean trade as well as coerced the Swahili city-states to pay annual tribute to the Portuguese Crown. Those who refused to pay were attacked and conquered by Portuguese forces. By the mid-17th century, the Portuguese were well established in the cities of Kilwa, Sofala, Mozambique, and Mombasa to better control the Indian Ocean trade that had once enriched the Swahili coast.

Erik Gilbert

Erik Gilbert is professor of history at Arkansas State University and associate dean of the graduate school. He specializes in global history, the Indian Ocean, Africa, and environmental history. Dr. Gilbert is author of numerous books and articles including *Trading Tastes: Commodity and Cultural Exchange to 1750* (Prentice Hall, 2006) with Jonathan Reynolds; *Dhows and the Colonial Economy of Zanzibar, 1860-1970* (Ohio University Press, 2004); and *Africa in World History* (Prentice Hall, 2007). He received his PhD in history from Boston University.

West African Society

Measuring at least 800 miles from north to south and about 3,000 miles from west to east, the [Sahara Desert](#) stretches across most of northern Africa. Crossing it is an arduous task, but for several hundred years, it was the site of a set of flourishing trade routes controlled by rich empires along the western periphery of Africa.

The traders who crossed the desert were known as Berbers. They consisted of several groups of nomads who traveled across the Sahara in camel caravans. There were several different camel routes, and each had planned stops at specific oases—places with permanent access to water, generally with a settlement nearby. The Berber tribes controlled (by force of arms) the oases on particular routes, as well as key territories both to the north and to the south of the desert. One important route included the salt mine at Taghaza, in the middle of the Sahara. At that mine, salt blocks were quarried from the ground in 200-pound blocks and transported, two per camel, to the [African](#) nations to the south. Salt was such an important import in the region south of the Sahara that some sources said it was exchanged for an equal weight of gold.

Just to the south of the Sahara were cities where the Berber caravans from the north met the routes of Sudanese traders from the south. There, salt, horses, copper, and dates from the north were exchanged for gold, ivory, kola nuts, and slaves from the rain forests and other regions to the south. Over time, those rich cities became richer and more powerful, and they gained control of larger territories to form empires. Those trading empires patrolled the trading routes in their territory to keep them safe from bandits and robbers. The source of their wealth came from tariffs levied on goods traded in their cities and from their monopoly of much of the gold trade.

Medieval Ghana

Ghana was located at the western end of Africa, just south of the Sahara in modern [Mali](#) and Mauritania (medieval Ghana did not actually include any of the modern nation of Ghana). It controlled the most important trading cities at the time. While the first historical reference dates from about 800 CE, it is unknown when the medieval kingdom of Ghana was first established. It is certain that by 1000, Ghana was a wealthy and powerful empire.

Ghana's main item for trading was gold. The area near Ghana included many rich gold mines. (Historians are uncertain whether the gold mines were within Ghana or if Ghana simply controlled the trade routes that led from the mines.) The [Soninke](#) kings of Ghana strictly controlled the sale of gold: any gold nuggets transported through or mined in Ghana became the property of the king. The miners and merchants directly traded only gold dust.

Beginning in about 1054, the Almoravids, a group of Muslim Berbers, conquered many of Ghana's key trading cities, including the capital itself. The Berber coalition did not remain united, and Ghana regained independence within several years. However, Ghana was left weakened, both militarily and economically. Several vassal states took advantage of Ghana's weak position to try to gain independence, and a struggle for power resulted. The volume of trade in Ghana's principal cities declined. Furthermore, the central

area surrounding the capital had been so damaged by overgrazing by the invaders that it was no longer capable of producing crops to support the cities.

Medieval Mali

In about 1203, the Susu, who had been part of Ghana's empire, captured Ghana's central territory and became the dominant power. They followed by invading the territory of the Malinke, south of Ghana. About 30 years after the Susu conquest of Ghana, the southern Malinke, led by their legendary general and king [Sundiata](#), repelled the Susu and invaded their territories. Ultimately, they conquered the Susu and established the empire of Mali from their capital at Niani.

The new empire of Mali, employing the trade practices of Ghana on a somewhat larger scale, became a rich and powerful state. After Sundiata, the *mansas*, or emperors, continued to expand Mali's territory. During the reign of [Mansa Musa](#) in the early 14th century, Mali reached its greatest extent. It included all the territory that had been ruled by Ghana, plus additional holdings, and reached from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the cities of [Timbuktu](#) and Gao in the east.

Neither Ghana nor Mali had written languages during those periods. However, Arab historians kept contemporary written records of Mali during Musa's reign. According to those chronicles, in 1324, the Muslim Musa went on a religious pilgrimage to Mecca. The trip was also intended to establish diplomatic relations with the rulers of [North Africa](#) and the kingdoms of the Near East. Musa brought so much gold with him that, on his arrival in [Egypt](#), the price of gold in Cairo dropped significantly for years.

Most of Mali's kings were Muslim, with Muslim scribes and officials in their courts, and most went on pilgrimages to Mecca if they lived long enough. The majority of the common people, however, kept their pagan beliefs and traditional ceremonies, and the *mansas* continued the traditional observances and rituals as well as their Islamic duties.

A great empire, Mali lasted more than 200 years, but it was plagued by problems of succession. The rules of succession were not well established, and several times there were disputes and even civil wars led by princes competing for the throne. During periods of weakness, provinces took the opportunity to rebel and become independent. During the 15th century, a nomadic group from the southern Sahara conquered the strategic trade city of Timbuktu, and the eastern territory of Gao gained power and conquered a large section of the empire. Mali remained a country for several more decades, but it was no longer the rich empire it had once been. Within a century, the lands of these former empires would serve as a major supply region in the emergent [transatlantic slave trade](#).

Ellen Bialo

Ellen Bialo is president and co-founder of Interactive Educational Systems Design, Inc. Prior to her current position, Bialo was a high school mathematics teacher. She holds a graduate degree in educational psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University

<https://go.openathens.net/redirector/ccc.edu?url=https%3a%2f%2fafricanamerican2.abc-clio.com%2fTopics%2fDisplay%2f1>

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2.2: Ancient Africa - Classroom Activity

Ancient Africa - Classroom Activity - 'Naming Classical African Kingdoms'

Students will watch the video "Untold Stories of the Great African Empires: A Journey Through Time" and list the name of every kingdom they hear mentioned. Each student and their assigned partner will take one of the kingdoms listed, report it to the instructor so their aren't duplicate presentations, and share out six facts (perhaps three each) about their respective kingdom for the next class session's in-class activity.



Black Journals. "The Untold Stories of the Great African Empires: A Journey Through Time." YouTube video, 32:35. October 21, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBf3pA3L1OQ>.

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2.3: Ancient Africa - Assignment

Ancient Africa - Discussion Assignment - Discuss a Classical African Civilization

After completing this module's selected reading "[African Civilizations](#)," select and discuss one classical African civilization or African tribe/cultural group. Make two posts: 1) a response to the prompt (minimum 250 words) and 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). *Grading Rubric is attached.



Some possible civilizations to choose from (not an exhaustive list):

[Ghana](#)

[Songhai](#)

[Mali](#)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Enslavement in America

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Define and discuss the Atlantic slave trade.
- Define and discuss the word, Maafa and its impact

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.

This module focuses on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Specifically, the middle stretch of that triangular journey called the middle passage which was the horrific ship route from Africa to the New World. After learning about Ancient Africa and life for "Black" people before European aggression and colonization, students will now see what Africans and their descendants lost with regards to wealth, culture, spirituality, etc.

[3.1: Enslavement in America - Readings and Media](#)

[3.2: Enslavement in America - Classroom Activity](#)

[3.3: Enslavement in America - Assignment](#)

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3.1: Enslavement in America - Readings and Media

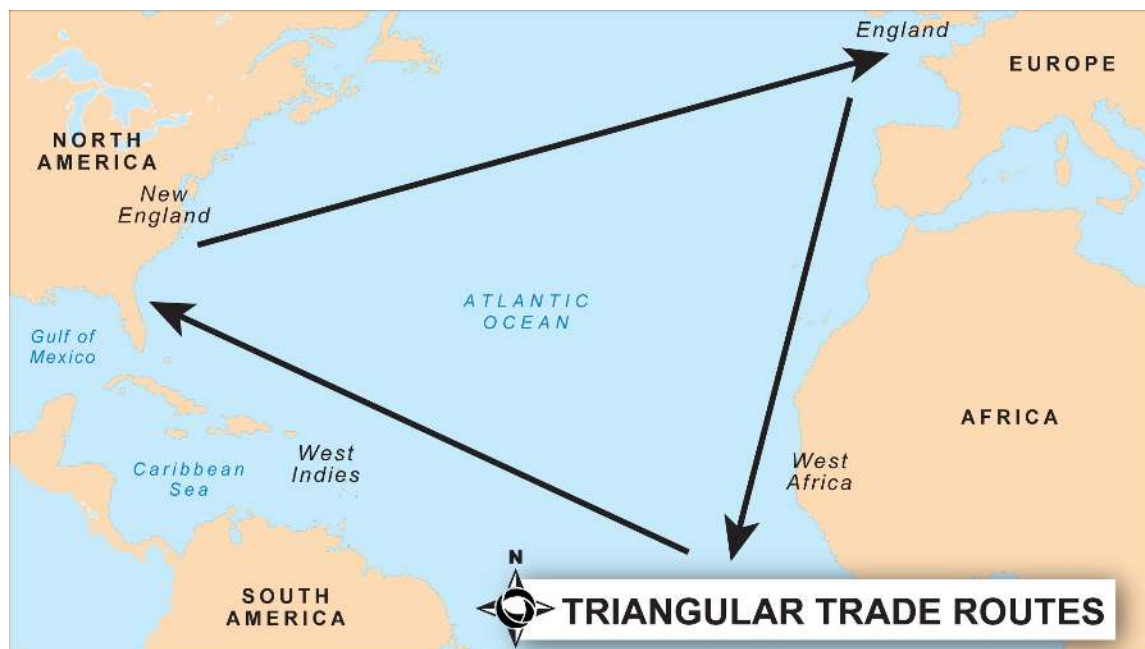
The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about the Atlantic slave trade and the slave codes.

Readings and Videos



Black Culture Unlocked. "The Atlantic Slave Trade: What Schools Never Told You." YouTube video, 24:21. January 1, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g00eIRjygRQ>.

Triangular Trade Routes



Triangle trade is a general term for trade involving three linked ports of destination. The most commonly known triangular trade route involved the Atlantic slave trade. During the 18th century, trading ships from New England carried rum and other goods to the west coast of Africa to be exchanged for slaves. The slaves then became the cargo for the voyage to the West Indies (the infamous Middle Passage), where they were exchanged for molasses to be transported back to New England and turned into rum.

"Triangular Trade Routes." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2025, africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/2152533. Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.

Slave Codes

A key component in the complex social and political system governing slavery, slave codes emerged as part of an extensive body of law aimed at regulating the lives and activities of enslaved African Americans in the United States. Slave codes were clear in defining slaves as property without full legal status, and they made slavery a permanent condition that was usually inherited through one's mother. The reach of these codes extended beyond those enslaved, however, given that many also had provisions that regulated free blacks, their movement, their employment, and their options for housing and setting up permanent residence. The reach, breadth, and severity of individual slave codes varied, but all had a vested interest in curtailing slave resistance, policing the everyday lives of those enslaved, and protecting slave owners. Although these codes are commonly associated with southern slave states, they could be found in their northern counterparts as well.

All slave codes shared certain characteristics in terms of the control they attempted to wield over the personal activities of slaves and often free blacks, but individual slave states had their own codes in place that dictated their provisions and informed their court systems. Slaves had very few legal rights in a court of law; their testimony was seldom duly considered in any litigation involving whites and could be dismissed in its entirety. Trials for slaves were occasionally held in taverns or country stores and seldom resulted in parity. Codes banned slaves from owning property, marrying, or entering into contracts. They were also written to exert dominion over the language that slaves spoke and the clothes that they wore. Speaking words considered defamatory meant that one could be arrested, whipped, and/or sold at auction. Manumission, or the freeing of one's slaves, was also restricted through slave codes in many states, in an effort to secure the growth of slavery and restrict the presence of free blacks.

Because slave codes were used largely to act as a form of social control, they were always subject to reformulation if a state felt that they needed to be strengthened in order to further discourage slave rebellions or to supplement already existing laws set out to protect the property and physical well-being of slave owners. Those enslaved were not allowed to assemble freely with one another or engage in communal worship, they could not be taught to read or write or possess literature that was considered inflammatory, and they could not vacate an owner's premises without explicit permission. Codes made it illegal for slaves to own firearms, attend unlawful assemblies, and participate in riots. Thus, the codes not only operated in an attempt to inhibit any form of resistance carried out by an individual person who was enslaved, but also were developed to suppress any semblance of communal gatherings that might lead to wide-scale uprisings or rebellions.

Slave codes and their corresponding punishments made them one of the most violent aspects of slavery. Submission to these codes was enforced through various measures, most of which exerted extreme force over any enslaved person found to act against a given code. Whippings, beatings, and floggings were commonly used forms of punishment, but other codes called for branding, dismemberment, imprisonment, and for males, castration. A 1690 statute in South Carolina, for instance, stated that slaves or runaways who struck a white person would be severely whipped on the first offense, followed by slitting of the nose and burning of a part of one's face with an iron for a second offense. A third offense could include death or any other punishment. In Virginia, robbing or committing any other major offense

could be met with 60 lashes, being placed in stocks, and dismemberment. Slave owners, on the other hand, who killed their slaves or other enslaved blacks were usually subject only to fines. Slave codes were frequently enforced by what were known as slave patrols, or groups of usually white men who went around various plantations ensuring slaves were inside of their quarters or otherwise not moving about freely. These patrols are sometimes seen as precursors to the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) that flourished following emancipation, given the violence that they inflicted and the presence that they had.

Slave codes were also antecedents to the black codes developed immediately after the Civil War that extended throughout the earliest waves of Reconstruction. Like their predecessors, these later codes were developed to act as an agent of social control in the interest of curbing the social, political, and economic opportunities available to African Americans, who though legally free from bondage, were subject to an ever-increasing number of laws that in many ways attempted to reenact the restrictions and chief aims of slave codes.

Amanda J. Davis

Davis, Amanda J. "Slave Codes." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2025, africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1477872. Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.

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3.2: Enslavement in America - Classroom Activity

Enslavement in America - Classroom Activity - 'The Impact of Slavery'

Students will be put in groups of three or four and assigned a topic/category related to the enslavement era. As a group, they will create a list of six questions about slavery from the perspective of their assigned category and share out. The categories are:

Economics

Family

Psychological/Mental Health

Culture

Lasting Impact

The United States/Law

Religion

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3.3: Enslavement in America - Assignment

Enslavement in America - Discussion Assignment - Discuss the Slave Narratives

After reading "Slave Narratives" students will make two discussion posts: 1) a response to the reading (minimum 250 words) and 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). *Discussion board grading rubric attached.

Slave Narratives

Slave narratives—the written testimony of enslaved and formerly enslaved African Americans—an effective discourse against the system of [slavery](#). The eyewitness testimony of men and women who had experienced slavery—which British travelers, European guests, and other white visitors might corroborate—presented a formidable challenge to those slaveholders who downplayed and even dismissed accusations of brutality against African Americans. Slave narratives additionally proved to be useful tools for educating readers concerning the horrific realities of an economic system that mythologized kind mistresses, benevolent masters, and contented [chattel](#) slaves.

Slave narratives of resistance stood as compelling evidence of the humanity of [African](#) men and women, and of their desire for liberty and autonomous lives that was innate, unstudied, and self-generated. By extension, the authors of these books demonstrated how freedom is often predicated upon the acquisition of literacy and an education. Yet, resistance to slavery required physical as well as psychological battles, and included in the slaves' narratives are descriptions of such tactics as fistfights with slave owners, collective rebellions, poisoning, work slowdown and stoppages, and both temporary and permanent escapes.

Beginning in the 18th century, slave narratives of resistance were published primarily for consumption by transatlantic British and U.S. audiences, and much of their appeal lay in the combination of sentiment, Christian moralizing, violence, melodrama, and suspense that came to characterize them. The genre derived characteristics from the authentic and fictional Native American captivity narratives of the colonial era, and from the conversion narratives and tales of crime, punishment, and imprisonment that were printed cheaply and sold briskly during the early Republic. Slave narratives peaked in popularity within the United States during the [antebellum](#) era, yet they continued to enjoy wide circulation, with new books emerging, after the [Civil War](#) and through [Reconstruction](#). In advance of printing book-length narratives, authors tested the appeal of themes and scenes in the pages of the antislavery press, particularly in correspondence or anecdotes directed to [The Liberator](#), the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, and other newspapers with loyal subscribers and organized reform societies underwriting them.

White [abolitionists](#) often transcribed and published the stories of illiterate ex-slaves, or, on occasion, such authors withheld their true identities and produced autobiographies that the public assumed had been written by former slaves. For example, Mattie Griffiths, who wrote *The Autobiography of a Female Slave* (1857), was a former Kentucky [plantation](#) heiress who had denounced slavery, left the South, and joined the abolitionists, but most readers assumed that she was an African American woman until her editor revealed the deception.

It was ex-slave men, however, who published the majority of slave narratives, and they typically worked out their books' subject matter as they lectured to northern antislavery audiences about surviving slavery. Those who could sway skeptical crowds assured themselves of a wide readership once their books were published, for the public demanded to see the fugitives in person in order to accept their stories as credible ones. The orators' dramatic presentations also supported the claim that African Americans were indeed capable of producing original and imaginative thought, speech, and literature.

Former slaves, both men and women, who lectured before the public debunked lies about their owners' benevolence by displaying the scars and wounds inflicted upon them during beatings, and the limbs muscled and blistered from their grueling, uncompensated labors. Their public recitations brought the antislavery message home to audiences who lacked the leisure time or the literacy skills to benefit from printed accounts of the subject. Such speeches often risked abrupt endings followed by literal acts of resistance, as they and other antislavery supporters—including African American activists such as Lewis Hayden and [Charles Lenox Remond](#)—fought their way out of lecture halls like Boston's African Meeting House while angry, brick-throwing mobs chased behind them.

Written accounts of resistance by ex-slaves worked in tandem with such oral presentations to defeat slavery. The autobiographies and memoirs of ex-slaves cite gaining literacy, fighting back, and escaping enslavement altogether as favored methods of resistance. In his [Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave](#) (1845), which became an international bestseller, [Frederick Douglass](#) presents his secret attempts to educate himself as an essential declaration of his humanity and as a counter to widely held assumptions, justifying slavery, that African Americans were little more than beasts. An insatiable thirst to attain learning also spurs him to succeed among a transatlantic community of much more privileged speakers and writers, after he obtains his freedom by dressing as a sailor and jumping ship in Baltimore. Similarly, [Harriet Jacobs](#) writes in her [Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl](#) (1861) of slaves risking beatings and torture to hide pages of the Bible in their clothing, and of holding an evening Sunday school as a pretext for defying anti-literacy laws and using Scripture verses to teach the slaves to read. Her recollections demonstrate that the slaves' resistance was also impelled by their version of Christianity, which offered believers hope for liberation in this world alongside assurances of salvation and tranquility in the next one.

Published narratives of slavery written by African Americans are replete with descriptions of physical resistance to dehumanization as well. As in the classic scene where Frederick Douglass beats his master, Edward Covey, often ex-slaves, brushing aside fears of losing their lives or being sold away from family members, struggle against abusive owners with brooms, tools, the whip that was to scourge them, or their own bare hands. Sabotage of crops and arson and theft of property, feigned sickness, outright revolt, murder of their owners and families, suicide, starvation, and, rarely, [infanticide](#), are just a few examples of how the slaves' narratives map out their hatred of slavery on their own bodies and on the persons and property of others.

Further testifying to the incendiary power of such descriptions of violence are what ex-slave authors omitted from their books. For instance, fearing disapproval from even her most sympathetic readers,

Jacobs deleted a concluding chapter she had written on the controversial [John Brown](#), who had led a group of men during the Harpers' Ferry Raid (1859) to steal arms from the federal arsenal in order to initiate a war against slaveholders.

Running away altogether is perhaps the most iconic method of resisting victimization that is recounted in both written and oral narratives. While fugitives such as [Sojourner Truth](#) tell of slipping away from servitude in somnolent dawn hours or camouflaged by murky evening darkness, conspiracies to escape also encompass more imaginative and daring schemes. Readers on both sides of the Atlantic found [Henry "Box" Brown's *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*](#) (1851) appealing because it chronicled how friends nailed the Virginia slave into a box, then shipped him by train to waiting abolitionists in the free city of Philadelphia. Similarly, the Irish [Quaker](#) William Tweedie must have published *Running 1,000 Miles for Freedom* (1860), the memoir of Georgia slaves [William and Ellen Craft](#), with their unusual method of escape in mind. Ellen, who could pass for white, disguised herself as a southern gentleman planter; her husband William traveled as her slave escort; the two of them journeyed with denizens of the slave-owning aristocracy by boat, carriage, and train until they too reached the first free northern city of Philadelphia. Fugitives such as Brown and the Crafts reached non-literate audiences and raised money for abolition by selling engravings depicting scenes from their escapes. Like the portraits of ex-slave authors that usually stood opposite the title page, these images verified the stories the fugitives told as true tales of servitude.

Decades after the Civil War had ended and with it, Southern slavery, [William Still's *The Underground Rail Road*](#) (1872) underscored the appeal to readers presented by the fugitives' narratives of escape. Still, an African American [Underground Railroad](#) conductor who had met both Brown and the Crafts when they arrived on separate occasions from the South, interviewed scores of [fugitive slaves](#) he assisted and transcribed their stories in a series of journals, which he gathered for posterity in this commemorative book. The narratives collectively offer several explanations for why escaping was an especially effective, though extremely risky, action against slavery. Slaves who fled caused public embarrassment for their owners, as well as injuring them financially and incurring additional expenses if the owners sought recapture or restitution. When news of a successful escape filtered back to plantation slaves through letters or word-of-mouth, those who remained behind could share the good fortune and hopes for their own [emancipation](#). Finally, runaways offered unassailable proof of the humanity of a people willing to risk their lives and families for freedom.

Even after the fugitives have settled in the nominally free states, their narratives attest to the continued need to resist human traffickers. Most narratives published after the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 contain scenes of runaways eluding bounty hunters sent north by furious owners to retrieve them. Fugitives fought against this second assault on their liberty by going into hiding with the assistance of the antislavery community, raising funds to compensate their owners for what their bodies would sell at auction, or uprooting with their families to settle all-black communities in Canada.

Fugitive narrators also write of women who attempt to undermine slavery by fighting against sexual exploitation: for example, by refusing to mate and breed more slaves with a man their owner has

selected. Women also describe escaping slavery under different circumstances than men do, choosing more frequently to run away in groups of family and friends rather than alone, and profiting along the way from the assistance of antislavery networks. After she reaches the free states, [Harriet Tubman's](#) decision in her autobiography to return multiple times into Maryland in order to rescue hundreds of relatives and strangers illustrates this commitment.

After the war and through the end of the century, the production of slave narratives of resistance diminished to a trickle, yet many still attracted an attentive readership. Writers including Susie King Taylor, who cooks, cleans, nurses, and does laundry for Union troops garrisoned on the Sea Islands in her *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp* (1902), and [Elizabeth Keckley](#), who designs clothes and dispenses advice for First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln in her *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (1868), demonstrate that former slaves are ready to occupy positions as hardworking, law-abiding citizens and community members. Even as their books include conventional accounts of their courage in the face of sadistic punishments and heartless treatment, the post-Civil War writers balance these reflections of trauma with a reconciliatory tone. For instance, Keckley recalls the generosity and charity of Virginia ladies she served, and Annie Louise Burton nostalgically reminisces about her idyllic childhood as an Alabama slave before the Civil War erupted.

Early slave narratives of resistance have influenced the most influential contemporary African American writers. From [Toni Morrison's *Beloved*](#) (1987) to [August Wilson's](#) plays, their works commemorate the former slaves' determination to humanize and complicate their experiences, and to depict themselves as more than mere victims.

Barbara McCaskill

McCaskill, Barbara. "Slave Narratives." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2025, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector...%26sTypeId%3d2>. Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Freedom and Reconstruction

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Discuss the causes of the Civil War.
- Discuss the participation of African Americans in the Union war efforts.
- Discuss the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

This module will cover African Americans fight for freedom and the resulting Reconstruction era and beyond. At the close of the Civil War, three cornerstone amendments were put into place for the newly freed Africans. They were the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments. The 13th Amendment (1865) abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime. Today, we have come to know that everyone who was enslaved was not freed at the close of the Civil War on April 9, 1865. In Galveston Texas, enslaved Africans were not notified of their freedom until June 19, 1865. The 14th Amendment (1868) grants citizenship, due process, and equal protection under the law. The 15th Amendment (1870) grants the right to vote to Black men. Women would gain the right to vote in (1920) with the 19th Amendment. During this time we saw the establishment of Black businesses and Black towns, and racial violence directed at Black progress. We saw the rise of Black votership and the election of the first Black members of the US Congress.

[4.1: Freedom and Reconstruction - Readings and Media](#)

[4.2: Freedom and Reconstruction - Classroom Activity](#)

[4.3: Freedom and Reconstruction - Assignment](#)

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4.1: Freedom and Reconstruction - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about African Americans fight for freedom, the reconstruction era, and their early years of freedom.

Readings and Videos

African Americans in the Civil War: Civil War

About 178,000 Black soldiers served in the Union Army during the [Civil War](#). Before 1862, those who sought to serve openly were turned away. However, some Black soldiers definitely served as members of their local units. Nick Biddle, one of the "First Defenders" who arrived at Washington, D.C., from Pottsville, Pennsylvania, to secure the national capital immediately after the war broke out, was a Black man. He was the first casualty of the war, being hit by a rock and wounded as Confederate sympathizers jeered his column as they marched across [Baltimore, Maryland](#), to change trains.

Only as white volunteers became scarce were Black volunteers welcomed to enlist. [Benjamin Butler](#), military commander of Louisiana, organized the Louisiana Native Guard when the Union conquered [New Orleans](#) and much of that state in 1862. He employed Black officers who had served with distinction in earlier battles, but when Butler was replaced so were the Black officers. The 54th and 55th Massachusetts regiments were the first Black regiments mustered in the North, and they accepted recruits from other Union states as well as those who escaped [slavery](#).

About a quarter of all Black enlistees were from the North; the rest were mostly formerly enslaved men from the South. As with all other Black units during the war, they were segregated and commanded by white officers. About 19,000 Black men served in the U.S. Navy, which had always had Black sailors. All in all, at the end of the war, 9% of about 2 million soldiers and sailors who were mustered out of the service were Black.

At first, Black soldiers were given noncombatant duty, building camps and roads, repairing rail lines, and driving wagons as white officers feared they would not do well in combat. One Black soldier wrote to U.S. secretary of war Edwin M. Stanton that "we expected to be treated as men but we have been treated more like dogs." Black soldiers were originally paid \$10 per month regardless of rank. They mainly served as corporals and sergeants, although 111 were commissioned officers by the end of the war. They had \$3 per month deducted from their pay where white privates, in contrast, earned \$10 a month in addition to a \$3 clothing allowance, and higher ranks earned more money. The Massachusetts regiments refused to accept any pay at all rather than an inferior wage, even when Massachusetts offered to make up the difference. A few soldiers mutinied and were executed.

By the end of the war, Black soldiers had proven themselves, most spectacularly in the heroic but disastrous assault on Fort Wagner near Charleston, South Carolina, where two-thirds of the officers and half the men of the [54th Massachusetts Regiment](#) lost their lives. Large numbers of Black soldiers were used in combat by Gen. Ulysses Grant in the war's final campaign against Richmond, and by Gen. George Thomas in the final battles of Franklin and Nashville against John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee. Over a fifth of the Black troops—36,000—died, 80% from disease, as opposed to 60% of the

disease-related deaths of white soldiers, because of inferior camps, as well as the fact more Black soldiers were in poorer health than their white comrades when they had enlisted. However, despite poor treatment, only about 5% of Black soldiers, as opposed to 15% of white soldiers, deserted.

The war provided Black men with some of the skills needed for civilian occupations. 16% became noncommissioned officers, and thus became leaders. Although there was no general policy, Northern [abolitionists](#) and white officers established schools to teach the mostly illiterate Black soldiers to read and write. The corporals and sergeants were taught and they, in turn, taught the privates. Their protests for equal pay and combat duty, along with the pride of marching and fighting alongside large numbers of other Black soldiers, instilled pride and a willingness to use their rights as Americans.

Most Black soldiers had enlisted in 1863 or later, and their three-year enlistments had not expired when the war ended. Thus, the Union regarded them as ideal occupation troops for the defeated South. Most Black soldiers resented this; they wanted to return to their families, correctly fearing that Southern white people not policed by Union troops would retaliate against African Americans. Those sent to Texas for garrison duty along the Mexican border mutinied as the United States was pressuring the French to leave that republic. Black troops in Jacksonville, Florida, mutinied and several were executed. The Black troops who remained on garrison duty in the South proved targets for the governments reconstituted by ex-Confederates that President [Andrew Johnson](#) allowed to take power.

After the war, Black veterans suffered more from poverty and unemployment than white veterans. Over four times as many Black as white veterans were jobless in the immediate postwar era. The [Freedmen's Bureau](#) had to feed and clothe thousands of homeless Black veterans discharged in Washington, D.C. Largely because Black Southerners did not obtain land at the end of the Civil War, most remained poor. In 1890, half of all African American veterans were unskilled workers, as opposed to just over 21% of Union and just under 10% of Confederate veterans. Most of the rest were farmers, usually tenants or [sharecroppers](#). Over half the white Union soldiers were still alive in 1890, only 30% of Black soldiers survived. Average life expectancy for white people was about 50, for Black people about 40. Only 1% of Black veterans ever stayed in the Soldiers Homes for Disabled Veterans.

Nevertheless, the 1890 census shows there was a significant degree of geographic and economic mobility for Black veterans. Although most remained in their region of birth, there was a pronounced movement from the South to the North, and from the country to cities—in short, to places where opportunity and freedom would be greatest. A combination of army pay, pensions, and skills was the path to upward mobility. 13% held high-status occupations as opposed to 7% for other African Americans. Realizing the power of the church in the African American community, high-status veterans tended to become clergymen—844 occupied pulpits as opposed to 93 for the second highest high-status category, teachers.

A smaller percentage of Black veterans received government pensions. This was even more true of widows because many African Americans did not legitimize their unions with official marriage ceremonies. Until 1890, veterans had to prove disability, and this required assembling witnesses and paperwork, notarizing documents, and traveling to pension offices. With average yearly incomes of about \$250, many Black veterans could not assemble the funds even to hire pension agents to take their cases.

Others who did receive pensions often were obliged to take out loans at high rates, anticipating future checks.

For most Black veterans, the principal social reinforcement their services received was from the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Posts in small towns generally admitted Black members, although some did not. In larger communities where significant numbers of African Americans had enlisted, they usually had their own posts. In 1887, the GAR turned down requests from Louisiana and Mississippi to have separate Black and white organizations in those states. Subsequently, two Black veterans served as commanders of those states' united departments as most of the Union veterans from those states were Black. Even white Southern Union veterans opposed the [segregation](#) proposal.

Some African Americans used their war service to achieve distinguished careers. Most notable was [Lewis Latimer](#), born in 1848, who served on the USS *Massasoit* in the [Union Navy](#). He returned to his home city of Boston, where he learned mechanical drawing and later worked for Thomas A. Edison as one of his foremost experts on electric technology. Other well-regarded African Americans received patronage posts in the [Republican Party](#). Sgt. [William H. Carney](#) of the 54th Massachusetts was one of 16 African Americans to win the Congressional Medal of Honor during the war.

[Robert Smalls](#), who served as congressional representative from South Carolina for 10 years in the 1870s and 1880s, was perhaps the most famous of all the Black veteran politicians. He became known for leading the enslaved people who seized and captured the Confederate steamer *Planter*, on which they worked. Except when Democrat Grover Cleveland was president, Smalls held the post of customs collector of Beaufort, South Carolina, from 1887 until his death in 1913.

Black veterans became involved in politics, primarily during [Reconstruction](#), when governments consisting of African Americans and southern Unionists were protected by Union troops. Six of the 16 African American members of the House of Representatives at this time were Union veterans. 37 veterans filled federal patronage positions in the South out of over 120 African Americans who held them. James Milton Turner was appointed minister to [Liberia](#). One acting governor and three lieutenant governors of Louisiana were veterans of the Native Guard. Two of the men were the principal sponsors of Homer C. Plessy's lawsuit in 1896 that unsuccessfully challenged the segregation of railroad cars and led to the Supreme Court's famous "separate but equal" decision.

Black veterans were among the most active African Americans in the struggle for equal rights in the years after the war. Octavius Catto, who raised 11 companies of Black soldiers in Pennsylvania and rose to the rank of major, although he did not see combat, was killed in 1871 when he was shot by a supporter of the [Democratic Party](#) for organizing African American voters in Philadelphia. African American veterans successfully fought against anti-[miscegenation](#) laws in Rhode Island but were unsuccessful in their efforts in Ohio. In 1909, Black veteran John B. Anderson's lawsuit persuaded federal courts to invalidate Maryland's law disfranchising men whose ancestors had not been eligible to vote before 1868 unless they had the substantial sum of \$500 in property.

Some African American veterans used their education to instruct their countrymen. John H. Murphy founded the [Baltimore Afro-American](#), which at the time of his death in 1922 had the highest circulation

of any African American newspaper on the East Coast. Alexander Augusta and Charles B. Purvis were African American medical professors at [Howard University](#) and founded the National Medical Society of the District of Columbia when white doctors would not admit them into the American Medical Association. [Allen Allensworth](#) and Henry Plummer went west with the African American regiments, the 24th U.S. Infantry and 10th U.S. Cavalry, respectively, as chaplains and used their posts to educate the troops, managing their libraries, gardens, bakeries, and treasuries, and defending them when they were court-martialed.

Other veterans saw migration as their solution to prejudice. Entitled to 160-acre homesteads, African American veterans were among the leaders of the [Exoduster](#) movement of Southern Black people to Kansas in 1879. Alfred Fairfax of Louisiana was the first African American member of the Kansas legislature. [Henry McNeal Turner](#), chaplain of the First United States Colored Infantry, served in the Georgia state legislature and as postmaster of Macon before deciding African Americans could not live peaceably with dignity in the United States. A bishop of the [African Methodist Episcopal Church](#), Turner never obtained many followers for his back-to-[Africa](#) movement because of lack of funds and reports of high death rates among those who emigrated.

For many years, the most notable monument to African American Civil War veterans was the frieze outside the State House in Boston. Executed by Augustus Saint-Gaudens and completed in 1897, it shows Black soldiers led into battle by Col. Robert Gould Shaw. In 1998, the African American Civil War Memorial was dedicated in Washington, D.C., at Vermont Avenue and U Street in the primarily African American Shaw community. Here several 11-foot-tall statues of African Americans entitled "The Spirit of Freedom" stand alone and do not share their glory with white officers. The names of more than 208,000 Black soldiers and sailors who served in the war are also etched into the memorial.

William A. Pencak

Pencak, William A. "African Americans in the Military: Civil War." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2025, [africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1481856](https://www.africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1481856). Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.

Read: ["Reconstruction: Civil Rights Acts"](#)

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4.2: Freedom and Reconstruction - Classroom Activity

Freedom and Reconstruction - Classroom Activity - "Black History Milestones: Timeline Activity"



Students will break into groups of three or four and each group will be assigned a topic from the **first eight topics** on the Black History Milestones: Timeline. After reviewing the information about their assigned topic, each group will summarize/describe their topic to the class. Some questions to guide students thinking are: "What impact did your topic have on African Americans?" "What were the key important facts about your topic?" "What impact did your topic have on the United States in general?"

[Black History Milestones: Timeline](#)

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4.3: Freedom and Reconstruction - Assignment

Freedom and Reconstruction - Short Essay Response- "Black History Milestones: Timeline Activity"

Select two topics from the first eight options on the "[Black History Milestones: Timeline](#)." Write a one-two paragraph response to each topic (totaling about 1 page combined). Make sure to include the key facts about the topic and the relevancy of the topic to African American history overall.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: African American Education

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Explore African Americans struggle to be educated in the United States
- Identify key figures and legal actions that impacted African Americans' education experiences

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

This module will cover African Americans' centuries long fight for quality education. There is clear evidence that ancient Africans and their descendants have consistently valued education as a pathway to growth and empowerment. This commitment to learning continued across the Atlantic, even in the face of barriers in America. Throughout U.S. history, African Americans have pursued education with determination, often amid tremendous struggle. The readings in this module will cover the great migration and segregation within the context of how it impacted African Americans' educational experiences. The film, *Tell Them We Are Rising*, directed by Stanley Nelson, highlights how Historically Black Colleges and Universities have served for over 150 years as spaces of unapologetic Black identity, intellectual development, and leadership for generations of artists, thinkers, and activists.

[5.1: African American Education - Readings and Media](#)

[5.2: African American Education - Classroom Activity](#)

[5.3: African American Education - Assignment](#)

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5.1: African American Education - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about African Americans fight for education and how key figures, legal activities, and the United States racial climate has informed African Americans' educational experiences.

Readings and Videos

The Great Migration

Fifty years after the United States outlawed [slavery](#), African Americans fled the South in huge numbers in a movement that became known as the Great Migration. Resettling in northern cities, where they sought better lives, employment, some degree of social equality, and an escape from daily violence, the migrants (numbering approximately 500,000 in the first wave, from 1916 to 1919) did find more opportunities in the North, where they transplanted some of the most vibrant aspects of their [culture](#). However, they also faced brutal violence reminiscent of what they had left behind in the former [Confederate States of America](#).

Fleeing Jim Crow Laws

The mass migration transformed both the South and the North. Most notably, African American migrants settled in [Chicago](#), Cleveland, [Detroit](#), and the [Harlem](#) section of [New York City](#). Those cities became the first U.S. urban centers with large African American populations. What attracted African Americans to the North? The answer lies not only in the opportunities they believed existed in the North, but also in the fact that the South was a brutal place for the formerly enslaved and their descendants. In the years following [emancipation](#), Southern politicians enacted so-called [Black Codes](#) that very closely replicated [slave codes](#)—a series of laws that severely limited the personal and social behavior of enslaved Black people.

The new Black Codes, known as [Jim Crow](#) laws, enforced strict racial [segregation](#) in every aspect of southern life, including education, transportation, and the legal arena. Although Jim Crow laws were a blatant violation of civil rights guaranteed to African Americans in the post-[Civil War](#) era, in 1896 they received the sanction of the U.S. Supreme Court in its [Plessy v. Ferguson](#) decision that codified the [separate-but-equal doctrine](#). The formerly enslaved also endured crushing poverty and continued subservience to white Southerners under [sharecropping](#)—a form of pseudoslavery in which white landlords retained economic control over African Americans. A [boll weevil](#) infestation that obliterated cotton crops across the South beginning in 1915 further worsened African Americans' state of economic dependence.

In addition, African Americans also faced entrenched violence in the South. For example, the [Ku Klux Klan](#) and even some mainstream white citizens regularly lynched African Americans as a means of maintaining social control through terror. In short, the American South was an especially dangerous place for African Americans by the time [World War I](#) opened up new opportunities in the North. Labor agents traveled to the South to entice African Americans northward, while at the same time Southern employers and landholders often intimidated and brutalized African Americans who tried to leave. The

mass exodus of African American laborers left the already economically troubled South in an even worse condition.

The Lure of the North

In addition to the lure of jobs, African Americans were persuaded to move northward by the encouraging letters of friends, family, and others who themselves had made the trip. African American churches in the North extended assistance to potential migrants as well. Perhaps most importantly, the *Chicago Defender*, a newspaper edited by African American Robert Abbott, railed against Southern injustices and encouraged African Americans living in the South to migrate to Chicago and other Northern cities, where conditions were far better for African Americans. The power of the *Chicago Defender* was such that many Southern localities banned its distribution, fearing its goal of tempting African Americans to leave the South.

On arrival in the North, African Americans found that there were jobs to be had. Those newfound job opportunities were due to the recruitment of U.S.-born white men into the military during World War I, which left positions vacant. Immigration laws of that era had severely restricted the influx of European immigrants who would normally fill those positions, and in the absence of native-born white workers and European immigrants, African American migrants filled the jobs. The newcomers, however, received substantially lower pay than their white counterparts and were often excluded from promotions or higher-paying positions. Nevertheless, wartime industrial production increased exponentially, creating many new positions that African Americans eagerly filled.

Impact on the North

The effects of the Great Migration on the North were nothing less than transformative. African Americans brought with them their culture, which left an indelible mark on the Northern, urban way of life. Among those cultural contributions was the introduction of "soul food" to Northern cuisine and the hugely influential infusion of blues into Northern music. In addition, African American migrants were part of a larger cultural transformation that sowed the seeds of what came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance and contributed to the emergence of modern Black society.

Even while making some economic strides and enjoying a cultural flowering, African Americans often found the urban North to be as inhospitable and hostile as the South had been. In the North, as in the South, racism permeated every aspect of public life. The relatively new National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) took the lead in mounting legal challenges to discrimination. Additionally, the National Urban League was created in 1911 to advance the interests and protect the rights of new African American migrants. Such leaders as Ida Wells-Barnett fought to bring an end to physical assaults on African Americans, most particularly in the form of lynching, while W.E.B. Du Bois and others worked in the courts to challenge legal discrimination.

The challenges those activists faced were daunting. Believing themselves to be at risk of losing their economic and social position, frightened white Northerners lashed out at the new arrivals. Matters worsened in 1919 when American soldiers returned from World War I only to find a social and cultural landscape vastly changed by the Great Migration. A series of race riots erupted that targeted African

Americans, igniting racial hatred and causing immense economic, physical, and personal damage. The most violent of those riots was East St. Louis Race Riot of 1917 and the [Chicago Race Riot of 1919](#). White gangs, often with the unspoken or open support of local police, roamed the cities, attacking African American citizens. In all, more than 20 race riots broke out in American cities in 1919, and the human toll was staggering.

Second Migration and Aftermath

A second migration wave that began in 1940 would generate similar demographic changes and, unfortunately, would lead to a repeat of the kind of racial violence that characterized the mass movement of African Americans to the North in the early part of the 20th century. The tremendous demographic changes brought by the Great Migration and the cultural and political transformations it produced also laid the foundation for the later [civil rights movement](#). Faced with such extreme and pervasive discrimination in the North, African Americans demanded and fought for equal rights.

Because of factors encompassing social conditions, racism, economic opportunity, and quality of life, during the 1990s the migratory direction of African Americans began to reverse. The overall condition and high crime rates of Northern cities, especially inner-city neighborhoods, had deteriorated to the point that many Black residents began to move to the South. By the turn of the 21st century, two times as many African Americans were moving to the South as those who were leaving the South.

Maeve Devoy

Allen Raichelle

Devoy, Maeve, and Allen Raichelle. "Great Migration." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2025, [africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1407061](https://www.africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1407061). Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.

Segregation

Segregation in the United States consists of the legal or socially enforced separation of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities from mainstream society both in public and private spheres. Such practices included restrictions on public accommodations, transportation, education, and employment. It can further involve the spatial separation of groups along with the mandatory use of different and usually inferior institutions, such as schools and hospitals.

Institutional Segregation

Institutions foster segregation, in housing for example, through selective enforcement of codes, the provision of services, and [urban renewal](#) policies that further isolated communities. Law enforcement and sentencing guidelines, immigration policies, and other actions reach beyond individual actions and make social assumptions a matter of policy.

Two major types of segregation have and continue to exist in the U.S. to the present day. De facto ("in-fact") segregation exists when members of a particular group mutually or under social pressure associate and conduct business and social relations apart from the mainstream. This type is often found in areas

with large immigrant or migrant communities in rural regions or urban neighborhoods. De jure (by law) segregation received the sanction and enforcement of law based on the provision of separate-but-equal facilities and an acceptance of a lower level of citizenship and legal rights. Supported by the 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, public policies based on its provisions were targeted primarily at African Americans. In practice, the services and facilities reserved for African Americans provided a lower quality of service than those reserved for whites, both North and South.

Maintenance of segregation came in a variety of forms, from restrictive covenants placed in housing deeds that prohibited particular groups, discrimination in rentals, voting restrictions, institutional separation in the armed forces, and limitations placed on hiring and promotion in employment. Particularly during the period from 1890 to 1930, vigilante violence throughout the U.S. resulted in thousands of reported and unreported lynchings and acts of violence for real or perceived breaches of social customs.

Segregation in the North

The First and Second Great Migrations, from 1915 to 1930 and 1940 to 1970, brought many African Americans to northern cities, where clashes with white people and other ethnic groups resulted in new segregated areas that would offer few avenues for advancement.

Though many immigrant groups eventually found acceptance into mainstream society, African Americans remained the primary targets of social and legal segregation. From the late 1940s to the 1960s, a series of court cases and congressional laws ended legal segregation. These included President Harry Truman's 1948 order to desegregate the armed forces; the Supreme Court cases *Shelly v. Kraemer* (1948) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which ended restrictive deed covenants and "separate-but-equal" policies in education respectively; and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Together with federal and state enforcement, these policies ended the most egregious examples of legal segregation. Despite these changes, segregation continues to the present shaped by the movement to suburbs, continued mortgage and lending discrimination (also called redlining), and the unequal provision of education, public services, health care, housing, and employment.

Matthew L. Daley

Daley, Matthew L. "Segregation." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2025, africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/2152541. Accessed 16 Dec. 2025.

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5.2: African American Education - Classroom Activity

African American Education - Classroom Activity - 'Value of Your Education'

This module's focus is on African Americans' struggle to be educated in the harsh racial climate of Jim Crow America. While the struggle itself is worthy of deep analysis and discussion, what was being fought for, education and its value, must also be appreciated and explored thoroughly.

Place students into groups of two. Each student should interview their partner about their own educational history. Questions to guide their interview could be: "How would you describe your elementary school years in school?" "Do you feel you had a positive educational experience?" "How did your school impact who you are today?" "Why are you pursuing an education in college now?" "What was your parents educational background?"

Once interviews are complete (maybe 10-15 minutes) have each student tell their partners educational background to the class (30-40 seconds each).

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5.3: African American Education - Assignment

[African American Education - Discussion Assignment - 'African American Education'](#)

Tell Them We Are Rising, Directed by Stanley Nelson explores unapologetic Blackness and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's). For more than 150 years, HBCU's have been a haven for Black intellectuals, artists and revolutionaries, and path of promise toward the American dream. Black colleges and universities have educated the architects of freedom movements and cultivated leaders in every field.

After reading this module's articles and viewing *Tell Them We Are Rising*, students will make two discussion posts: 1) Respond to the following prompt(s): What are some of the historical and current challenges to education for people of African descent in America? Identify and discuss a movement(s), and/or ways that individuals and groups have challenged and pushed back the barriers to obtaining an education in America. 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). Discussions grading rubric is attached.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: African Centeredness

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Define the concepts of Black Nationalism.
- Define the concept of Pan Africanism.
- Define the concept of Afrocentricity/Afrocentrism.

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

This module will cover the concept of African centeredness or Afrocentrism. This is the idea of keeping Africa and/or Black culture at the core of one's thoughts, culture, and behaviors. Contrary to the concept of Eurocentricity, which is the idea of Europe or "whiteness" being at the center of one's being, Afrocentricity argues that African Americans have long been indoctrinated with a Eurocentric point of view. This perceived reality is deemed harmful to African Americans individually and as a whole.

[6.1: African Centeredness - Readings and Media](#)

[6.2: African Centeredness - Classroom Activity](#)

[6.3: African Centeredness - Assignment](#)

6.1: African Centeredness - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about the concept of African centeredness also known as afrocentrism. Included are links to articles about the aligned concepts of Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism as well.

Readings and Videos



Black History Files. "How Does Afrocentrism Relate to Pan-Africanism?." YouTube video, 3:52. December 6, 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3ldoAvV0zY>.

Afrocentrism

Afrocentrism is the interpretation of reality from perspectives that are centered by and within the processes that maintain and perpetuate the life and [culture](#) of people of African descent. Afrocentric or African-centered education is the means by which the attributes of African culture are developed and advanced, along with the knowledge and skills needed to maintain and perpetuate it. Both concepts are corollaries of the "African worldview," a term first coined by Senegalese anthropologist Cheikh Anta Diop, whose 1978 work, *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa*, is generally regarded as the cornerstone of the Afrocentric idea, which has since been amplified and popularized by [African American Studies](#) theoreticians in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas. Moreover, Afrocentrism has also created controversy in academe, most notably in the historiographical debate over Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987) which suggested African origins to ancient Greek civilization and thus greater western civilization.

Diop's thesis is that European and African cultural orientations represent antithetical worldviews. Instead of a universal hierarchy of cultures in which Western European culture represents the epitome, Diop suggested that African and European cultures developed within two axiomatic and divergent "cradles" of civilization. The environmental harshness of the northern cradle (Europe) gave rise to individualism, possessiveness, and forms of social organization reflective of the scarcity of natural resources within the European environment. Conversely, the warmth and fertility of the southern cradle (Africa) and the absence of moral and material misery produced a sense of collectivism and benevolence among

precolonial Africans. The following attributes of the African worldview have been identified in the literature:

- an emphasis on the family as a source of personal identity and reference
- a far-reaching and abiding spirituality
- respect for elders and ancestral figures
- a preference for communal and societal arrangements
- a live-and-let-live philosophy of coexistence and cooperation among individuals, communities, and cultures
- an optimistic and holistic disposition toward life

While, as Diop contends, the Afrocentric worldview has existed from antiquity, Afrocentrism is a contemporary concept. Afrocentrism shares with earlier constructions such as [negritude](#), [Black Nationalism](#), and early [pan-Africanism](#) an emphasis on the need for people of African descent to resist Western cultural hegemony. What sets Afrocentrism apart, however, is its focus on recovery and restoration of the African worldview as a means of locating and centering present conceptions of reality and analyses of phenomena. Among contemporary scholars, [Molefi Kete Asante](#) is perhaps the most widely known and prolific proponent of Afrocentrism and Afrology, a term he has coined to refer to "the science or study of all modalities related to people of African descent from an Afrocentric perspective." Other African American Studies scholars such as [Maulana Karenga](#), Daudi Ajani ya Azibo, Jacob H. Carruthers, and Marimba Ani have focused on the ideological function of culture in European and African societies and the personal transformation facilitated by the concept of the "de-Europeanization" of culture.

Afrocentric education is part of the same process of cultural restoration and promulgation that is inherent to Afrocentrism. Schools are among the institutions through which the process of cultural assault upon Africans has been facilitated. African students are taught to think in non-African ways, using Western orientations to knowledge as the foundation for learning. [Carter G. Woodson](#) provides a treatise on this process in his classic 1933 text, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. As a countervailing force, African-centered education contributes to the development of African American people's sense of history, pride, and collective belonging through a reinforcement of their culture. Some of the major assumptions underlying Afrocentric education are that it

- acknowledges African spirituality as an essential aspect of our uniqueness as a people and makes it an instrument of liberation
- facilitates participating in the affairs of nations and defining (or redefining) reality from the perspectives of African people's needs and interests
- prepares people of African descent for self-reliance and governance in every regard
- emphasizes the fundamental relationship between the strength of African American families and the strength of their communities and nations
- ensures that the historical role and function of the customs, traditions, rituals, and ceremonies that have protected and preserved our culture are maintained and perpetuated

- facilitates African people's spiritual expression
- ensures harmony in social relations between people of African descent and others
- prepares African American youth to meet their responsibilities as adults
- sustains the continuity of African life over successive generations

More recently, Afrocentrism ignited a significant controversy through the polemic debate raised by historian Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987), which suggested African origins to Western civilization. Bernal argued that ancient Greek civilization was significantly influenced by African culture due to initial Egyptian and Phoenician migration into Greece, with northern Indo-Europeans moving into the region much later and mixing in with the local population. Moreover, he also hypothesized that classical Greek evolved from African languages, most notably Semitic and Egyptian dialects from the Near East. Classicists, historians, and archeologists, foremost among them historians Mary Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, criticized Bernal's work as speculative for its purported lack of solid evidence regarding ancient Greek origins. Lefkowitz and Rogers, in their book *Black Athena Revisited* (1996), which was a collection of essays engaging Bernal's book, created a maelstrom of controversy within academe. Lefkowitz, in particular, came under attack by some Afrocentric scholars for questioning Bernal's scholarship, thus illustrating the politicized nature of Afrocentrism in modern academe.

Kofi Lomotey

Mwalimu J. Shujaa

Shujaa, Mwalimu J., and Kofi Lomotey. "Afrocentrism." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2025, [africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1407577](https://www.africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1407577). Accessed 17 Dec. 2025.

- [pan-Africanism](#)
- [Black Nationalism](#)

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6.2: African Centeredness - Classroom Activity

African Centeredness - Classroom Activity

The content of this module explores the concepts of African centeredness, afrocentrism, pan-Africanism, and Black nationalism. Please use the information provided and respond to the questions below.

1. Why is it important for African Americans to be centered in their own cultural traditions, values, and norms?
 2. In what ways do you believe African Americans display "Eurocentricity" or European centeredness?
-

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6.3: African Centeredness - Assignment

African Centeredness - Assignment - Marcus Garvey Paper

Watch [African Redemption: The Life and Legacy of Marcus Garvey](#) and write a 500 word response paper. Your paper should be 12 point Times New Roman font and double spaced.

Grading Rubric for Short Papers is attached.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: The Black Church

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Expose students to different African American religious traditions
- Explore African Americans relationship with Christianity
- Discuss the role the Black church played in the Civil Rights Movement

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

Since the beginning of African history, the spiritual practices of ancient civilizations have always been of extreme importance. In more recent history, the Black church dating back to the enslavement era, has long been considered the center of African American culture. This module will delve into some of African Americans' history with religion, spirituality, and the institution of the Black church.

[7.1: The Black Church - Readings and Media](#)

[7.2: The Black Church - Classroom Activity](#)

[7.3: The Black Church - Assignment](#)

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7.1: The Black Church - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about African Americans' religious traditions.

Readings and Videos



Seminary Now. "The Origins of the Black Church in America." YouTube video, 8:41. January 9, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyRHvifK3Bg>.

Black Churches

The expression "Black churches," or "the Black church," has been used to refer to four groups of organizations:

1. Denominations founded by, formed of, and led by Black people
2. Black congregations that belong to predominately white denominations
3. Independent congregations
4. Loose fellowships of Black churches.

This entry makes reference only to the major Black denominations: Methodist, Baptist, Holiness, and Pentecostal.

Pre-Civil War Period

During enslavement, Africans were forced to worship with their enslavers. Black people were segregated within the white churches and were not free to worship according to their [culture](#). In time, however, enslaved people began worshiping in secret prayer meetings, escaping the supervision of slaveholders.

Between 1773 and 1775, enslaved people in the South founded the first Black (Baptist) church in Silver Bluff, South Carolina. Similarly, in 1794, [Absalom Jones](#) and [Richard Allen](#), in opposition to mistreatment at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, organized St. Thomas [African](#) Episcopal Church and Bethel [African Methodist Episcopal Church](#) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Twenty-two years later, Allen organized other Methodist congregations into the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the first Black denomination in the United States.

Black Methodists in New York also became weary of prejudice; Peter Williams Sr. and James Varick, among others, organized the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, a new denomination, in [New York City](#) in 1796. In the South, Black parishioners remained in the white Methodist fold until 1870, when they left to form the Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church. In 1954, the word "[colored](#)" was removed, and the CME became the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

From the very beginning, Black churches reflected Black political thought. For example, Bethel AME, pastored by Richard Allen, was a center of Black [emigration](#) to Haiti. [Denmark Vesey](#), Rev. Morris Brown, and [Nat Turner](#) all used religion in planning armed revolts against [slavery](#). The [abolitionist movement](#) was also deeply connected to the Black church; it was in the basement of a Black church that the New England Antislavery Society, the first such organization, was founded in Boston in 1832. In 1843, Black Ohio Baptists organized the Union Antislavery Baptist Society, the first Black abolitionist society.

Reconstruction

During and after [Reconstruction](#) (1866–1877), Black parishioners founded many schools to help freed people achieve a higher level of literacy and education. African Americans also developed a sense of responsibility toward foreign missions in Africa. In 1897, the [Lott Carey](#) Foreign Mission Convention was founded as an independent organization whose aim was to focus on missions in Africa. Black missionaries built numerous churches, schools, and orphanages in Africa with African American donations. Concern for African missions, however, did not diminish the Black Church's prophetic voice. [Frederick Douglass](#), Rev. [Henry Highland Garnet](#), and Bishop [Henry McNeal Turner](#) made clarion calls for justice as [segregation](#) continued after [emancipation](#).

Black Baptists tried several forms of organization before forming a single convention. By 1894, most Black Baptists were concentrated in the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, the American National Baptist Convention, and the National Baptist Educational Convention. In 1895, these conventions consolidated into the National Baptist Convention of the United States (NBCUSA). Twenty years later, the leaders of the National Baptist Publishing Board (NBPB) severed their connections with the NBCUSA and formed the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA).

During the [civil rights movement](#) of the 1950s and 1960s, some clergy disagreed with Dr. Joseph Jackson over his long tenure as president of the NBCUSA and his slow, gradual approach to civil rights. Because Jackson was not willing to change his views, Gardner Taylor, L.V. Booth, [Martin Luther King Jr.](#), and others withdrew and formed the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) in 1961. But this was not the last Baptist split. In 1988, another group left the NBCA because of differences over the governance of the NBPB. The new group called itself the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America.

Holiness Movement

Holiness organizations arose in the late 19th century to oppose what was perceived as the worldliness of the mainline Protestant denominations. The holiness movement first entered the white Methodist Episcopal Church before the [Civil War](#) and spread widely during the post–Civil War era. Basically, the holiness movement claimed that sanctification, and other divine work, must take place in the life of the believer after conversion/salvation (in other words, a true believer would, with God's help, live a sinless life). Scores of Baptists and Methodists chose to associate themselves with "holiness" and thus were excommunicated from their home churches or chose to leave on their own.

In 1886, Isaac Cheshier pioneered the United Holy Church of America (UHCA), the earliest Black holiness group, in Method, North Carolina. Eleven years later, Charles Price Jones, a prominent Baptist preacher, founded a holiness convention in Jackson, Mississippi. Jones's convention was informally organized as the [Church of God in Christ](#) in 1897. In 1920, Jones reorganized his group as the Church of Christ (Holiness) USA. Most holiness churches have granted freedom to women to work as evangelists and ordained pastors and have not required educational achievements as a requirement for ordination.

Pentacostal Movement

Charles Parham and William Seymour were the major promoters of what has become the [Pentecostal movement](#). They promoted another work of grace, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which they claimed came after salvation and evidenced by speaking in tongues. Parham, a white preacher, founded the Pentecostal movement in 1901; and Seymour, a Black pastor, led the Azusa Revival (1906–1922), an international revival based in Los Angeles. Many Black organizations added the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to their list of doctrines. The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW) was organized as an interracial group in 1907, but issues of power and racism forced most white ministers to leave, thus making the PAW a predominantly Black Pentecostal denomination.

In late 1907, Charles Mason, a holiness leader who had endorsed speaking in tongues, left Jones's organization and legally retained the name "the Church of God in Christ" (COGIC) for his new Pentecostal organization. In 1908, Magdalena Tate, a female holiness preacher, pioneered the Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth. That same year, she was made bishop, the first Black woman to claim such a title in the U.S. In 1924, Ida Robinson, formerly associated with the UHCA, chartered Mt. Sinai Holy Church of America, a new Pentecostal group that encouraged women to pursue the ordained ministry. Robinson also ordained men as pastors, but women clergy dominated Mt. Sinai for many decades.

Great Migration

During the [Great Migration](#) after [World War I](#), Northern churches provided shelter, financial assistance, and employment to Southern migrants. [Nannie Burroughs](#), a women's leader in the NBCUSA, followed the Black prophetic tradition by speaking against Black oppression in the U.S. In 1934, Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom led other church leaders in founding the Fraternal

Council of Negro Churches, an ecumenical group designed to create a united front in tackling the social problems of the African American community.

Civil Rights Movement

During the civil rights movement, the Black church made a sterling contribution to the social and political advancement of the race. Local congregations served as meeting places for countless rallies and fundraisers. Scores of local churches got involved in voter education and voter registration drives.

In 1957, King and other ministers formed the powerful [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#). Nine years later, another group of ministers pioneered the National Conference of Black Churchmen in support of the [Black Power movement](#). Among the prominent ministers who led the national civil rights movement were King, [Adam Clayton Powell Jr.](#), [Ralph Abernathy](#), and [Jesse Jackson](#). Christian women also contributed as marchers, secretaries, activists, and fund-raisers. [Ella Baker](#) and [Fannie Lou Hamer](#) were the most famous female activists. Gospel stars [Mahalia Jackson](#) and Ernestine Washington sang in fundraising concerts for the civil rights cause. Black churches later provided strong support to Black presidential candidates Jesse Jackson (1984, 1988) and [Barack Obama](#) (2008).

Black Congregations in White Denominations

Any study of the Black church must include those congregations that belong to white denominations. Because white people introduced the gospel to enslaved Africans, the early Black churches were pastored by white ministers or found themselves under white control. Nevertheless, the founding of Black denominations did not mean that all Black people would leave white denominations.

Today, thousands of Black people can be found in the Southern Baptist Convention, the American Baptist Churches, the United Methodist Church (UMC), the Episcopal Church, the Catholic Church, and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Black parishioners can also be found in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Church of Christ (UCC), the Presbyterian Church USA, the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), the Church of the Nazarene, and the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee). Many Black Baptist churches claim double affiliation, with both a Black convention and a white group. Black clergy in white denominations, like their peers in the Black denominations, also supported the civil rights movement. [Andrew Young](#) (UCC) and [James Lawson](#) (UMC) are the most well-known among them. Also within the ranks of these white denominations are large numbers of immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean.

Independent Churches and Fellowships

A large number of Black people also belong to independent churches and loose fellowships. Independent churches are found in rural, urban, and suburban areas and are led by ministers who prefer independence because of personality or financial factors. Many urban storefronts and megachurches are independent.

In recent years, some ministers have preferred to organize themselves as "fellowships" instead of joining the more established denominations. These fellowships do not report standards of denominationalism (such as publishing houses, Bible schools, and Christian colleges) or strong foreign missions. Nonetheless, they do ordain ministers and organize national conferences. Today, the most well-known fellowship is the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, founded in 1992 and still led by its founder, Bishop Paul Morton. Another notable phenomenon is the acceptance of Pentecostal/charismatic worship styles in the more established and older denominations.

Influence and Impact

The Black church made other significant contributions to American society during the 20th century, such as heavily contributing to the development of Black and American Christian music. Gospel music and singing pioneers included Charles Tindley, Lucy Campbell, Thomas Dorsey, Mahalia Jackson, and others. Later, Andrae Crouch, Mattie Moss Clark, and James Cleveland were among those who developed and promoted contemporary [gospel music](#) and singing. In the area of ecumenism, Black people founded the National Black Evangelical Association (1964) and the Congress of National Black Churches (1978), and worked with the National Council of the Churches of Christ, the World Baptist Alliance, the World Methodist Council, and the World Council of Churches. It was probably this kind of ecumenism that influenced the AME (1948) and the CME (1954) to ordain women.

Another form of ecumenism can be seen in the Interdenominational Theological Center, founded in 1958, which is now a consortium of Black seminaries and an ecumenical fellowship. In addition, Black churches have built thousands of housing units for low-income and senior citizens, chartered credit unions and banks, and developed vocational programs. In the 21st century, the Black church continues to receive the support of the African American community. Overall, it must be understood that the Black church is more than just Christian people who are Black. The Black church is a spiritual center, a prophetic voice, and a medium for economic empowerment.

David Michel

Michel, David. "Black Churches." *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2025, africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1477639. Accessed 18 Dec. 2025.

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7.2: The Black Church - Classroom Activity

The Black Church - Classroom Activity - 'Your Religious/Spiritual Journey'



Seminary Now. "The Black Church and the Civil Rights Movement." YouTube video, 19:31. January 16, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQuX3hSP35A>.

This module is exploring the role of the Black church in the history of African Americans. In particular, the Black church was central to the civil rights movement of the mid-1900's. After viewing "[The Black Church and the Civil Rights Movement](#)" respond to the questions below.

1. How did the Black church impact the success of the civil rights movement?
2. What was unique about the Black church that made it useful to the civil rights movement?

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7.3: The Black Church - Assignment

The Black Church - Discussion Assignment - 'The Future of the Black Church'



Freedom Journal Institute. "The State of the Black Church in American 2024." YouTube video, 47:01. September 26, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tROTmSl6yo>.

After viewing "The State of the Black Church in America 2024" students will make two discussion posts: 1) a response to the reading (minimum 250 words) and 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). *Discussion board grading rubric attached.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Black Feminism

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Expose students to Black feminism and womanism
- Discuss the necessity for the Black feminist movement and Black feminism overall

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

Black Feminism emerged from the necessity for Black women to be recognized, included, and represented within mainstream society. Womanism, a term coined by Alice Walker, emerged alongside Black Feminism as a framework that unapologetically centers the experiences and needs of Black women while also advocating for Black men, Black children, and the broader Black community. For example, while Black men secured the right to vote in 1870, women were not granted suffrage until 1920. Even then, the political efforts of Black men and women were repeatedly challenged, undermined, and violently suppressed well into the early 1970s—and, some argue, beyond. Voting is deeply tied to full citizenship and participation in a nation, making its denial a powerful example of systemic exclusion. The struggle for voting rights is only one of many ways Black women have been marginalized in the United States.

[8.1: Black Feminism - Readings and Media](#)

[8.2: Black Feminism - Classroom Activity](#)

[8.3: Black Feminism - Assignment](#)

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8.1: Black Feminism - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about Black feminism and womanism.

Readings and Videos

[Black Feminist](#) is a feature length documentary film surrounding the double edged sword of racial and gender oppression that black women face in America. This documentary is told through interviews from scholars, lecturers, writers, business owners, veterans, comedians and authors.

Sinclair, Maiya., & Thirus, Zanah. (Producers). (2019). *Black Feminist* [Motion Picture].

Womanism

The term *womanism* was coined by [Alice Walker](#) in her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983). Womanism referred to Black women whose focus is Black women's [culture](#), the family, and combating racism together with men. Womanists do not view Black men as oppressors but rather as partners in the fight against white racism and domination. Womanists celebrate women's issues but embrace Black men within the context of their common cultural traditions. In traditional [African](#) culture, Black women and men are equal; there is no passive female role in African society, which is reflected in African American culture. Black women do not feel the patriarchal oppression from Black men but rather from white society as a whole: both men *and* women. For the womanist, the fight against white racism is the core from which womanism springs. Black women already hold a position of autonomy within Black gender relationships, so the womanist struggle against men is transformed to a struggle against the oppression of white people against all genders of African Americans and people of color.

Womanists work to advocate the family and family empowerment. They believe that motherhood should be embraced as an integral part of a woman's wholeness. For womanists, motherhood is viewed as a key element in the health and well-being of future African Americans. Womanism promotes issues of race, gender, and identity and collective social goals over individual fulfillment. Womanists support social justice issues as a means to improve the economic and social inequalities that affect people of color all over the world. Womanism is a unique ideal that unites African Americans by their common history of suffering under [slavery](#) and as a connection to and preservation of traditional African heritage.

Beaulieu, Elizabeth Ann. "Womanism." In *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2025. Accessed December 27, 2025. <https://africanamerican2-abc--clio-c...isplay/1405278>.

[Africana Womanism and Black Feminism](#) are two different approaches that attempt to redefine and contextualize the experiences of African/Black women. Though both of these ideologies underscore Black women's experiences, the principles and methods of these two approaches differ and sometimes conflict. The main difference between Africana Womanism and Black Feminism is the terminology, the prioritization of battles (racism, classism, and sexism), the relationship with the male counterpart, and the liberation from traditional gender roles vs the idea of family centrality.

Terminology in Africana Womanism and Black Feminism

The first major difference is the name. The terminology "feminist" or "feminism" is a product of white Anglo-Saxon women's struggles. In [Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves](#), Clenora Hudson-Weems writes, "...no matter what form of feminism one may identify with, be it mainstream, cultural, radical, or Black feminism, the term 'feminism' itself is firmly etched in the ideology or theoretical concept...which replicates dominant Eurocentric perspective" (37). Hence, the term "Feminism" is not only insufficient to conceptualize the experiences of African women but harmful in the sense that it is assimilationist. Adding "Black" to a pre-established Eurocentric line of thought argues Hudson-Weems is, in fact, a lazy approach to creating a sufficient ideology and representative of the complexities of African/Black women.



Clenora Hudson-Weems, Assistant Professor at University of Missouri and author of *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*

Africana Womanism, coined by Hudson-Weems, was an attempt to create something completely separate from pre-established movements. The term “Africana,” as described by Hudson-Weems, is to identify the “ethnicity of the woman being considered” and establish her cultural identity as it “relates directly to her ancestry and land base—Africa”. Womanism, in turn, partly inspired by Sojourner Truth’s impromptu speech “Ain’t I a Woman?” is another attempt to separate oneself from the terminology of “Feminism/Female.” Especially because “only a female of the human race can be a woman.” This nuance is crucial because it goes a long way in not only distinguishing but humanizing the African Woman, especially in a world that does everything to dehumanize her. The combination of these two words, in essence, is the radical self-definition that black women need. It is this self-definition that Black Feminism preaches but fails to practice. [Bell hooks](#), Black Feminist and author of *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, writes, “Much feminist theory emerges from privileged women who live at the center, whose perspectives on reality rarely include knowledge and awareness of the lives of women and men; who live in the margin.” Here, bell hooks states the simple fact that the existing framework (feminist theory) excludes non-white peoples. For bell hooks and Black Feminism, the main struggle is to move to the “center.” The same center that wants to exclude them. This is where conflicts arise because Africana Womanism is separationist. It centers the ancestral homeland of all Black women—Africa—as the foundation. For Africana Womanists, the “center” is Africa. Hudson-Weems argues that for African/Black women to identify themselves within the framework of any type of “feminism” is to attempt to make room for black women within the anti-black “center” of which bell hooks speaks.

Prioritization of Racism, Classism, & Sexism



[Bell hooks](#), author of *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*

The next major difference is the prioritization of racism, sexism, and classism. Black Feminism prioritizes its struggles with sexism being at the forefront, racism second, and classism last. Africana Womanism prioritizes racism, the liberation of all her sisters and brothers, classism, and sexism, respectively.

Hudson-Weems says that like Black Feminism, Africana Womanism “acknowledges societal gender problems as critical issues to be resolved,” however she also argues that feminism is “a sort of inverted white patriarchy, with the White feminist now in command and on top.” Adding “Black” next to feminism again attempts to make space for people at a table they were never

wanted. Hudson-Weems writes, “When the Black feminist buys the White terminology, she also buys its agenda”. This claim is founded on the very fact that Black Feminism works to overthrow the patriarchy first before battling the racist system overall. Black Feminism also does not make room for the fact that Black men, just like Black women, are victims of the patriarchal system.

Because Black Feminism comes from feminism, it retains the idea that the respective male counterpart is a perpetrator of patriarchy. Since Black Feminism sees patriarchy in the American context as the first order of business, there lacks an approach to fighting racism, classism, and sexism in the global context. Considering this, it becomes clear that Africana Womanism is a more universal framework that goes beyond the borders of the United States. When Hudson-Weems coined the terminology, Africana Womanism, it included all Africans, within and without the continent. The global approach to battling oppression is key because African women, regardless of their location, face racism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism on a global scale; linking up with all African peoples is absolutely crucial.

Relationship with the Male Counterpart

The next major difference is the relationship with the male counterpart. One major driving force to feminism, and by extension Black Feminism, is the aversion to the male counterpart as all males are seen as perpetrators of the patriarchal system. Feminism does not allow for this nuance because it is a white-centered approach. White men have oppressed white women, this is true. White women were denied suffrage, political careers, and a few other basic rights. However, the same cannot be said for African/Black women in relation to Black men. Black men were never and still are not, in a position to oppress Black women as white men have white women. A group of people cannot successfully deny basic rights to another group without institutional power. I repeat, black men do not, and have never, had institutional power. Black Feminist Thought falls victim to this white-centered approach and is evident in contemporary Black Feminist academics such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Brittney Cooper. The rhetoric employed by these women makes sweeping and general statements about Black men and causes gender-division across African peoples.



These tweets show the generalizations Black Feminists tend to make when speaking of Black men. In this case, the incomplete/misleading data showed that a significant number of Black men voted for Trump in the 2020 Presidential Elections.

Liberation from Traditional Gender Roles vs Family Centrality

Another major factor to feminism is liberation from traditional women roles like motherhood and housewifery. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan (though she concedes the importance of family later in her life) writes that she wants more than her husband and more than her children. This attitude shaped an entire generation of women who viewed bearing children as backward and restrictive. At this point in time, getting married and raising children had become a burden to white women because they were denied everything else. It became an unwanted duty forced upon them by the patriarchy. The same cannot be said for African women. In fact, because of the lengths the patriarchal system has gone to hinder Black men from getting a job, the gender roles within the African community have never been set in stone. If anything, Black women have had to play the role of breadwinner

because again, the patriarchy goes the extra mile to dehumanize the Black man by denying him a living. Because both Black men and women were equally oppressed because of their race, Africana Womanism emphasizes the importance of being in concert with the Black male counterpart. And by extension, it also stresses the significance of a strong African family unit in the fight for liberation.

Because of colonialism in Africa and slavery in the Americas, African men and women have become equal victims of these racist systems worldwide. Black women and Black men are both victims of the patriarchy. Hence, the idea of a perpetual struggle among the genders for African men and women simply does not hold up. Traditional gender roles, like many other European values of individualism and capitalism, were brought to Africa from outside. Africana Womanism emphasizes the importance of family centrality as the true Africana Womanist sees her nurturing and mothering role as crucial to creating a strong African family unit; The same strong African family unit is the foundation critical in fighting for the liberation for all African peoples.

Bekele, Solyana. (2021, March 12). "Africana Womanism vs. Black Feminism". <https://hoodcommunist.org/2021/03/11...lack-feminism/>

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8.2: Black Feminism - Classroom Activity

Black Feminism - Classroom Activity - 'Black Panther Woman Speaks on Feminism'



This module is exploring Black feminism and womanism. After viewing [Black Panther Woman Speak on Feminism](#), respond to the questions below.

1. What role did feminism and/or womanism play in the Black Panther movement?
2. Why was there a need for feminist activism in the Black Panthers?

SYKOPAHeist. "Black Panther Woman Speak on Feminism." YouTube video, 7:57. June 16, 2026.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSSYLuyRhA>.

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8.3: Black Feminism - Assignment

Black Feminism - Discussion Assignment - 'Intersectionality and Black Feminism'



TEDx Talks. "Intersectionality: Feminism Wasn't Made for Black Women." YouTube video, 7:39. November 6, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLzLBbxlmq8>.

After viewing "[Intersectionality: Feminism Wasn't Made for Black Women](#)" students will make two discussion posts: 1) a response to the video (minimum 250 words) and 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). *Discussion board grading rubric attached.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: The Great Migration

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Describe the great migration of African Americans
- Provide students with background information about the causal factors which contributed to the great migration

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

The Great Migration was a major era in African American and American history overall. Between approximately 1910 and 1970, millions of African Americans migrated from the southern United States to the northern United States in search of better lives and opportunities. This mass movement changed the demographics of the United States and heavily impacted American politics, culture, and race relations.

[9.1: The Great Migration - Readings and Media](#)

[9.2: The Great Migration - Classroom Activity](#)

[9.3: The Great Migration - Assignment](#)

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9.1: The Great Migration - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about the great migration.

Readings and Videos



CrashCourse. "The Great Migration: Crash Course Black American History #24." YouTube video, 12:39. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Woh63FIFDBk>.

The Great Migration was the relocation of more than 6 million Black Americans from the rural South to the cities of the North, Midwest and West from about 1916 to 1970. Driven from their homes by unsatisfactory economic opportunities and harsh segregationist laws, many Black Americans headed north, where they took advantage of the need for industrial workers that arose during the First World War. During the Great Migration, Black people began to build a new place for themselves in public life, actively confronting racial prejudice as well as economic, political and social challenges to create a Black urban culture that would exert enormous influence in the decades to come.

Great Migration

After the Civil War and the Reconstruction era, racial inequality persisted across the South during the 1870s, and the segregationist policies known as "Jim Crow" soon became the law of the land.

Black Southerners were still forced to make their living working the land due to Black codes and the sharecropping system, which offered little in the way of economic opportunity, especially after crop damage resulting from a regional boll weevil infestation in the 1890s and early 1900s.

And while the Ku Klux Klan had been officially dissolved in 1869, the KKK continued underground after that, and intimidation, violence and lynching of Black southerners were not uncommon practices in the Jim Crow South.

Did you know?

Around 1916, when the Great Migration began, a factory wage in the urban North was typically three times more than what Black people could expect to make working the land in the rural South.

The Great Migration Begins

When World War I broke out in Europe in 1914, industrialized urban areas in the North, Midwest and West faced a shortage of industrial laborers, as the war put an end to the steady tide of European immigration to the United States.

With war production kicking into high gear, recruiters enticed Black Americans to come north, to the dismay of white Southerners. Black newspapers—particularly the widely read *Chicago Defender*—published advertisements touting the opportunities available in the cities of the North and West, along with first-person accounts of success.

Life for Migrants in the City

By the end of 1919, some scholars estimate that 1 million Black people had left the South, usually traveling by train, boat or bus; a smaller number had automobiles or even horse-drawn carts.

In the decade between 1910 and 1920, the Black population of major Northern cities grew by large percentages, including [New York City](#) (66 percent), [Chicago](#) (148 percent), [Philadelphia](#) (500 percent) and Detroit (611 percent).

Many new arrivals found jobs in factories, slaughterhouses and foundries, where working conditions were arduous and sometimes dangerous. Female migrants had a harder time finding work, spurring heated competition for domestic labor positions.

Aside from competition for employment, there was also competition for living space in increasingly crowded cities. While segregation was not legalized in the North (as it was in the South), racism and prejudice were nonetheless widespread.

After the U.S. [Supreme Court](#) declared racially based housing ordinances unconstitutional in 1917, some residential neighborhoods enacted covenants requiring white property owners to agree not to sell to Black people; these would remain legal until the Court struck them down in 1948.

Rising rents in segregated areas, plus a resurgence of KKK activity after 1915, worsened Black and white relations across the country. The summer of 1919 began the greatest period of interracial strife in U.S. history at that time, including a disturbing wave of race riots.

The most serious was the [Chicago Race Riot of 1919](#)—it lasted 13 days and left 38 people dead, 537 injured and 1,000 Black families without homes.

Impact of the Great Migration

As a result of housing tensions, many Black residents ended up creating their own cities within big cities, fostering the growth of a new, urban, Black culture. The most prominent example was Harlem in New York City, a formerly all-white neighborhood that by the 1920s housed some 200,000 Black people.

The Black experience during the Great Migration became an important theme in the artistic movement known first as the New Negro Movement and later as the [Harlem Renaissance](#), which would have an enormous impact on the culture of the era.

The Great Migration also began a new era of increasing political activism among Black Americans, who after being disenfranchised in the South found a new place for themselves in public life in the cities of the North and West. The [civil rights movement](#) directly benefited from this activism.

Black migration slowed considerably in the 1930s, when the country sank into the [Great Depression](#), but picked up again with the coming of [World War II](#) and the need for wartime production. But returning Black soldiers found that the [GI Bill](#) didn't always promise the same postwar benefits for all.

By the 1970s, when the Great Migration ended, its demographic impact was unmistakable: Whereas in 1900, nine out of every 10 Black Americans lived in the South, and three out of every four lived on farms, by 1970 the South was home to only half of the country's Black population, with only 20 percent living in the region's rural areas. The Great Migration was famously captured in Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*.

"The Great Migration." *History.com*. <https://www.history.com/articles/great-migration>. Accessed 22 Dec. 2025.

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9.2: The Great Migration - Classroom Activity

The Great Migration - Classroom Activity - 'Push and Pull Factors'



This module is exploring the great migration. After viewing [The Great Migration: Diverse Reasons Why Black Americans Moved North](#), respond to the questions below.

1. Please list some of the "push factors" (reasons that pushed African Americans out of the south) before and during the great migration.
2. Please list some of the "pull factors" (things that pulled African Americans toward the northern United States) before and during the great migration.

HomeTeam History. "The Great Migration: Diverse Reasons Why Black Americans Moved North." YouTube video, 6:40. February 10, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsvMVkJ2b-I>.

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9.3: The Great Migration - Assignment

African Centeredness - Assignment - Marcus Garvey Paper

Watch "[Why African-Americans left the south in droves-and what's bringing them back](#)" and read "[The Black Reverse Migration and the Future of the South](#)" write a 500 word response paper. In your response, give your opinion on whether or not you believe African Americans should mass reverse migrate back to the southern United States. Your paper should be 12 point Times New Roman font and double spaced.

Grading Rubric for Short Papers is attached.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Black Psychology

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Define and discuss post traumatic slave syndrome
- Explore the various components of Black psychology

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

Understandably, after enduring the horrors of geographical dislocation, the middle passage, slavery, and Jim Crow, African Americans have historically experienced distinct psychological trauma. These psychological struggles range from colorism, anxiety, hypertension, and issues with self-identity. Psychologist Joy DeGruy coined the term Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome which "exists as a consequence of multigenerational oppression of Africans and their descendants resulting from centuries of chattel slavery-a form of slavery which was predicated on the belief that African Americans were inherently/genetically inferior to whites." (Joy DeGruy) This module will discuss the various ways the residue of enslavement and systemic oppression have impacted the psychology of African American people.

[10.1: Black Psychology - Readings and Media](#)

[10.2: Black Psychology - Classroom Activity](#)

[10.3: Black Psychology - Assignment](#)

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10.1: Black Psychology - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about various components of Black psychology.

Readings and Videos

The Enduring Nature of Colorism in the Black Community

Novelist [Alice Walker](#) coined the term colorism in 1983, but skin-tone bias and discrimination has divided the black^[1] community for almost as long as racism has divided America. In the United States, colorism shapes the African American experience in a unique way. Like the legacy of [slavery](#) and racism, colorism remains a vital feature of black America's cultural DNA. Colorism is a form of [internalized racism](#) that promotes bias and favor for light skin, European features, and "good (i.e. straight) hair" among African Americans. Today, colorism is much more than the elevation of light skin over dark skin in relation to [beauty standards](#). Contemporary social science research shows that skin tone affects educational attainment, household income, and occupational status for black men and women in the 21st century. Further, the academic literature documents that color prejudice intersects many facets of black life—from hip-hop lyrics, family dynamics, self-esteem, and advertising, to employment discrimination, [sports](#) and physical education, school suspension, and prison sentencing. Simply stated, color matters.

Our society frequently engages in discussions on the continuing significance of race in a seemingly "post-racial" era. Yet, there is far less dialogue surrounding the pervasive problem of colorism that keeps people of color around the world reaching for an impossible standard of [whiteness](#), whether that is in the form of skin bleaching, hair straightening, or the widespread rejection of dark skin.

Although colorism is a global concern, this essay will specifically address the enduring nature of colorism in black America. The strict racial binary in effect in the United States since the 17th century, coupled with the [one-drop rule](#), creates a unique system of racism and colorism for African Americans. Monumental shifts have occurred in (black) American history—from the end of slavery to the election of the nation's first black president—yet, skin tone differences remain a pressing concern that warrants continued empirical exploration in the 21st century.

What is Colorism?

Colorism is a pressing social problem for many communities of color across the globe today. Similar to racism, sexism, and many of the other "isms" in our society, colorism—defined as the unequal treatment and discrimination of individuals belonging to the same racial or ethnic group—extends privilege and power or oppression and inequality to certain individuals in society. In particular, colorism operates to privilege light skin over dark skin in the same way that whiteness is placed over blackness.

Colorism is a byproduct of racism, and thus shares many of the same qualities and characteristics. For example, colorism, like racism, is deeply embedded within societal structures (e.g. education, politics, the media) and can be institutionalized. Colorism can also operate on the interpersonal or individual level. Colorism can be blatant or covert. It is important to note that while African Americans are not capable of institutionalized racism (they lack the power to do so), colorism however, has been perpetuated and rooted into our societal structures. This is in large part due to the broader system of white racial domination in American society. Black Americans have been responsible for maintaining the seeds of colorism that were originally planted (and still presently reinforced) by this larger system of white privilege.

Often referred to as the "last taboo among African Americans," or even the "dirty laundry of black community," colorism has yet to be formally named within the African American [culture](#).^[2] The phenomenon is more frequently referred to as the "color complex," or the issue of "light-skin vs. dark-skin." It has instead found its way into the everyday names and practices used among family, friends, and in social situations that perpetuate and reinforce the discourse of discrimination attached to skin tone. From "high yella" to "blue-black", various skin tones are placed on a continuum from light to dark. For generations, darker-skinned blacks have been made to feel less than, or inferior to their lighter counterparts, and lighter-skinned blacks have been called out on the carpet for not being "black enough."

In the black community, colorism is a sensitive topic that stirs such emotions as anger, fear and pain. Many people within the African American community would rather not talk about, focus, or draw attention to an issue that shames and embarrasses blacks in the face of larger (white) American society. It has essentially been restricted to discussion within the minority community. However, in the new millennium, more and more black men and women—from Lupita N'yongo to Don Lemon to [Oprah Winfrey](#)

—are opening up about the insidious issue of colorism. Because of a number of societal shifts in how knowledge is shared and disseminated (via the Internet and social media), the dialogue on colorism is now more open and candid.

The Distinctive Nature of Colorism in (Black) America

The history of colorism in black America starts with the history of race in America. As race scholar Joe Feagin explains, "racist thought did not come accidentally to the United States. It was, and still is, actively developed and propagated."^[3] Since the onset of colonial expansion into the United States, the history of this nation has rested upon a clear binary divide—black and white. The institution of colonialism brought more than slavery into this country; a racist ideology followed that cultivated a system of language, classification, and domination privileging whiteness over blackness. Using the biological differences of skin color as a justification for the oppression and enslavement of Africans, European colonizers developed a social hierarchy that aligned whites at the top and blacks at the bottom. The inferiority associated with blackness translated into socially constructed ideas about skin tone and phenotype that continue to shape identity, status, and opportunity.

In addition to defining a color line that separated blacks and whites, racist ideology subsequently caused internalized divisions among African Americans. The frequent "mixing" of the races (commonly through the sexual exploitation of black female slaves by white male slave owners) resulted in biracial progenies. In order to prevent any ambiguity in regards to racial classification, and to preclude blacks with white ancestry from gaining the same legal status as full-blooded whites, lawmakers mandated the rule of the hypo-descent, or the "one-drop" rule: even the smallest amount (or drop) of African ancestry legally defined a person as black. This statute set the United States apart from many other societies who operated under more fluid, multi-racial categories of personal and group identification.

Although the enforcement of the "one-drop" rule equalized all blacks in the eyes of the law, in everyday practice significant differences developed between blacks of varying skin tones, hair textures, and facial features. Consequently, colorism became an undeniable social force in the black community that caused division and separation within the race based upon one's proximity to whiteness. While blackness emerged as an inferior social, cultural and political category in opposition to whiteness, lightness and darkness ensued as secondary categories that carried their own sub-system of social, cultural, and political significance within the black community.

Examining Colorism in Popular Culture and Academia

Writers, poets, social scientists, filmmakers, and everyday black people alike have chronicled the distinctive nature of colorism in African American culture for over 150 years; the issue of color prejudice in the black community has graced the pages of many literary pieces and other works of popular culture dating back to the mid-1800s. [William Wells Brown](#), author of the first black American novel, was the first to document the complexity of skin tone in the 1853 classic *Clotel*. Since then, color consciousness has seeped through the pages of black epics such as *The Blacker the Berry* (1929), *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and *The Color Purple* (1983), and more recent literary works including *Our Kind of People* (2000) and *Don't Play in the Sun* (2004); and films such as [Spike Lee's School Daze](#) (1988), [Chris Rock's Good Hair](#) (2009); and Bill Duke's *Dark Girls* (2011). This exhaustive body of work indicates the ubiquitous nature of skin tone bias and discrimination over time in black American popular culture.

On the academic front, issues of colorism in the black community have been at the center of analysis and discussion of many black scholars' work for more than a century. [Anna Julia Cooper](#) and [W. E. B. Du Bois](#) were among the first black scholars to articulate the presence of a skin color hierarchy within black communities. (W. E. B. Du Bois coined the term "colortocracy" in 1903). However, the genesis of empirical research on colorism began toward the end of the [Jim Crow](#) era. At this time (the period spanning from the 1860s to the 1950s), colorism—like racism—was blatant, overt, and palpable in the lives of black Americans. Having a lighter skin color and European features provided access to better opportunities; T. Joel Wade explains that at this time, "skin color became a criterion for the attainment of prestige in the African-American community."^[4] As such, skin tone and social class became an important focus of social scientists examining aspects of racism and colorism in black society.

Today, in the post-civil rights era, colorism remains a factor in the lives of black Americans that can influence many areas of life. Some recent studies still find an inescapable link between skin tone and social class. The groundbreaking research of Michael Hughes & Bradley Hertel indicates that blacks with lighter skin achieve "higher educational attainment, occupational prestige, personal income, and family income than those with darker skin."^[5] Similar analyses by social scientists also find that lighter skin is more advantageous for black Americans in the post-civil rights age; a fairer complexion indicates higher levels of income, occupational, and educational achievement.^[6] The more recent work of sociologist JeffriAnne Wilder also highlights that many of

the names and stereotypes African Americans today associate with light, medium, and dark skin tones are exactly the same as the language used by black Americans during Jim Crow.

Contemporary research on colorism more carefully documents how black women are more vulnerable to the impact of skin tone bias and discrimination. Race historians agree that in the post-civil rights era, gender does make a difference when considering predictors of physical attractiveness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Unpacking the term "gendered colorism," sociologist Mark Hill explains that "skin color has more bearing in the lives of African-American women than of African-American men."^[7] This is not surprising given the societal value placed on female beauty. Colorism scholar Margaret Hunter explains that the social construction of beauty is "informed by other societal status characteristics including race."^[8] Empirical research on the nature of gendered colorism unveils that darker-skinned black women are at a particular disadvantage in the areas of beauty, mate selection, and self-esteem.

While scholars have examined the effects of skin tone for black Americans, mainstream non-fiction on colorism is still a newer area of exploration and discourse. In 1992, Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson, and Ronald Hall published *The Color Complex*—a groundbreaking work that squarely addressed the contemporary nature of colorism and skin color politics in the African American community. Their book was monumental because it was the first manuscript to shed light on the controversial issue of color bias in the post-civil rights era. They have since revised this work in a second edition published in 2013. In the 20 years since the original publication of *The Color Complex*, there have been less than 10 non-fiction books dedicated to exploring skin color politics in black America. All of these works—from Marita Golden's riveting autobiography *Don't Play in the Sun*, to sociologist Margaret Hunter's *Race, Gender, and the Politics of Skin Tone*, to Yaba Blay's *(1)ne Drop: Shifting the Lens of Race*—are important texts that expand our knowledge and understandings of race, racism and its inexorable connections to colorism. More importantly, these works help us to understand the complexities and implications of denying blackness, and seeking whiteness. Although racism remains an important matter of social, political, and scholarly focus, colorism—in conjunction with racism—has been central to the black experience in the United States.

Conclusion: Colorism Remains a Social Force in the 21st Century

Colorism continues to be an issue of great social and cultural influence in the black American community. While many communities of color have to contend with the impact of racism, African Americans are equally shaped by the nature of internalized racism from within the community. As the literature on colorism indicates, skin tone can add an additional layer of oppression and inequality in the lives of many individuals.

By 2050, it is estimated that people of color (black, Asian, and Hispanic populations) will comprise half of the American population. As the demographics of our society changes, and the overall skin tone of American deepens in the new millennium, many scholars are calling for continued dialogue and increased awareness on colorism as some predict that in 50 years colorism will replace racism in significance. For instance, sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva proposes that "colour gradations, which have always been important matters of within-group differentiation, will become more salient factors of stratification"^[9]. That is, our society could begin to place more emphasis on complexion and less importance on racial category. Simply stated, colorism could be the "new" racism. Anthropologist Nina G. Jablonski highlights in her 2012 book, *Living Color: The Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color*, that there is a recent trend toward colorism in the 21st century and refers to the issue as a "major social force and challenge to human equality."^[10] It remains critical to examine the implications of this new racial trajectory, and the specific consequences for black Americans as they are uniquely impacted by both racism and colorism.

Wilder, JeffriAnne. "The Enduring Nature of Colorism in the Black Community." In *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2026. Accessed January 2, 2026. <https://africanamerican2-abc--clio-c...isplay/1932857>.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

A result of twelve years of quantitative and qualitative research, Dr. DeGruy developed her theory of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, publishing her findings in the book "[Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome – America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing](#)". The book addresses the residual impacts of generations of slavery and opens up the discussion of how the black community can use the strengths we have developed in the past to heal in the present.

WHAT IS P.T.S.S.?

P.T.S.S. is a theory that explains the etiology of many of the adaptive survival behaviors in African American communities

throughout the United States and the Diaspora. It is a condition that exists as a consequence of multigenerational oppression of Africans and their descendants resulting from centuries of chattel slavery—a form of slavery which was predicated on the belief that African Americans were inherently/genetically inferior to whites. This was then followed by institutionalized racism which continues to perpetuate injury, thus resulting in **M.A.P.**:

- **M**: Multigenerational trauma together with continued oppression
- **A**: Absence of opportunity to heal or access the benefits available in the society; leading to
- **P**: Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome

Under such circumstances, these are some of the predictable patterns of behavior that tend to occur:

KEY PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR REFLECTIVE OF P.T.S.S.

Vacant Esteem

Insufficient development of what Dr. DeGruy refers to as primary esteem, along with feelings of hopelessness, depression and a general self-destructive outlook.

Marked Propensity for Anger and Violence

Extreme feelings of suspicion perceived negative motivations of others. Violence against self, property, and others, including the members of one's own group, i.e. friends, relatives, or acquaintances.

Racist Socialization/Internalized Racism

Learned helplessness, literacy deprivation, distorted self-concept, antipathy or aversion for the following:

- The members of ones own identified cultural/ethnic group
- The mores and customs associated ones own identified cultural/ethnic heritage
- The physical characteristics of ones own identified cultural/ethnic group

The book Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome incorporates her research in both America and Africa, as well as her twenty years of experience as a social work practitioner and consultant to public and private organizations. Dr. DeGruy first exposes the reader to the conditions that led to the Atlantic slave trade and allowed the pursuant racism and efforts at repression to continue through present day. She then looks at the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that African Americans faced as the result of the slave trade. Next, she discusses the adaptive behaviors they developed—both positive and negative—that allowed them to survive and often even thrive. Dr. DeGruy concludes by reevaluating those adaptive behaviors that have been passed down through generations where appropriate. She explores replacing behaviors which are today maladaptive with ones that will promote, and sustain the healing and ensure the advancement of African American culture.

The Study Guide is designed to help individuals, groups, and organizations better understand the functional and dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors that have been transmitted to us through multiple generations; behaviors that we are now transmitting to others in our environments of home, school, and work and within the larger society. The Guide encourages and broadens the discussion and implications about the specific issues that were raised in the book, Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing. The Study Guide provides useful and practical tools to help the reader develop skills aimed at transforming negative attitudes and behaviors into positive ones.

DeGruy, Joy. "Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome". <https://www.joydegruy.com/post-traum...slave-syndrome>.

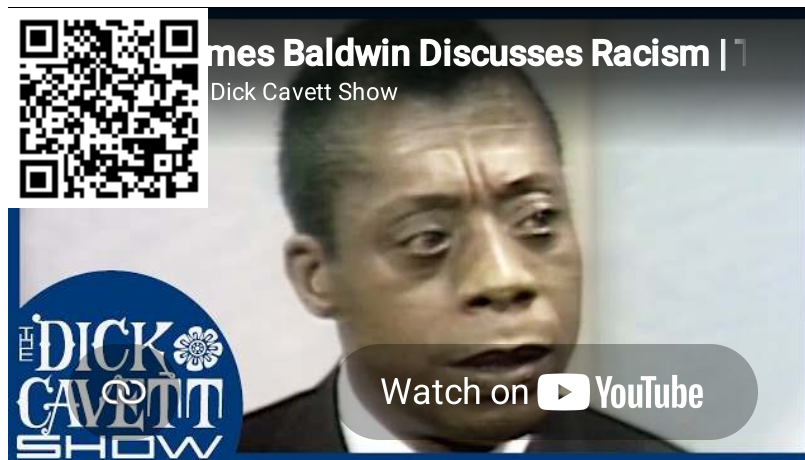
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10.2: Black Psychology - Classroom Activity

Black Psychology - Classroom Activity

James Baldwin was an iconic literary giant. He "bore witness to the unhappy consequences of American racial strife. Baldwin's writing career began in the last years of legislated segregation; his fame as a social observer grew in tandem with the civil rights movement as he mirrored Black people's aspirations, disappointments, and coping strategies in a hostile society...In his novels, plays, and essays alike, Baldwin explored the psychological implications of racism for both the oppressed and the oppressor." (Poetry Foundation)

Poetry Foundation. "James Baldwin." <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/james-baldwin>.



This module is exploring Black psychology. After viewing [James Baldwin Discusses Racism](#), respond to the questions below.

1. What was James Baldwin's main point in this discussion?
2. Do you believe the content of this discussion is still relevant today? Why or why not?

The Dick Cavett Show. "James Baldwin Discusses Racism." YouTube video, 17:08. June 24, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWwOi17WHpE&t=1s>.

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10.3: Black Psychology - Assignment

Black Psychology - Discussion Assignment - 'Black Psychology'

"The achievements and contributions of Black psychologists are conspicuously absent from most of the History of Psychology texts regularly assigned in psychology courses around the world. Moreover, there is scant attention given in the curriculum of psychology departments to the pioneering theories, concepts, and paradigms proffered by African/Black psychologists. [This documentary](#) film introduces viewers to the pioneering theories, methods, and techniques of African/Black Psychology and maps their historical development in the Diaspora." - Shawn Utsey

After viewing [Toward a Black Psychology: Origin & Evolution of a Discipline](#) students will make two discussion posts: 1) a response to the video (minimum 250 words) and 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). *Discussion board grading rubric attached.

Toward a Black Psychology: Origin & Evolution of a Discipline. Directed by Shawn Utsey. Privately Published, 2018. <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/black-psychology>.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Jim Crow

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Explore the characteristics of the Jim Crow Era
- Discuss African Americans fight for equality and the end of Jim Crow

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

Beginning in the late 1800s and lasting into the later stages of the mid 1900s, the Jim Crow Era is a major part of not only African American history, but United States' and world history overall. Informally, the Jim Crow era lasted from after emancipation, 1866, until the last piece of civil rights legislation (The Fair Housing Act) was passed in 1968. This approximately 100 year period was defined by legal racial discrimination, racial oppression, and racial terror.

[11.1: Jim Crow - Readings and Media](#)

[11.2: Jim Crow - Classroom Activity](#)

[11.3: Jim Crow - Assignment](#)

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11.1: Jim Crow - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about the Jim Crow era.

Readings and Media

Jim Crow

Definition: Discriminatory laws designed to disfranchise and segregate African Americans in the South

Significance: Jim Crow laws established a system of white supremacy and discrimination in the United States that lasted from the end of Reconstruction until well into the 1960s. Although virtually all Jim Crow laws are now off the books, their legacy has left African Americans politically and economically disadvantaged.

The term “Jim Crow” is thought to have originated in the song “Jump Jim Crow,” which a white minstrel performer in blackface made famous during the 1830s. His exaggerated mimicking of African American stereotypes may have caused the term to become associated with southern stereotypes of presumed black inferiority. After the end of Reconstruction in the South in the late 1870s, southern states began passing legislation to take away the rights that former slaves had enjoyed after the [Civil War](#). By the turn of the twentieth century, the term Jim Crow became synonymous with discrimination and particularly [racial segregation](#).

Development of Segregation

The first segregation laws actually originated in the North before the Civil War. In some northern states, African Americans were segregated in railway cars, theaters, schools, prisons, and hospitals. They were also frequently barred from restaurants and hotels and were excluded from jury service. Some northern states had constitution provisions restricting the admission of African Americans to their states.

After the Civil War, the states of the defeated Confederacy adopted laws known as “black codes” that restricted the rights of new freed slaves and created a system similar to slavery. However, [Reconstruction](#) soon brought in Union troops and forced the creation of new governments. African American men were given the same voting rights as white men, and many African Americans were elected to political office for the first time. This overturning of the southern order naturally angered many white southerners and engendered resentments that would later be expressed in vengeful legislation.

During the 1870s, the US Supreme Court began to issue rulings that limited federal protections of the civil rights guaranteed by the equal protection and privileges and immunities clauses of the [Fourteenth Amendment](#), which had been ratified in 1868. These rulings had the effect of contributing to the later development of legally mandated racial segregation. In 1877, for example, the Court ruled in *Hall v. de Cuir* that states could not prohibit segregation on common carriers. In 1883, the Court declared unconstitutional the Civil Rights Act of 1875, and ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment gave Congress the power to restrain states but not individuals from racial discrimination and segregation. In 1890, in *Louisville, New Orleans and Texas Railroad v. Mississippi*, the Court ruled that states could constitutionally require segregation on carriers.

The Supreme Court’s landmark [Plessy v. Ferguson](#) decision of 1896 established the principle of separate-but-equal in a ruling upholding a Louisiana law that required segregation on railroad cars. The separate-but-equal doctrine would serve as the constitutional underpinning of legal segregation until the mid-1950s. Finally, in 1898, the Court upheld the new Mississippi constitution that effectively disfranchised African Americans. The Court also ignored its separate-but-equal principle in public education when it ruled in 1899 in *Cumming v. County Board of Education* that statutes establishing separate schools for whites were valid even if they provided no comparable schools for African Americans.

Jim Crow Laws

Jim Crow laws generally consisted of statutes that disfranchised and segregated African Americans. The most common disfranchising device was the use of literacy tests, which required prospective voters to read, write, and interpret passages from the US and state constitutions. In theory, the tests applied equally to all citizens, but in practice they were gimmicks designed to take away the vote from former slaves, few of whom had had opportunities to learn to read. At the same time, the states’ so-called grandfather clauses restored the vote to many illiterate white southerners by exempting from the literacy test requirement citizens whose grandfathers had been eligible to vote—a loophole of no benefit to former slaves. Some states also provided exemptions for illiterate citizens judged to be of “good moral character”—a subjective evaluation made by biased white registrars. Moreover, even

if black would-be voters could read, they still had to get past the registrars' subjective evaluations of their interpretations of constitutional texts.

Another common disfranchising device was the use of [poll taxes](#), which affected both poor blacks and poor whites. These taxes were generally payable six to eighteen months prior to elections. Would-be voters who failed to pay them by deadlines could not vote. Some states also required voters to pay the taxes not only for forthcoming elections but for all previous elections to retain their eligibility to vote.

A final disfranchising technique was the so-called white primary, which thirteen southern states used to prevent African Americans from having meaningful voices in the electoral process. Because most white southerners were Democrats during the Jim Crow era, Democratic Party primaries were the most important elections. Candidates who won the Democratic primaries were virtually assured of victory in the general elections, which Republican Party candidates occasionally did not even bother to contest. Since political parties were regarded as private clubs, they remained exempt from government antidiscrimination laws until well into the twentieth century, allowing local Democratic Party branches legally to exclude African Americans from voting in party primaries—which were the only elections that mattered.

The disfranchisement of African Americans gave white southerners total control over political processes and allowed them to enact discriminatory laws. As the US Supreme Court diluted the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment and federal civil rights laws, southern states moved quickly to segregate African Americans. Mandatory segregation on public transportation was followed by segregated waiting rooms and ticket windows. Local ordinances segregated almost everything that might mix members of different racial groups, from theaters, swimming pools, and restaurants to parks, phone booths, elevators, and even public benches and water fountains. At the state level, schools, mental institutions, homes for the aged, and prisons were segregated. Florida even required that school textbooks used by black and white students be stored separately when classes were not in session. Eventually, the Jim Crow system governed nearly every aspect of daily life, and white supremacy was the norm in the South.

Challenges to Segregation

As early as 1915, the Supreme Court began overturning Jim Crow laws. During that year, the Court declared grandfather clauses unconstitutional in [Guinn v. United States](#). Many other antidiscriminatory decisions followed, such as the Court's 1944 banning of white primaries in *Smith v. Allwright*. The Court's most important ruling, however, came in 1954, when its justices unanimously declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education*. That landmark decision was the beginning of the end of the separate-but-equal doctrine. In his opinion on the *Brown* ruling, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote that in the matter of education, "separate" could never be "equal."

The 1950s also brought the [Civil Rights movement](#) and a new anti-Jim Crow attitude in federal government. In 1964, the US Congress passed the [Civil Rights Act](#), a far-reaching law that ended segregation in many public accommodations, outlawed employment discrimination, and anticipated further major civil rights legislation. The following year, [Congress passed the first Voting Rights Act](#). It eliminated literacy tests as a voting requirement. During that same year, the Supreme Court declared poll taxes unconstitutional in *Harper v. Virginia*. These developments did not end all Jim Crow laws immediately, but they set the United States on a course that would, in fact, lead to the abolition of legally mandated segregation and discrimination. The changes wrought by the end of Jim Crow meant that African Americans could, for the first time, become full participants in the American political process.

Jim Crow in the Twenty-First Century

Despite the progressive measures of the late twentieth century, there are some who believe that a racial caste system is alive and well in the United States of the twenty-first century. Issues cited as evidence include racial profiling, instances of police brutality against African Americans and other minorities of color, and the seemingly mass incarceration of African Americans in the country's prisons. In 2010, former litigator Michelle Alexander published a book titled *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* focusing specifically on the idea that the criminal justice system targets African Americans, offering statistics that convey the reality of the number of African Americans criminalized and kept behind bars. In general, she claims that African Americans remain in a subordinate state, albeit one slightly different from that of their ancestors. Alexander emphasizes that there are actually a greater number of African Americans in prisons or on probation and parole than were enslaved in 1850. Such arguments have sparked several debates, especially following Barack Obama's election as president in 2008.

Moore, William V. "Jim Crow Laws." *Salem Press Encyclopedia*. 2022.

Jim Crow & Segregation

In the late nineteenth century, the implementation of Jim Crow—or racial segregation—laws institutionalized white supremacy and Black inferiority throughout the South.



Courtesy of the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University.

A black and white reproduction of a photograph of a New Orleans CORE protest at Woolworths and McCrory's on Canal Street, April 1961.

In the late nineteenth century, many white Louisianans attempted to reverse the gains African Americans had made during Reconstruction. The implementation of Jim Crow—or racial segregation laws—institutionalized white supremacy and Black inferiority throughout the South. The term Jim Crow originated in minstrel shows, the popular vaudeville-type traveling stage plays that circulated the South in the mid-nineteenth century. Jim Crow was a stock character, a stereotypically lazy and shiftless Black buffoon, designed to elicit laughs with his avoidance of work and dancing ability. By 1880, however, “Jim Crow” came to signify a model of race relations in which African Americans and white Americans operated in separate social planes. Almost one hundred years would pass before civil rights workers were able to reverse these laws.

The Origins of Jim Crow, 1865 to 1890

In the five years after the [Civil War](#), the Republican-controlled Louisiana Congress enacted powerful civil rights legislation aimed at securing African Americans their political rights. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, respectively, abolished slavery, recognized African Americans as citizens, and guaranteed African American men the right to vote. The Fourteenth Amendment was particularly significant because it guaranteed African Americans the same rights of citizenship that white Americans had, including equal protection under the law. By 1875 African Americans across the South, supported by the federal government, had established nearly four thousand schools for Black students. In addition, more than fifteen hundred had run for office as state and national representatives.

Instituting Jim Crow was a gradual process before 1880, especially during [Reconstruction](#), when it appeared that African Americans enjoyed some protection from the federal government. But in 1865, the Louisiana legislature began implementing “[black codes](#),” laws that formed the basis for racial segregation. Originating in the eighteenth century, black codes regulated and restricted the movement of enslaved people. More generally, they reinstated the [antebellum](#) southern social order, in which white

people occupied a higher social rung than Black people. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, black codes limited Black life in numerous ways. They determined the types of businesses African Americans could own and the time of day they could visit downtown. The codes stipulated that no more than three African Americans could ever assemble in one place, and gave white people legal authority over Black people when no police officer was present. Though black codes were found in every parish, they were most vigorously enforced in the northern and eastern parishes of Louisiana.

In southern Louisiana, African Americans were allowed much more freedom, largely owing to the racial demographics of southern Louisiana in general and New Orleans in particular. By 1860, New Orleans could be divided into three discernable racial groups: whites, [free people of color](#), and enslaved people of African descent. In New Orleans, free people of color, who often had a mixed racial heritage, traditionally enjoyed a measure of freedom in their businesses and social interactions not found in other parts of the state.

By 1877, deepening distrust between white people and African Americans led to the lowest point in race relations in American history. At the beginning of Reconstruction, Louisiana sent several Black politicians to the US House of Representatives, and one African American, [P. B. S. Pinchback](#), served as governor from late 1872 to January 1873. By the time federal troops were officially removed from Louisiana in 1877, however, all of these politicians had been defeated; all hopes for improved racial relations, or federal intervention on behalf of Black Louisianans, seemed to have evaporated.

As Reconstruction ended, most African Americans in Louisiana rented small plots of land, hoping to become self-sufficient farmers. Formerly enslaved people tended to stay geographically close to their former owners, usually living no more than fifty miles away. In place of slavery, white Louisianans developed an agricultural system called sharecropping. White property owners gave African American farmers access to land with the understanding that these farmers would give the landowner part of the crop as “rent.” Sharecropping quickly evolved into an exploitative relationship between farmers and landlords. Often illiterate and uneducated, sharecroppers rarely understood the written contracts they were compelled to sign. Further, landlords set the price of the crop, often ignoring its market value, while Black farmers were left without recourse. Sharecropping undergirded Black poverty in Louisiana—profits were scarce, weather and climate were often uncooperative, and corruption was rampant. While there were attempts to unify white and Black farmers in the immediate postbellum period, sharecropping allowed class and racial distinctions to persist.

Institutionalizing Jim Crow

By 1890, the Democratic Party hatched a scheme to completely remove the Republican Party from the South by disfranchising southern Black men, the most ardent supporters of the Republican Party. White Louisianans implemented poll taxes, literacy tests, residency requirements, and “understanding” clauses to prevent Black people from registering to vote. Despite the rights guaranteed them by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, African Americans were systematically excluded from the political process. Social segregation soon followed.

In 1891, the Louisiana legislature had officially segregated the railroads within the state. In 1892, Homer Plessy, an active member of a New Orleans civil rights organization, the *Comité de Citoyens*, bought a first-class ticket on a train and attempted to sit among whites. After he was arrested for breaking the law, Plessy sued the railroad company, his lawyers arguing that segregation denied him equal protection under the law as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. In 1896, however, the US Supreme Court upheld Louisiana law in its decision on [Plessy vs. Ferguson](#). Speaking for the majority, Justice Henry Brown stated that segregation did not deprive Plessy of his rights, nor did it make him an inferior person. The justices argued that states could establish “separate but equal” facilities; if Black and white people were treated equally, segregation would be allowed to stand. Yet, in almost all public facilities—schools, hospitals, trains, restaurants, hotels, parks, cemeteries, the armed forces, and jury duty—white people received priority over African Americans. Following the decision, some institutions excluded African Americans altogether.

Two years after the *Plessy* decision, Louisiana passed one of the first laws officially stripping Black men of the right to register to vote. In essence, everything that could be segregated in Louisiana was. Public facilities for adults, including restaurants, hotels, night clubs, and cemeteries, were strictly segregated, as were public facilities for children such as amusement parks, playgrounds, and schools. By 1900, the line separating white and Black people had become deeply entrenched in Louisiana’s culture. After 1902, New Orleans streetcars were segregated. A 1908 state law prohibited cohabitation (in marriage or domestic situations) between white and Black men and women. Racial segregation in jails was required in 1920. Even in New Orleans, tolerant (if not friendly)

interactions between white and African American residents all but disappeared. The Catholic Church established a segregated parish in downtown New Orleans, the Congregation of Corpus Christi.

Not coincidentally, [lynchings](#) increased dramatically after 1900, primarily in the northern parishes of Caddo, Ouachita, and Morehouse. Between 1900 and 1931, more than half the lynchings in the state occurred north of Alexandria. The numbers of African Americans lynched are in the thousands, though detailed statistics are skewed because police officers in the northern parishes rarely considered lynchings as homicides. Still, lynchings and the threat of lynching contributed to the maintenance of Jim Crow.

The Civil Rights Movement Builds

As the century turned, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) became increasingly active in Louisiana. Between 1909 and 1930, the NAACP was a decentralized organization that focused on ending lynchings. In the 1930s, however, the organization retooled itself for the purpose of challenging the doctrine of “separate but equal” that formed the base of the Jim Crow laws.

In 1930s Louisiana, the NAACP counted New Orleans attorney [A. P. Tureaud](#) as one of its most important assets. Tureaud, a Howard University Law School graduate and colleague of Thurgood Marshall, sought to dismantle segregation in Louisiana’s public schools. Tureaud believed that segregated education, and the meager resources allotted for African American children, perpetuated poverty and inequality across generations. With the assistance of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Tureaud sued the state of Louisiana for paying African American teachers lower salaries than their white counterparts. Tureaud’s 1940 victory in *Joseph P. McKelvin v. Orleans Parish School Board* led to pay equity among all public schools.

[World War II](#) ushered in a number of legal and social changes that further weakened the structure of segregation. Nearly one million Black men and women served in the armed forces, and about five hundred thousand served in Europe and Asia. African Americans understandably believed that their willingness to die for their country abroad proved their worthiness for expanded political rights at home. Faced with an emergent civil rights movement, President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981 in 1948, fully desegregating the armed forces.

In Louisiana, the fight for desegregation took place in another social arena: public accommodations. Long before Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat in Montgomery, Alabama, African Americans in Baton Rouge initiated a [bus boycott](#) of their own in 1953. Baton Rouge segregated the buses so that the first ten rows were reserved for white passengers, though African Americans accounted for 80 percent of the riders. A leading minister in the city, T. J. Jemison, spoke before the Baton Rouge City Council, testifying that it was unfair to force African American riders to stand in the back of the bus while the seats in the front remained empty. In June, African Americans in Baton Rouge formed the United Defense League (UDL) and organized a bus boycott. After one week, the city council and the UDL reached a compromise. The first two rows on the buses were reserved for white passengers but, after that, African Americans could sit where they wanted. Though segregation was still in effect, the [Baton Rouge Bus Boycott](#) provided a model for other cities to follow.

Memorable and vital successes over racial segregation continued in Louisiana and the rest of the South throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In response to a pending lawsuit, segregation was abolished at Louisiana State University; the first African American undergraduate enrolled in 1953. The Plessy decision was finally overturned the next year, when the US Supreme Court ruled on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The court found legal segregation unconstitutional in all public accommodations, especially public schools. Though met with massive resistance, the decision transformed the southern way of life. The “whites only” screens on New Orleans’s streetcars were officially removed in 1958. In 1960, the [New Orleans School Crisis](#) erupted over the desegregation of public schools. But in 1961, desegregation continued peacefully.

Jim Crow’s Demise

In 1964, the Civil Rights Act outlawed racial discrimination and segregation in schools, restaurants, hotels, and universities. Signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Civil Rights Act also prohibited unequal application of voting requirements, ended discrimination in interstate commerce, barred discrimination by state and city governments, and outlawed discrimination in private companies that take federal dollars. The 1965 Voting Rights Act went a step further and outlawed numerous tactics used to disenfranchise African Americans and other groups. Officially, the era of Jim Crow had ended. After nearly one hundred years of

economic, political, and social demoralization, African Americans occupied the same levels of citizenship as white people, at least in the eyes of the law.

For Louisiana, desegregation in public schools would come slowly. In 1965, only five Louisiana parishes submitted plans for integration. By 1967, thirty parishes still had made no arrangements to desegregate. In 1970, forty-five parishes were ordered to come up with a legitimate plan or risk the loss of federal funding; full integration of Louisiana's public schools did not come until the mid-1970s. Similarly, Louisiana was ordered—on at least ten occasions between 1965 and 1998—to integrate segregated universities and professional schools or compensate the state's historically Black colleges and universities for generations of neglect.

The impact of segregation on Louisiana's culture and history continues to linger. One lasting consequence of Jim Crow is the persistence of extreme poverty among African Americans, particularly in the northern parishes bordering the Mississippi River. The decline of cotton and sugar production, the source of Louisiana's wealth prior to the [Civil War](#), has left behind impoverished communities unable to find suitable alternatives. In twenty-first century, "stealth racism," or subtle long-term racism, remains in Louisiana, particularly as racial attitudes harden in the midst of economic instability.

Brown, Nikki. "Jim Crow and Segregation." *64 Parishes*. January 21, 2015. https://64parishes.org/entry/jim-cro...kaAvfuEALw_wcB.

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11.2: Jim Crow - Classroom Activity

Jim Crow - Classroom Activity - 'History of Jim Crow'



This module is exploring the Jim Crow era. After viewing [History of Jim Crow](#), respond to the questions below.

1. What impact did Jim Crow have on African American life?
2. In your opinion, why did White people feel the need to oppress African Americans in such a way?

Robin Hamilton (ARound Robin Production, LLC). "History of Jim Crow." YouTube video, 22:37. June 22, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqRv9Jh-7fc&t=1s>.

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11.3: Jim Crow - Assignment

Jim Crow - Discussion Assignment - 'Jim Crow's Relevance Today'

After reading "[How Mississippi's Jim Crow Laws Still Haunt Black Voters Today](#)," students will make two discussion posts: 1) a response to the reading (minimum 250 words) and 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). *Discussion board grading rubric attached.

How Mississippi's Jim Crow Laws Still Haunt Black Voters Today

After the U.S. Civil War, white supremacists used felony disenfranchisement to suppress the Black vote. Even now, restoring rights has hit a roadblock.



A group of demonstrators march in Jackson, Miss., on June 19, 2021, in protest of new voting access restrictions in Black Belt states. Members of Black Voters Matter took part in a Freedom Ride bus tour to Washington, D.C., to advocate for voting rights. Joshua Lott/The Washington Post via Getty Images

Charles Caldwell was never meant to have a voice. Mississippi's White ruling class made sure of it.

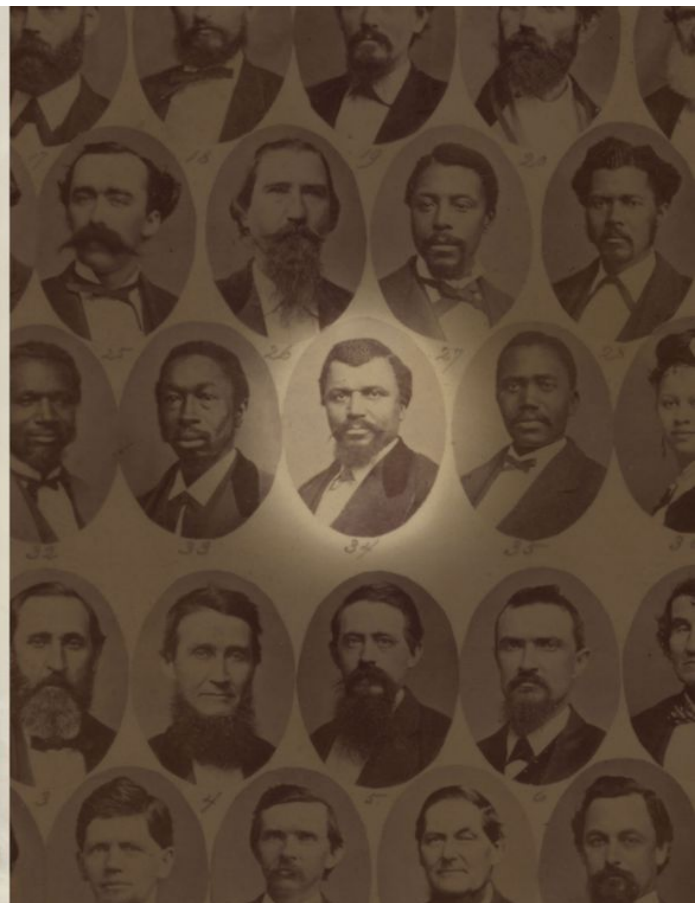
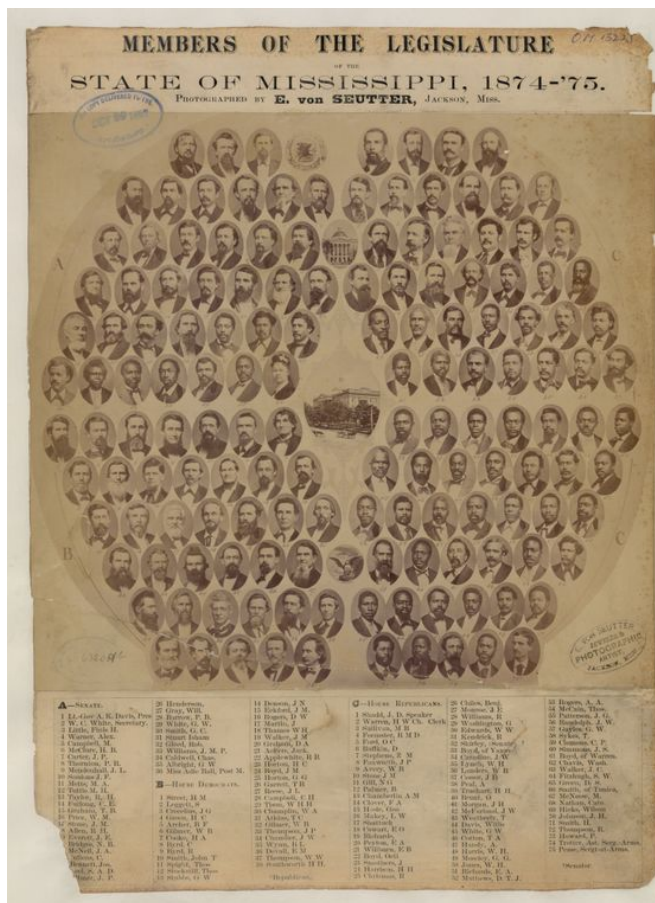
He was part of Mississippi's silenced majority in 1860 — 436,600 enslaved people to 354,000 White people, according to the [Census](#) — who would be granted full citizenship after the Civil War.

By 1868, Caldwell was one of 16 Black delegates at the state's post-war constitutional convention, which extended the right to vote to all men and created a framework for public education.

This article was published in partnership with [Mississippi Today](#).

Described in a White politician's [historical account of the Clinton Riot](#) as “one of the most daring and desperate negroes of his day,” Caldwell was “the dominant factor in local Republican politics.”

In December 1875, Caldwell was lured to a cellar for a celebratory Christmas drink. He was ambushed — shot once from behind — and then carried into the street, where a White mob riddled him with bullets. Caldwell, who rose from servitude to become a state senator, was once again silenced.



Charles Caldwell, one of 16 Black delegates at the state’s post-war constitutional convention in 1868, pictured within a montage of the Mississippi Legislature in 1875. Caldwell was assassinated in 1875 part of “the Mississippi Plan” to maintain White political control. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

His murder was a calculated part of white supremacists’ post-war efforts, collectively known as the Mississippi Plan, to maintain political control by White men, whom freedmen outnumbered. In the post-war South, white supremacists used lynchings, massacres and intimidation to silence the Black people they once owned, then cemented racism into the state’s 1890 constitution to further restrict the Black vote.

Although most other racist sections of Mississippi’s 1890 constitution were erased by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, one part of the plan continues to stalk Black voters today. Called felony disenfranchisement, the constitution takes away — for life — the right to vote upon conviction for several low-level crimes, like theft and bribery, that the 1890 drafters felt would be mostly committed by Black people.

A bill that would reinstate voting rights for thousands convicted of nonviolent offenses was passed by the Mississippi House of Representatives in March but [died this week](#) in the state Senate. Republicans control both chambers.

[Section 241](#), the disenfranchisement clause of the constitution, has since been expanded and interpreted to cover 102 crimes.

Why was voter disenfranchisement created? In 1890, state Rep. James K. Vardaman, who would later be elected governor, said, “There is no use to equivocate or lie about the matter. ... Mississippi’s constitutional convention of 1890 was held for no other purpose than to eliminate the [n-word] from politics.”

Over the past 30 years, approximately 55,000 Mississippians have lost their rights to vote due to felony disenfranchisement. About six out of 10 are Black, according to state conviction records reviewed by The Marshall Project - Jackson.

An effort to overturn the state’s disenfranchisement law has gone before the U.S. Supreme Court twice, and the case was twice rejected by the majority. In her 2023 dissent, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson [rebuked the law’s racist intent](#), saying it contained “the

most toxic of substances” that needed to be removed.

In addition to disenfranchisement, the 1890 delegates crafted legal language around racism and conditions perpetuated by slavery. Poll taxes and literacy tests attacked the lack of wealth and education. Left out of [Section 241](#) were violent crimes — murder, rape and assault — that were often part of white supremacists’ terroristic strategy.

In an [1896 case](#), the Mississippi Supreme Court noted the choice of disenfranchising crimes was racist. “Restrained by the federal constitution from discriminating against the negro race, the convention discriminated against its characteristics and the offenses to which its weaker members were prone,” the court wrote. It describes Black people as “patient, docile people,” more inclined to “furtive offenses than to the robust crimes of the whites.”



Terror, murder and Jim Crow laws: [Explore our timeline of the fight for Black voting rights](#). Associated Press

Yet as 20th-century civil rights laws stripped away most voting restrictions, voter disenfranchisement remained because civil rights have never come easy to Mississippi, voting advocates say.

“There’s never been a time period in Mississippi history where we have done what the federal government has wanted us to do without the federal government having to directly step in and make us do it,” said Hannah Williams, policy and research director of voting rights advocacy group Mississippi Votes. “Even now.”

“Movements change, but commitments don’t,” said Flonzie Brown Wright, the first Black woman in the state elected to public office in a racially mixed town. “Call it whatever you want to call it,” Brown Wright told The Marshall Project - Jackson. “But the common denominator is: Let’s [not] give these minorities any power.”

Civil rights gains — and new ways to stop them

Mississippi is one of 13 states that imposes a lifetime voting ban, even after the end of a felony sentence. In most of those states, lifetime disenfranchisement is for violent crimes or government corruption. In Mississippi, a single felony conviction for writing a bad check or shoplifting takes away the right to vote.

Across the nation, courts and state legislatures have restored voting rights for people convicted of felonies. Since 1997, 26 states and the District of Columbia have expanded voting rights for people with felony convictions, according to [The Sentencing Project](#).

Mississippians last amended Section 241 in 1968 — to add murder and rape to the list of disenfranchising crimes, after burglary was removed in 1950. ([See the full list of offenses.](#))

Though they once outnumbered White people in the state, Black people have never held a majority of representation in the state’s government. Robert Lockett, a civil rights historian and professor at Jackson State University, said the modern conservatism that rules Mississippi can be traced back to the insidious Mississippi Plan to eliminate Black political power.

“Conservatives today, especially in the South, didn’t just pop up out of nowhere,” Lockett said. In his view, “they are directly descended from segregationists, from white supremacy.”

The plan effectively suppressed the Black vote in the 19th and 20th centuries. Lockett and other historians said White political control continues to evolve in the 21st century.

Between 1875 and 1892, the number of Black voters plummeted. Though about 67% had been registered in 1867, fewer than 6% of eligible Black men were registered to vote by 1892, according to [the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](#).

Starting early in the 20th century, hundreds of thousands of Black Mississippians left the state during the Great Migration caused by economic and social hardships. By 1940, Black people were no longer a majority in the state. And in many rural places, the order established by slavery remained. Black sharecroppers farmed land owned by White people.

Except for a few pockets of Black political power, such as the all-Black town of Mound Bayou in Bolivar County, the Black vote in Mississippi remained largely dormant until the 1960s.

Black people who remained in Mississippi faced much of the same oppression as their ancestors: lynchings, beatings, intimidation and imprisonment.

George W. Lee, a preacher in Belzoni, Mississippi, was murdered for his efforts to register Black voters in 1955. Fannie Lou Hamer, who rose to become a national civil rights champion, sharecropped in rural Ruleville, Mississippi, and had no idea she could vote [until she was 44 years old](#). Hamer was arrested, sexually assaulted and beaten so brutally that it left her with kidney damage and a permanent limp, [she testified at the 1964 Democratic National Convention](#).

Brown Wright said her father was fired from his job because of her activism. Before her barrier-breaking election in 1968, more than 1,000 civil rights protesters in Jackson were arrested and held in livestock pens in 1965, in one of the largest mass arrests of the Civil Rights Movement.



Civil rights demonstrators sing “Freedom Songs” at temporary jail facilities at Mississippi State Fairgrounds on June 16, 1965. Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

The passage of the federal Voting Rights Act in 1965 protected the right of Black citizens to vote and outlawed discriminatory barriers like literacy tests. By 1968, 60% of eligible Black residents had registered to vote, and Mississippians elected their first Black state legislator since Reconstruction, according to the [U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](#).

Brown Wright won her race for the elections commission in Canton, despite a rule change that required her to win votes across all parts of Madison County, instead of just the votes from the single district she would represent.

“It was a clear case of voter suppression,” she said.

After she took office at age 26, she said the board routinely denied her lists of poll workers who had been community activists and disqualified Black candidates. She sued to overturn the discriminatory actions and won.

White people “never intended for Blacks to supersede or give the perception that we were in the process of gaining some semblance of equality. It was never intended to be,” Brown Wright, now 81, told The Marshall Project - Jackson.



Left to right: Fannie Lou Hamer, Victoria Gray and Annie Devine in Washington, D.C., in 1965. House Speaker John McCormack granted the three members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party permission to take seats as the U.S. House of Representatives debated the validity of Mississippi’s elections. Activists protested the election results because Black Americans were barred from the polls. Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

Carroll Rhodes, a civil rights attorney who has challenged the state on voting rights for more than 40 years, said that following the 1965 Voting Rights Act, local circuit clerks would come up with devious ways to make it difficult for Black people to register and vote. Some examples he listed were splitting majority-Black areas across different districts to dilute Black voting power and requiring voters to re-register multiple times.

“The only difference is, after Reconstruction, all the way through Jim Crow, it was easy to tell that race was the motivating factor, because they explicitly say it,” Rhodes said. “But the court and the federal government cracked down on those White officials because they were saying they were doing it because of race. So the White official got smart. They no longer say they’re doing it because of race. They come up with other excuses.”

Mass incarceration as modern voter suppression

At the same time that Mississippi’s civil rights activism gripped the nation, a conservative movement laid the foundation for tough-on-crime rhetoric that eventually took hold among both major political parties and fueled the escalation of arrests and mass incarceration.

The key to the new rhetoric was erasing any mention of race. Instead, disciples of this new movement used crime and welfare as coded language to target Black people, attorney and civil rights scholar Michelle Alexander wrote in “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness.”

“Barry Goldwater, in his 1964 presidential campaign, aggressively exploited the [civil rights] riots and fears of black crime, laying the foundation for the ‘get tough on crime’ movement that would emerge years later,” Alexander wrote.

Goldwater’s narrative resonated with White Mississippi voters who rejected Democratic incumbent Lyndon B. Johnson’s civil rights reforms. A majority of Mississippians voted for a Republican presidential candidate — Goldwater — for the first time since Reconstruction.

White Mississippians then continued to vote for Republican presidential candidates in almost every election after 1964, while the state government maintained a status quo of White men, mostly Democrats, who dominated the state legislature and governor’s office. Despite splitting the vote across party lines, the common denominator in White Mississippians’ voting practices was their singular goal of maintaining power.

After the Voting Rights Act, tough-on-crime rhetoric fueled initiatives like GOP President Richard Nixon's war on drugs and Democratic President Bill Clinton's 1994 crime bill that [increased mandatory prison sentences](#). Mississippi now [incarcerates more people](#) per capita than any other state. About 60% of all incarcerated people in the state were Black in 2022, according to the [Mississippi Department of Corrections](#),

Though not all incarcerated people have lost their right to vote, a lack of information about who can and can't vote makes it difficult for many affected by the legal system to access ballots.

However, some in Mississippi's government have tried to change the state's disenfranchisement laws.

In 2008, the Mississippi House passed a bill to restore voting rights to the disenfranchised, excluding rape and murder convictions, but the bill died in the state Senate.

A 2023 lawsuit challenge to felony disenfranchisement was successful when a three-judge U.S. Fifth Circuit Court panel ruled that the lifelong voting ban violated the Eighth Amendment's cruel and unusual punishment clause. However, the state appealed to the full appeals court, and the disenfranchisement law remains in place. In its defense, the state said disenfranchisement is [not punishment](#) and that the Legislature, not the courts, should decide on any modifications.

In March, the Mississippi House voted across party lines to [approve a bill](#) that would restore the right to vote for people convicted of some nonviolent offenses. However, the bill died in the state Senate without a committee hearing.

Rhodes, the civil rights attorney, is co-counsel for the Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP in a [lawsuit](#) that challenges the state's congressional redistricting plan, saying it dilutes Black voting power. The case is pending in federal court.

"There will always be a constant struggle. I learned that early on," Rhodes said. "The forces that want to undo the progress that's been made will always be there."

Henry, Daja, E. "How Mississippi's Jim Crow Laws Still Haunt Black Voters Today." *The Marshall Project*. April 4, 2024. https://www.themarshallproject.org/2...oaAh_1EALw_wcB.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Black Politics

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Examine African Americans' history with politics
- Discuss how racism, the constitution, perception, and other factors impacted and continue to impact African Americans' relationship with politics

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

Prior to gaining the right to vote, African Americans had already been influencing United States' politics. Frederick Douglass, for example, met with President Abraham Lincoln multiple times during the Civil War, advocating for the abolition of slavery as a central war objective. Following the war's end in 1865, the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 granted Black men the right to vote, leading to the election of the first twenty-two Black members of Congress. Since then, Black political participation has fluctuated, reaching historic highs during the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, when Barack Obama was elected president for two terms. There also continues to be tension within the African American community about which of the two major political parties, Republican and Democrat, African Americans should show allegiance to.

[12.1: Black Politics - Readings and Media](#)

[12.2: Black Politics - Classroom Activity](#)

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12.1: Black Politics - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about Black Politics.

Readings and Media

Political Realignment and African Americans

The shift of African Americans from the Republican to the [Democratic Party](#) is one of the striking political phenomena of the 20th century, and one in which the [Great Migration](#) played an important role. Black loyalty to the Grand Old Party (GOP) was forged during the [Civil War](#)—Democrats were the party of Southern racism, Republicans the party of [Abraham Lincoln](#) and [emancipation](#). For decades thereafter, in thrall to the Lincoln legacy, African Americans sustained their historic political allegiance in plain defiance of the disappointing records of successive Republican administrations on issues of concern to the race. The allegiance was dramatically sundered by the economic crisis of the 1930s. Responding to the economic benefits of the New Deal and believing themselves to be included in [Franklin D. Roosevelt's](#) concern for the common man, African Americans transferred their loyalties from Lincoln to Roosevelt. Later, the embrace of civil rights on the part of [Harry S. Truman](#), [John F. Kennedy](#), and [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) turned devoted black Roosevelt supporters into committed black Democrats.

In the early decades of the 20th century, black fealty to the GOP was sorely tested as successive Republican administrations cultivated the white South, failed to appoint African Americans to federal offices, promoted segregation in the federal civil service, and ignored problems of segregation, discrimination, [disfranchisement](#), and racial violence. Yet the Democrats failed to present a compelling alternative.

By the election of 1932 the crippling economic burden of the depression gave African Americans good reason to question their continuing Republican allegiance. Equally a matter of concern was President [Herbert Hoover's](#) stance on race. In addition to continuing the offensive racial practices of his predecessors, Hoover took two celebrated actions that African Americans interpreted as deliberate slaps: the segregation of Gold Star Mothers traveling to Europe to visit the graves of soldier sons and husbands, and the nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court of John J. Parker, a circuit court judge in North Carolina who was reported to have spoken in favor of disfranchisement in an earlier campaign for governor.

Still, the Democratic nominee, Roosevelt, offered African Americans little inducement to overcome their traditional antipathy to the party, and neither Republicans nor Democrats did very much to court black votes. It was little wonder. Two-thirds of all African Americans of voting age lived in the 11 former Confederate states and the District of Columbia; [poll taxes](#), property qualifications, [literacy tests](#), white primaries, intimidation by voting registrars, and a variety of other devices kept the vast majority of them away from the polls. The 2.1 million African Americans who resided elsewhere and who were 21 years of age or older in 1930 constituted less than 3% of the potential national electorate.

Since African Americans were at best of incidental importance to the major parties in 1932, how were enfranchised African Americans to cast their vote? For the first time there was a lively debate among black spokesmen. While many African Americans argued that it was safer to stay with the Republicans, others made the case that splitting the black vote would be smart politics, evidence of political maturation, a declaration of political independence that would make it impossible for either party to take African Americans for granted. African Americans had long ago repaid their debt to Lincoln and the Republicans, so the argument went, and the [Republican Party](#) in its modern incarnation could no longer lay claim to the enduring elements of the Lincoln legacy.

Despite the disenchantment of many African Americans with Hoover, deep-rooted wariness of the Democratic Party kept most of them in the Republican camp. Hoover ran far ahead of Roosevelt in black election districts in most cities; in some cities Hoover even increased his share of the black vote in comparison with 1928.

The dramatic break came with the election of 1936. African Americans were more politically engaged by the time of this election. Migration played a critical role. Seeking relief from the economic emergency, some 400,000 African Americans left the South between 1930 and 1940. The large majority of them gravitated to eight Northern states: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. The massing of African Americans in limited geographic areas made possible the articulation of common political interests. It fostered the development of specialized interest groups with particular political objectives. It created an environment conducive to the emergence of black political leadership. It brought African Americans under the sway of local Democratic political machines. And with 202 of 523 electoral votes at stake in the states where African

Americans congregated, the black vote became a sufficient force to warrant attention from the major parties. The Republicans grounded their appeal to African Americans in the Lincoln legacy; the Democrats mustered a raft of symbolic overtures to African Americans at their national convention, followed by highly publicized outreach that continued during the subsequent campaign.

The stunning Roosevelt victory—the largest popular plurality, 60.8%, to that point in American history—brought with it a fundamental change in black political behavior. Roosevelt's share of the black vote substantially exceeded his nationwide average: for example, 81% in [Harlem](#), 75% in Pittsburgh, 69% in Philadelphia, 66% in [Detroit](#), and 65% in Cincinnati. Roosevelt won anywhere from 60 to 250% more votes in black neighborhoods in these cities in 1936 than he had in 1932.

In voting Democratic in 1936, African Americans were behaving like most other poor people in the United States. While African Americans were certainly aware that FDR had failed to act on such issues as [lynching](#), disfranchisement, and discrimination, racial concerns had to be fitted into a scale of priorities, and there was overwhelming agreement that economic problems were more pressing than racial concerns. New Deal programs often made the difference between starvation and survival, and African Americans who were suffering the most from the depression responded accordingly.

African Americans not only voted for Roosevelt but also idolized him as a hero, the savior of the race. They believed that Roosevelt cared personally about them and that the slights and injustices they suffered, even the rank discrimination in the administration of relief, were the products of underlings who acted in contravention of the president's wishes. African Americans believed also that Roosevelt shared in the racial sensibilities of his wife, whom they regarded as a genuine friend. [Eleanor Roosevelt's](#) sympathetic ear in the heart of the administration made the critical difference in conveying a sense of caring, and her racial involvements made many African Americans believe that the president was more interested in racial justice than he actually was.

African Americans thought of themselves as Roosevelt supporters well before they called themselves Democrats. Throughout the New Deal there was a significant discrepancy between the way African Americans voted and the way they described their political affiliation. Identification with the president, then, played an important part in the politicization of black Americans. Roosevelt was a magnetic symbol of political authority who drew people into a positive identification with the larger political system. Now what happened in Washington, D.C., vitally affected the lives of African Americans, as it did those of other Americans. Accordingly, the New Deal brought new black voters to the polls at the same time that it swung African Americans who were already voting away from the Republican Party.

Several circumstances thrust the Democratic Party's appeal to black voters into a more explicitly racial context after 1940. Politicized by the New Deal, African Americans moved increasingly to use the ballot as a lever to encourage attention by the national parties to racial concerns. At the same time, migration and [urbanization](#) continued apace as African Americans left the South in search of employment in war industries. The increasing concentration of black voters in states that held the balance of power in presidential elections made the black electorate more important in the Democratic Party's calculations.

The death of Franklin Roosevelt in 1945 raised the question of the transfer of black political loyalties from the president to his party. The rise of the [civil rights movement](#), the increasing racial consciousness of black Americans as a consequence of [World War II](#), and the diminution of the economic emergency brought racial issues to the fore in the 1940s in ways that had not occurred in the previous decade. With Harry S. Truman's embrace of civil rights, the gap between black voting behavior and party identification narrowed significantly.

From 1940 to 1960, generally two-thirds or more of black voters supported Democratic candidates in presidential and congressional elections. In the presidential elections of 1948, 1952, and 1960 (and the congressional election of 1952), the black Democratic vote topped 75%. In subsequent presidential elections 8 out of 10 or even 9 out of 10 African Americans voted Democratic, their allegiance sealed by the explicit embrace of civil rights on the part of John F. Kennedy and especially Lyndon B. Johnson. The [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#), the soaring rhetoric of presidential speeches about fundamental human dignity, the administrations' support, symbolic and real, for peaceful protesters seeking their civil rights—this was the stuff that cemented political loyalty. The black political realignment that had begun during the New Deal had become a near-unanimous black commitment to the Democratic Party.

Weiss, Nancy J. "Political Realignment and African Americans." In *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2026. Accessed January 2, 2026. <https://africanamerican2-abc--clio-c...isplay/1400593>.

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12.2: Black Politics - Classroom Activity

Black Politics - Classroom Activity - 'Discussion on Black Political Direction'

This module is exploring Black Politics. After viewing "[Politics: New Black Power? Part 1](#)", respond to the questions below.

1. Why was political involvement important for African Americans?
2. What was the main argument in this discussion?

James Cannady, & Sheryl J. Parker (Producers), & Colgan, M. (Director). (1983). Politics: New black power? (special, part 1). [Video/DVD] Tony Brown Productions. Retrieved from <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/special-part-1>.

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12.3: Black Politics - Assignment

Black Politics - Discussion Assignment - 'From Lincoln to Trump'



Vox. "How the Republican Party went from Lincoln to Trump." YouTube video, 7:20, July 20, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8VOM8ET1WU>.

After viewing "How the Republican Party went from Lincoln to Trump" students will make two discussion posts: 1) a response to the video (minimum 250 words) and 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). *Discussion board grading rubric attached.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Civil Rights Movement

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Examine the origins, purpose, and impact of the civil rights movement
- Discuss some of the key figures in the civil rights movement

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

The Civil Rights Movement also known as the Civil Rights Era lasted from approximately 1954 - 1968. This era was marked by African Americans' legal fight for equality, justice, and full citizenship under the law. Jim Crow legislation blocked African Americans from enjoying complete protection under the law as well as the full benefits of being United States' citizens. Civil Rights legislation such as Brown v. Board of Education, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 granted African Americans new rights, protections, and mobility under the law that they never experienced before.

[13.1: Civil Rights Movement - Readings and Media](#)

[13.2: Civil Rights Movement - Classroom Activity](#)

[13.3: Civil Rights Movement - Assignment](#)

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13.1: Civil Rights Movement - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about the civil rights movement.

Readings and Media

The Civil Rights Movement



Civil Rights March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, 1965

In the middle of the 20th century, a nationwide movement for equal rights for African Americans and for an end to racial segregation and exclusion arose across the United States. This movement took many forms, and its participants used a wide range of means to make their demands felt, including sit-ins, boycotts, protest marches, freedom rides, and lobbying government officials for legislative action. They faced opposition on many fronts and fell victim to bombings and beatings, arrest and assassination. By the end of the 1960s, the civil rights movement had brought about dramatic changes in the law and in public practice, and had secured legal protection of rights and freedoms for African Americans that would shape American life for decades to come.

A few key moments include:

- **Brown v. Board of Education** The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense and Educational Fund, led by Thurgood Marshall, spent decades fighting against racial segregation in education. This long campaign culminated when the U.S. Supreme Court heard *Brown v. Board of Education*, which gathered together five separate cases related to school segregation with Marshall leading the arguments before the Court. On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal,” legally ending racial segregation in public schools and overruling the “separate but equal” principle set forth in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1889.
- **Rosa Parks arrested** On December 1, 1955, civil rights activist Rosa Parks was arrested when she refused to surrender her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus to a white passenger. The arrest led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, a pivotal event in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, and was a defining moment in Parks' long career as an activist. The Montgomery Bus Boycott also saw the rise to prominence of a young Montgomery minister, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- **Little Rock school integration crisis** After the *Brown v. Board*, Supreme Court decision, state and local officials in a number of states resisted school integration. In September of 1957, nine African American students attempted to attend Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. The governor ordered the state's National Guard to surround the high school, and the Black students were harassed and kept from entering the building. President Dwight Eisenhower nationalized the Arkansas National Guard and sent U.S. troops to protect the students and enforce the desegregation order of the federal courts.
- **Birmingham campaign** In the spring of 1963, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., launched a large-scale campaign of sit-ins and marches in Birmingham, Alabama, to protest the city's brutal segregation policies. Many of the protestors and leaders were jailed, and while behind bars, Dr. King wrote a long public letter that explained his philosophy of non-violent protest. This document, which became known as “The Letter from Birmingham Jail,” went on to be widely republished and regarded as a classic defense of the principles of civil disobedience.

- **The March on Washington** On August 28, 1963, hundreds of thousands of people arrived in Washington, D.C., for the largest non-violent civil rights demonstration that the nation had ever seen: The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The march was organized in a few months, coordinated by veteran strategist Bayard Rustin, and was meant to demonstrate an urgent need for substantive change. The demands in the event program began with “Comprehensive and effective *civil rights legislation* from the present Congress” and included the end of discrimination in education, housing, employment, and more. Leaders and organizers met with members of Congress and with President John F. Kennedy, while the march ended at the Lincoln Memorial with music and speeches, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech.
- **The Selma civil rights marches** On March 7, 1965, a civil rights march in Selma, Alabama, led by 25-year-old activist leader John Lewis, was attacked by state troopers and sheriff’s deputies as the marchers attempted to cross the city’s Edmund Pettus Bridge. Coverage of the marchers being beaten, tear-gassed, and trampled by police horses prompted outrage across the nation, and activists, religious leaders, and everyday citizens flooded into Selma to lend their support. On March 9, a second group of marchers, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., approached the bridge, prayed there, and returned to church. On March 21, thousands of marchers crossed the bridge, this time protected by federalized National Guard troops, and headed to Montgomery.
- **The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965** The two most significant pieces of civil rights legislation since Reconstruction were passed within two years of each other. Between the two, these Acts outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. They banned discrimination in public accommodations, public education, and employment, and prohibited race-based restrictions on voting. Such sweeping legislation had been a longtime goal of the civil rights movement, and it brought many of the laws and practices of the Jim Crow Era to an end.

[The Fair Housing Act](#), 42 U.S.C. 3601 [et seq.](#), prohibits discrimination by direct providers of housing, such as landlords and real estate companies as well as other entities, such as municipalities, banks or other lending institutions and homeowners insurance companies whose discriminatory practices make housing unavailable to persons because of:

- [race or color](#)
- [religion](#)
- [sex](#)
- [national origin](#)
- [familial status](#), or
- [disability](#).

In cases involving discrimination in mortgage loans or home improvement loans, the Department may file suit under both the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act. The Department brings cases where there is evidence of a [pattern or practice](#) of discrimination or where a denial of rights to a group of persons raises an issue of general public importance. Where force or threat of force is used to deny or interfere with fair housing rights, the Department of Justice may institute [criminal proceedings](#). The Fair Housing Act also provides procedures for handling individual complaints of discrimination. Individuals who believe that they have been victims of an illegal housing practice, may file a complaint with the [Department of Housing and Urban Development \[HUD\]](#) or file their own lawsuit in federal or state court. The Department of Justice brings suits on behalf of individuals based on referrals from HUD.

[Discrimination in Housing Based Upon Race or Color](#)

One of the central objectives of the Fair Housing Act, when Congress enacted it in 1968, was to prohibit race discrimination in sales and rentals of housing. Nevertheless, more than 30 years later, race discrimination in housing continues to be a problem. The majority of the Justice Department’s [pattern or practice](#) cases involve claims of race discrimination. Sometimes, housing providers try to disguise their discrimination by giving false information about availability of housing, either saying that nothing was available or steering homeseekers to certain areas based on race. Individuals who receive such false information or misdirection may have no knowledge that they have been victims of discrimination. The Department of Justice has brought many cases alleging this kind of discrimination based on race or color. In addition, the Department’s [Fair Housing Testing Program](#) seeks to uncover this kind of hidden discrimination and hold those responsible accountable. Most of the mortgage lending cases brought by the Department under the Fair Housing Act and [Equal Credit Opportunity Act](#) have alleged discrimination based on race or color. Some of the Department’s cases have also alleged that municipalities and other local government entities violated the Fair Housing Act when they denied permits or zoning changes for housing developments, or relegated them to predominantly minority neighborhoods, because the prospective residents were expected to be predominantly African-Americans.

Discrimination in Housing Based Upon Religion

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based upon religion. This prohibition covers instances of overt discrimination against members of a particular religion as well as less direct actions, such as zoning ordinances designed to limit the use of private homes as places of worship. The number of cases filed since 1968 alleging religious discrimination is small in comparison to some of the other prohibited bases, such as [race](#) or [national origin](#). The Act does contain a limited exception that allows non-commercial housing operated by a religious organization to reserve such housing to persons of the same religion.

Discrimination in Housing Based Upon Sex, Including Sexual Harassment

The Fair Housing Act makes it unlawful to discriminate in housing on the basis of sex. In recent years, the Department's focus in this area has been to challenge sexual harassment in housing. Women, particularly those who are poor, and with limited housing options, often have little recourse but to tolerate the humiliation and degradation of sexual harassment or risk having their families and themselves removed from their homes. The Department's enforcement program is aimed at landlords who create an untenable living environment by demanding sexual favors from tenants or by creating a sexually hostile environment for them. In this manner we seek both to obtain relief for tenants who have been treated unfairly by a landlord because of sex and also deter other potential abusers by making it clear that they cannot continue their conduct without facing repercussions. In addition, pricing discrimination in mortgage lending may also adversely affect women, particularly minority women. This type of discrimination is unlawful under both the Fair Housing Act and [Equal Credit Opportunity Act](#).

Discrimination in Housing Based Upon National Origin

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based upon national origin. Such discrimination can be based either upon the country of an individual's birth or where his or her ancestors originated. Census data indicate that the Hispanic population is the fastest growing segment of our nation's population. The Justice Department has taken enforcement action against municipal governments that have tried to reduce or limit the number of Hispanic families that may live in their communities. We have sued lenders under both the [Fair Housing Act](#) and the [Equal Credit Opportunity Act](#) when they have imposed more stringent underwriting standards on home loans or made loans on less favorable terms for Hispanic borrowers. The Department has also sued lenders for discrimination against Native Americans. Other areas of the country have experienced an increasing diversity of national origin groups within their populations. This includes new immigrants from Southeastern Asia, such as the Hmong, the former Soviet Union, and other portions of Eastern Europe. We have taken action against private landlords who have discriminated against such individuals.

Discrimination in Housing Based Upon Familial Status

The Fair Housing Act, with some exceptions, prohibits discrimination in housing against families with children under 18. In addition to prohibiting an outright denial of housing to families with children, the Act also prevents housing providers from imposing any special requirements or conditions on tenants with custody of children. For example, landlords may not locate families with children in any single portion of a complex, place an unreasonable restriction on the total number of persons who may reside in a dwelling, or limit their access to recreational services provided to other tenants. In most instances, the amended Fair Housing Act prohibits a housing provider from refusing to rent or sell to families with children. However, some facilities may be designated as Housing for Older Persons (55 years of age). This type of housing, which meets the standards set forth in the Housing for Older Persons Act of 1995, may operate as "senior" housing. The [Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#) has published regulations and additional guidance detailing these statutory requirements.

Discrimination in Housing Based Upon Disability

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all types of housing transactions. The Act defines persons with a disability to mean those individuals with mental or physical impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities. The term mental or physical impairment may include conditions such as blindness, hearing impairment, mobility impairment, HIV infection, mental retardation, alcoholism, drug addiction, chronic fatigue, learning disability, head injury, and mental illness. The term major life activity may include seeing, hearing, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, caring for one's self, learning, speaking, or working. The Fair Housing Act also protects persons who have a record of such an impairment, or are regarded as having such an impairment. Current users of illegal controlled substances, persons convicted for illegal manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance, sex offenders, and juvenile offenders are not considered disabled under the

Fair Housing Act, by virtue of that status. The Fair Housing Act affords no protections to individuals with or without disabilities who present a direct threat to the persons or property of others. Determining whether someone poses such a direct threat must be made on an individualized basis, however, and cannot be based on general assumptions or speculation about the nature of a disability. The Division's enforcement of the Fair Housing Act's protections for persons with disabilities has concentrated on two major areas. One is insuring that [zoning and other regulations concerning land use](#) are not employed to hinder the residential choices of these individuals, including unnecessarily restricting communal, or congregate, residential arrangements, such as group homes. The second area is insuring that newly constructed multifamily housing is built in accordance with the Fair Housing Act's [accessibility requirements](#) so that it is accessible to and usable by people with disabilities, and, in particular, those who use wheelchairs. There are other federal statutes that prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is enforced by the [Disability Rights Section](#) of the Civil Rights Division.

Discrimination in Housing Based Upon Disability Group Homes

Some individuals with disabilities may live together in congregate living arrangements, often referred to as "group homes." The Fair Housing Act prohibits municipalities and other local government entities from making zoning or land use decisions or implementing land use policies that exclude or otherwise discriminate against individuals with disabilities. The Fair Housing Act makes it unlawful --

- To utilize land use policies or actions that treat groups of persons with disabilities less favorably than groups of non-disabled persons. An example would be an ordinance prohibiting housing for persons with disabilities or a specific type of disability, such as mental illness, from locating in a particular area, while allowing other groups of unrelated individuals to live together in that area.
- To take action against, or deny a permit, for a home because of the disability of individuals who live or would live there. An example would be denying a building permit for a home because it was intended to provide housing for persons with mental retardation.
- To refuse to make reasonable accommodations in land use and zoning policies and procedures where such accommodations may be necessary to afford persons or groups of persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing. What constitutes a reasonable accommodation is a case-by-case determination. Not all requested modifications of rules or policies are reasonable. If a requested modification imposes an undue financial or administrative burden on a local government, or if a modification creates a fundamental alteration in a local government's land use and zoning scheme, it is not a "reasonable" accommodation.

Discrimination in Housing Based Upon Disability -- Accessibility Features for New Construction

The Fair Housing Act defines discrimination in housing against persons with disabilities to include a failure "to design and construct" certain new multi-family dwellings so that they are accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities, and particularly people who use wheelchairs. The Act requires all newly constructed multi-family dwellings of four or more units intended for first occupancy after March 13, 1991, to have certain features: an accessible entrance on an accessible route, accessible common and public use areas, doors sufficiently wide to accommodate wheelchairs, accessible routes into and through each dwelling, light switches, electrical outlets, and thermostats in accessible location, reinforcements in bathroom walls to accommodate grab bar installations, and usable kitchens and bathrooms configured so that a wheelchair can maneuver about the space.

Developers, builders, owners, and architects responsible for the design or construction of new multi-family housing may be held liable under the Fair Housing Act if their buildings fail to meet these design requirements. The Department of Justice has brought many enforcement actions against those who failed to do so. Most of the cases have been resolved by consent decrees providing a variety of types of relief, including: retrofitting to bring inaccessible features into compliance where feasible and where it is not -- alternatives (monetary funds or other construction requirements) that will provide for making other housing units accessible; training on the accessibility requirements for those involved in the construction process; a mandate that all new housing projects comply with the accessibility requirements, and monetary relief for those injured by the violations. In addition, the Department has sought to [promote accessibility through building codes](#).

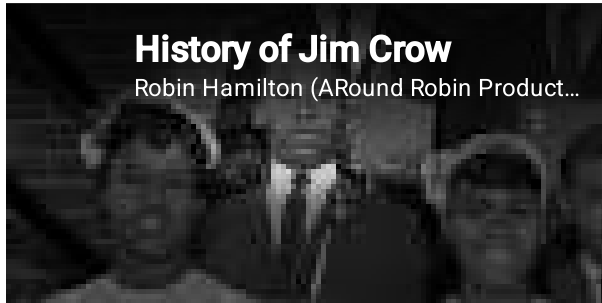
"The Civil Rights Movement." Library of Congress. Accessed January, 1, 2026. <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/civil-rights-movement/>.

"The Fair Housing Act." United States Department of Justice. June 22, 2023. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fair-housing-act-1>.

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13.2: Civil Rights Movement - Classroom Activity

Civil Rights Movement - Classroom Activity - 'Civil Rights Act of 1964'



This module is exploring the Civil Rights Movement. After viewing "1964 Civil Rights Bill Explained in 8 Minutes", respond to the questions below.

1. What impact did the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have on African American life?
2. What was the most influential factor that led to the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

Made From History. "The 1964 Civil Rights Bill Explained in 8 Minutes." YouTube video, 8:25. August 15, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVMH5u6bPGA>.

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13.3: Civil Rights Movement - Assignment

Civil Rights Movement - Essay Assignment - 'Which Bill Was Most Impactful?'

After viewing each of the short videos about various Civil Rights legislation (Brown v. Board of Education, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, Fair Housing Act of 1968), select one law that you feel was the impactful and write a 500 word response paper explaining why. Your paper should be 12 point Times New Roman font and double spaced.

Grading Rubric for Short Papers is attached.



Voices of the Civil Rights Movement. "Brown v. Board of Education." YouTube video, 2:30. May 17, 2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkuiMr2tLJE>.



Made From History. "The 1964 Civil Rights Bill Explained in 8 Minutes." YouTube video, 8:25. August 15, 2014.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVMH5u6bPGA>.



History. "Sound Smart: The Voting Rights Act of 1965." YouTube video, 1:42. March 1, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nrpLVgO7l4>.



HistoryPod. "11th April 1968: The Fair Housing Act of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 signed by President Johnson." YouTube video, 2:45. April 10, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkbKutv0MP0>.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Black Power Movement

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Explain the Black Power Era
- Discuss the difference between the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Era

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

Immediately following the civil rights movement, the next distinct era in African American history was the Black Power Era. This era witnessed the Black Power Movement, which began as a revolutionary movement in the 1960s and 1970s. It emphasized racial pride, economic empowerment, and the creation of political and cultural institutions. This module discusses the tenets, motivations, events, and impact of the Black Power movement. It's appropriate to discuss the Black Power movement after the civil rights movement for more than chronology. The progress made during the civil rights movement, namely, the complete recognition of African Americans "American-ness" as U.S. citizens allowed for figures during the Black Power era to demand society to recognize their "African-ness."

[14.1: Black Power Movement - Readings and Media](#)

[14.2: Black Power Movement - Classroom Activity](#)

[14.3: Black Power Movement - Assignment](#)

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14.1: Black Power Movement - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about the Black Power movement.

Readings and Media

After the perceived success of the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans around the country now wanted to enjoy their newfound rights as United States citizens completely. The Civil Rights Movement made the United States acknowledge and confirm African Americans' "Americanness," but the Black Power Movement wanted to celebrate and emphasize African Americans' unique "African ness" and/or "Blackness." The Black Power era can be defined by the celebration of Black history, Black culture, Black beauty, and self reliance. Intrinsically, this philosophy and aligned behavior is revolutionary and counter the norms of United States majority society.

Black Power

Black Power began as revolutionary movement in the 1960s and 1970s. It emphasized racial pride, economic empowerment, and the creation of political and cultural institutions. During this era, there was a rise in the demand for Black history courses, a greater embrace of African culture, and a spread of raw artistic expression displaying the realities of African Americans.

The term "Black Power" has various origins. Its roots can be traced to author Richard Wright's non-fiction work *Black Power*, published in 1954. In 1965, the Lowndes County [Alabama] Freedom Organization (LCFO) used the slogan "Black Power for Black People" for its political candidates. The next year saw Black Power enter the mainstream. During the Meredith March against Fear in Mississippi, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Chairman Stokely Carmichael rallied marchers by chanting "we want Black Power."

This portal highlights records of Federal agencies and collections that related to the Black Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The selected records contain information on various organizations, including the Nation of Islam (NOI), [Deacons for Defense and Justice](#), and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). It also includes records on several individuals, including Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Elaine Brown, Angela Davis, Fred Hampton, Amiri Baraka, and Shirley Chisholm. This portal is not meant to be exhaustive, but to provide guidance to researchers interested in the Black Power Movement and its relation to the Federal government.

The records in this guide were created by Federal agencies, therefore, the topics included had some sort of interaction with the United States Government. This subject guide includes textual and electronic records, photographs, moving images, audio recordings, and artifacts. Records can be found at the National Archives at College Park, as well as various presidential libraries and regional archives throughout the country.

Malcolm X

The inspiration behind much of the black power movement, Malcolm X's intellect, historical analysis, and powerful speeches impressed friend and foe alike. The primary spokesman for the Nation of Islam until 1964, he traveled to Mecca that year and returned more optimistic about social change. He saw the African American freedom movement as part of an international struggle for human rights and anti-colonialism. After his assassination in 1965, his memory continued to inspire the rising tide of black power.

Malcolm X's expression of black pride and self-determination continued to resonate with and engage many African Americans long after his death in February 1965. For example, listening to recordings of his speeches inspired African American soldiers to organize GI's United Against the War in Vietnam in 1969.

Stokely Carmichael

Stokely Carmichael set a new tone for the black freedom movement when he demanded "black power" in 1966. Drawing on long traditions of racial pride and black nationalism, black power advocates enlarged and enhanced the accomplishments and tactics of

the civil rights movement. Rather than settle for legal rights and integration into white society, they demanded the cultural, political, and economic power to strengthen black communities so they could determine their own futures.

SNCC Supports Black Power

SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, created in 1960, destroyed “the psychological shackles which had kept black southerners in physical and mental peonage,” according to its chairman, Julian Bond.

Black Power Around the World

Revolutions in other nations inspired advocates of black power. The African revolutions against European colonialism in the 1950s and 1960s were exciting examples of success. Wars of national liberation in Southeast Asia and Northern Africa offered still more encouragement. Stokely Carmichael’s five-month world speaking tour in 1967 made black power a key to revolutionary language in places like Algeria, Cuba and Vietnam.

Protesting Apartheid, Cape Town, South Africa

In 1972 African Americans began annual celebrations of African Liberation Day to commemorate and support liberation movements in Africa.

“Free All Political Prisoners!”

Critics vilified black power organizations as separatist groups or street gangs. These critics ignored the movement’s political activism, cultural innovations and social programs. Of nearly 300 authorized FBI operations against black nationalist groups, more than 230 targeted the Black Panthers. This forced organizations to spend time, money, and effort toward legal defense rather than social programs.

The War on Black Power

Between 1956 and 1971, the FBI and other government agencies waged a war against dissidents, especially African Americans and anti-war advocates. The FBI’s Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) targeted Martin Luther King Jr., the Black Panthers, Us and other black groups. Activities included spying, wiretapping phones, making criminal charges on flimsy evidence, spreading rumors and even assassinating prominent individuals, like Black Panther Fred Hampton. By the mid-1970s, these actions helped to weaken or destroy many of the groups associated with the black power movement.

The Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) was founded in October 1966 in Oakland, California by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, who met at Merritt College in Oakland. It was a revolutionary organization with an ideology of Black nationalism, socialism, and armed self-defense, particularly against police brutality. It was part of the Black Power movement, which broke from the integrationist goals and nonviolent protest tactics of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The BPP name was inspired by the use of the black panther as a symbol that had recently been used by the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, an independent Black political party in Alabama.

The BPP’s philosophy was influenced by the speeches of Malcolm X of the [Nation of Islam](#), the teachings of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung of the Communist Party of China, and the anti-colonialist book *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*, 1961) by the Martiniquan psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. The BPP’s practice of armed self-defense was influenced by African American activist Robert Williams, who advocated this practice against anti-black aggression by the Ku Klux Klan in his book *Negroes with Guns* (1962). Newton and Seale canvassed their community asking residents about issues of concern. They compiled the responses and created the Ten Point Platform and Program that served as the foundation of the Black Panther Party. The ten points are:

- We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
- We want full employment for our people.
- We want an end to the robbery by the Capitalists of our Black Community.
- We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
- We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society.
- We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
- We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.
- We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.

- We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
- We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

Because of its practice of armed self-defense against police, as well as its Communistic and revolutionary elements, the BPP was frequently targeted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's COINTELPRO program as well as by state and local law enforcement groups. However, despite its militant stance, the BPP also provided free breakfast for school children, sickle cell anemia screening, legal aid, and adult education.

The National Archives and Records Administration contains over 2,400 records relating to the Black Panther Party. Most of these records are textual records, but there are also motion pictures, sound recordings, and photographs.

"Black Power." *National Archives*. March 16, 2021. <https://www.archives.gov/research/af...ns/black-power>.

Easley, Barbara. "The Black Panther Party." *National Archives*. Accessed January 3, 2026. <https://www.archives.gov/research/af...nthers#bpintro>.

"The Foundations of Black Power." *National Museum of African American History & Culture*. Accessed January 3, 2026. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/storie...ns-black-power>.

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14.2: Black Power Movement - Classroom Activity

Black Power Movement - Classroom Activity - 'Who was Malcolm X?'



This module is exploring the the Black Power Era. One of its most influential figures was Malcolm X. After viewing "Who was Malcolm X?", respond to the questions below.

1. What was your previous view of Malcolm X? How, if at all, has that view changed?
2. What was Malcolm X's influence on the Black Power movement?

TRT World. "Who was Malcolm X." YouTube video, 15:18. February 21, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaVIucxNeTY>.

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14.3: Black Power Movement - Assignment

Black Power Movement - Discussion Assignment - 'COINTELPRO'

Within one year of the formation of the Black Panther Party, the FBI established a special counter-intelligence program called COINTELPRO, to neutralize political dissidents. Between the years 1956 and 1971, the FBI used the COINTELPRO program to investigate "radical" national political groups for intelligence that would lead to involvement of foreign enemies with these groups. This of course meant that the FBI specifically targeted American citizens. According to COINTELPRO documents, 5 groups were singled out for investigation - the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers' Party, White Hate Groups, Black Nationalist Hate Groups and the New Left. The Black Panther Party was specifically targeted and bore the brunt of the most damage.

According to FBI documents, one of the purposes of the COINTELPRO program was to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of the Black nationalists". They wanted to prevent the rise of a black "messiah" and Martin Luther King Jr. had been amongst the candidates until his assassination in 1968 when the attention shifted to Huey P. Newton. Of the 295 documented actions taken by COINTELPRO to disrupt Black groups, 233 were directed against the Black Panther Party. (PBS.org)

After viewing [Freedom Archives: Cointelpro 101](#) students will make two discussion posts: 1) a response to the video (minimum 250 words) and 2) you will respond to a classmate's post (minimum 75 words). *Discussion board grading rubric attached.

"COINTELPRO." Luna Ray Films, 2002. PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/hueypnewton/acti...ointelpro.html>.

Freedom Archives: Cointelpro 101. Anonymous MVD Entertainment Group, 2011. <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/wa...cointelpro-101>.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

15: Black Economics

Learning Objectives

This module will:

- Define and discuss the Black/White wealth gap
- Explore how the housing market, specifically, impacts Black generational wealth

Upon Completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Identify and demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in Africana Studies, and interrelated disciplines.
- Recognize and discuss social issues affecting people of African descent in the United States, across the African Diaspora, and throughout the world, with knowledge of Africa as a place of origin.
- Distinguish key concepts in Africana Studies related to anthropology, sociology, literature, history, women's studies, gender studies, psychology, economics, and cultural studies, as these fields intersect with the lived experiences of people of African descent from antiquity, through the slave trade, into emancipation, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and beyond.
- Recall, and apply theoretical language to explain key texts, leaders, and movements in the discipline, from multiple schools of thought.
- Analyze issues related to race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect people of African descent socially, politically, and economically on local, national and global levels. Employ life-long learning beyond the classroom to create trans-generational, community-based solutions to the problems studied in this course, with future impacts for marginalized minority groups, especially African Americans.

Any examination of Black economics must consider the struggles and obstacles that have interfered with African American wealth development. It has long been believed that home ownership is the building block for wealth in the United States. Home value appreciation creates equity which in turn increases net worth and provides collateral for financing of one's economic endeavors. Unfortunately, African Americans have suffered many obstacles with regards to attaining home ownership, getting fair interest rates on home loans, and gaining equity on pace with their white counterparts. This module, we will discuss African Americans' experiences with the home market and how this troubled relationship continues to impact the Black/White wealth gap.

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15.1: Black Economics - Readings and Media

The selected readings, images, and videos of this module will inform students about Black economics, the wealth gap, and generational wealth.

Readings and Media

Discrimination in Banking and Lending

People of color, especially Black Americans, are disproportionately disadvantaged in banking and lending as compared to their white counterparts. This differential treatment has had a tangible impact on their wealth accumulation and partially accounts for the gap in wealth between whites and people of color in the United States.

Discriminatory Banking

When examining banking and lending practices more broadly, deep racial inequalities exist in the United States. For example, a 2018 study by professors Jacob Faber and Terri Friedline, of New York University and the University of Kansas, respectively, found a number of "racialized costs of banking" in the United States. Some of the study's key findings include the following:

- Banks typically charge people of color more than their white counterparts for opening checking accounts. For instance, the minimum opening deposit is nearly \$81 in majority Black neighborhoods, but it is only \$68.50 in majority white neighborhoods.
- It is cheaper for those in white neighborhoods to maintain their checking accounts (a minimum of about \$625 must remain in their accounts to avoid bank fees) than for those residing in majority Black neighborhoods (about \$871) or those in majority Latino neighborhoods (about \$749). This means that those living in majority Black or Latino communities must keep more of their earnings in their checking accounts than those living in majority white areas; consequently, a greater proportion of their earnings cannot be accessed.
- Banks tend to open and operate the majority of their branches in middle- and upper-class white communities, creating "banking deserts" in low-income and nonwhite communities. Consequently, people of color living in poorer areas with few white residents must travel farther to find a banking facility or instead rely on more expensive services, such as payday lenders, check cashing stores, and other nonbank services that typically proliferate in these communities. This is especially problematic for impoverished Americans without cars or other motorized transportation.

Several national banks have been sued for widespread discriminatory practices against people of color, such as allegedly opening accounts and lines of credit without their knowledge, illegally charging fees for dormant accounts they did not even know they possessed, automatically closing accounts when they exhibited signs of fraudulent activity (instead of first conducting investigations as legally required), and charging them comparatively higher interest rates than their white counterparts.

Discriminatory Lending

Research also shows discrimination in lending practices—particularly when Americans apply for home, car, and business loans. As compared to people of color (especially African Americans), whites are more likely to be granted loans, offered lower interest rates, given better customer service, and offered more information from loan officers—at times regardless of creditworthiness.

A 2016 study published in the *Journal for Urban Economics* found differential treatment by mortgage loan originators (MLOs)—the primary point people that homeowners typically deal with when applying for mortgages. MLOs were more likely to respond to e-mails from prospective borrowers with white-sounding names than those with Black-sounding names. They also found that the effect of having a Black-sounding name on how MLOs responded to prospective borrowers was equivalent to having a credit score that is 71 points lower.

A 2018 study performed by Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting found that of 31 million mortgage applications in 2015 and 2016, people of color, especially African Americans and Latinos, were denied conventional mortgage loans at much higher rates than whites—even when they had the same level of income. Banks often point to the comparatively lower credit scores of people of color to explain the disparities, though because this information is not publicly available (because lenders refuse to report credit score data to the government), there is no way to know for sure.

In 2019, the real estate company Clever analyzed 1.7 million mortgage applications from 2016 and found that Black applicants were denied home loans at twice the rate of white applicants, even when controlling for income. Furthermore, more than half of Black applicants (52%) were given no reason for why their loans were denied (this was the highest percentage for any racial group). The authors of the study called for more transparency in mortgage lending.

Consequences of Racial Disparities in Lending Practices

According to federal data, the average wealth of white families was 10 times that of Black families in the United States in 2016. Much of this wealth gap stems from different rates of home ownership and the accumulation of home **equity** over time. According to Princeton sociologist Dalton Conley, "The majority of Americans hold most of their wealth in the form of home equity. So that's their nest egg. That's how they can finance the education of their offspring, that's how they can ... save up for retirement. It's their savings bank. They're living in their savings bank." However, American lenders have a long history of denying home loans to people of color, especially African Americans, and studies suggest the practice of denying loans to people of color persists.

As whites obtain mortgage loans, buy homes, and build equity, they continue to build wealth, though the same opportunities are not always afforded to people of color, even when they have similar incomes. White Americans also benefit from increased access to banks, less expensive bank services, increased access to their money, and lower interest loans on homes. While inequality in banking and lending often goes unnoticed, discrimination and inequality persist, disproportionately hitting people of color in their wallets.



NPR. "Housing Segregation and Redlining in America: A Short Film." YouTube video, 6:37. April 11, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5FBJyqfoLM>.

Redlining

Redlining is a practice in which companies or institutions deny goods and services to certain groups on the basis of race or where they live. In the United States, redlining was supported by a combination of government policies and private-sector practices. Key stakeholders in redlining are borrowers, lenders, government regulators, realtors, and fair housing advocates. Redlining established [de facto](#) residential [segregation](#) patterns that have lasted into the present despite increased federal regulation over the practice.

Origins and Development of Redlining

In the 1930s, Federal Housing Administration (FHA) lending guidelines provided a critical policy basis for redlining in the housing industry. The FHA justified its redlining policy by saying it would prevent inharmonious racial groups from mixing in communities and would prevent property values from declining. These policies resulted in limited housing opportunities for African Americans, who increasingly lived in racially segregated neighborhoods, where the housing available had lower assessed property value, was substandard in quality, and was more overcrowded than housing available to white people.

The federal government created the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933 as a New Deal measure to help struggling homeowners by refinancing mortgages. The HOLC had a color-coded rating system for assessing the value of neighborhoods in terms of long-term lending. It included a red-colored designation for undesirable areas (which is credited as the basis for the term "redlining"). Areas with significant African American populations tended to fall into this lowest category. HOLC staff used evaluations from local real estate professionals to "grade" neighborhoods across the country.

Realtors used restrictive covenants to reinforce residential segregation. A restrictive covenant is language included in a property deed that restricts its use. Race-related covenants were designed to prevent homes from being sold to, or purchased by, certain racial or ethnic groups. These covenants helped to perpetuate the segregated neighborhoods caused by redlining and provided a convenient rationale for denying loans

to African Americans and other minorities. The U.S. Supreme Court struck down the power to enforce restrictive covenants in *Shelly v. Kraemer* in 1948. The decision, however, did not stop the housing industry from continuing to engage in redlining. Racially restrictive covenants were not outlawed until the [Fair Housing Act of 1968](#).

Legislation in the 1960s and 1970s

The most significant government legislation enacted to expand housing access, and limit exclusionary practices like redlining, was the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Lenders could no longer use race as a factor to determine creditworthiness. Government regulators were lax in enforcing the law, but fair housing advocates engaged in various protests to bring to light the injury caused to African Americans by banks and lenders. Their actions influenced Congress to pass further anti-redlining legislation.

When Congress passed the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) in 1975 and the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) in 1977, fair housing advocates tackled redlining head-on through protests, lawsuits, and consumer education in the community reinvestment movement. Throughout the 1980s, government regulators enforced HMDA by requiring banks to collect data about where they made housing loans and to document efforts to make loans in previously underserved communities. Despite these advances, lenders continued to deny loans to African Americans about twice as often as white borrowers into the 1990s.

Effects of Redlining

Redlining is often associated with patterns of "[white flight](#)" in response to growing African American populations in cities. It allowed real estate companies to create exclusive, often wealthy, white suburbs and exurbs in major American metropolitan regions. The higher tax base of these suburbs allowed for higher municipal spending, such as the per capita spending per student within their local public school districts. In contrast, urban municipalities faced shrinking tax bases as residents who could afford to moved away. This meant less money for public services such as police, fire, health, and education in urban areas.

Reverse Redlining

A turning point occurred in the 1990s with more aggressive government support for programs to expand African American homeownership. Lenders in the private sector simultaneously developed loan products that made it easier for African Americans to qualify for home mortgages. However, the drawbacks to these increased opportunities were high interest rates and confusing repayment terms. Fair housing advocates soon after introduced a new term, "reverse redlining," to explain troubling new lending practices.

Predatory lending and subprime loans are key components to reverse redlining. Lenders target African Americans to purchase or refinance mortgages at high interest rates in the subprime lending market, rather than qualify them for low interest rates in the prime market. Reverse redlining practices contributed to record home ownership levels among African Americans in the early 2000s. However, these unfavorable loans led to unprecedented default and foreclosure rates near the end of the decade.

Fair housing advocates have urged the government and private companies to combat reverse redlining by using objective criteria and fair terms when lending to African American borrowers.

Housing Discrimination in the 21st Century

Redlining and housing discrimination is still occurring in the 21st century, although it is illegal. For example, in 2023, Los Angeles-based City National Bank settled with the Department of Justice for \$31 million over charges of discrimination in lending against Black and Latino communities.

In 2018, the Brookings Institution released a report finding that homes in Black neighborhoods were worth 23% less than comparable homes in white neighborhoods, and homes in neighborhoods where the residential population is 50% Black are valued at about half the price as homes in neighborhoods with no Black residents. In addition, metropolitan areas with more devalued Black neighborhoods are also more segregated and provide less upward mobility for Black children living in these communities. The report concluded that the difference in home values was a result of racial bias.

In 2021, Freddie Mac, a government-sponsored mortgage corporation, reported that between 2015 and 2020, homes in Black and Latino neighborhoods were much more likely to be undervalued by appraisers than comparable homes in white neighborhoods. Again, researchers stated that differences in home and neighborhood quality did not account for the disparity. Undervalued appraisals result in families selling their homes for less than the property is worth, making it more difficult for Black and Latino families to build wealth.

Hinesmon-Matthews, Lezlee J. "Redlining." In *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2026. Accessed January 3, 2026. <https://africanamerican2-abc--clio-c...isplay/1477470>.

Khanna, Nikki, and Noriko Matsumoto. "Discrimination in Banking and Lending." In *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, ABC-CLIO, 2026. Accessed January 3, 2026. <https://africanamerican2-abc--clio-c...isplay/2269224>.

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15.2: Black Economics - Classroom Activity

Black Economics - Classroom Activity - 'Segregation and Poverty'



This module is exploring Black economics, specifically, how housing discrimination has impacted Black wealth accumulation and generational wealth. After viewing "[Racial Segregation and Concentrated Poverty: The History of Housing in Black America](#)", respond to the questions below.

1. What impact did housing discrimination have on African American wealth accumulation?
2. How did housing discrimination and segregation impact the Black/White wealth gap?

The Root. "Racial Segregation and Concentrated Poverty: The History of Housing in Black America." YouTube video, 6:01. March 4, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt9sJhISYfg&t=1s>.

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15.3: Black Economics - Assignment

Black Economics - Assignment - 'The Black Tax'



After viewing "[The Black Tax: Cost of Being a Black American](#)," write a 500 word response paper discussing what you think the future of Black wealth accumulation and the Black/White wealth gap looks like. Will housing discrimination continue to be an issue? Will the alleged currency associated with Whiteness and burden associated with Blackness continue to maintain the wealth gap? What can African Americans do to close the wealth gap? Your paper should be 12 point Times New Roman font and double spaced.

Grading Rubric for Short Papers is attached.

TalksatGoogle. "The Black Tax: Cost of Being a Black American." YouTube video, 1:15:15. February 9, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0w3o8uHVkKQ>.

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